

TRICARNIA

LAND OF PRINCES AND DEMONS

By UMBERTO PIGNATELLI



BEASTS BARBARIANS

A Sword and Sorcery Savage Worlds setting



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CREDITS

EDITING: ANDY SLACK

ARTS: AGNIESZKA SZAFRANIE, MATEUSZ BIELSKI, JACK HOLLIDAY, JOYCE
MAUREIRA, Tomek TWOREK, PETER SZABO GABOR, TAMAS BARANYA, MATT MORROW,
MARK HYZER, BRADLEY K McDEVITT, STORN A. COOK, "PRIESTESS DIGITAL

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CHOICE -QUALITY STOCKART  RICK HERSHEY/FAT GOBLIN GAMES.

COVER: Tomek TWOREK

LAYOUT AND TYPESETTING: IREK WINNICKI

PLAYTESTERS: MARCO BELTRAMINO, DANIELE BONETTO, VANIA CATALIN, LUCA

COERO BORGIA, MANER SAMUEL, PAOLO BOIERO, PIERPAOLO FERRARI.

SPECIAL THANKS TO: MARTA CASTELLANO (MY WIFE) QUEEN OF ALL THE

AMAZONS, MASSIMO CAMPOLUCCI (MY UNCLE), FOR BEING THE FIRST, REAL

DHAAR, SIMONE RONCO AND POLLIOTTI YOSHI (MY FRIENDS) FOR FIGHTING

ALONE AGAINST THE VALK DEMONS.

FOR M. K.

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INTRODUCTION

Shangor met Zandorra's eyes, while the black stone gate, carved with sinuous shapes, opened. A subtle scent came from the darkness inside the room; it was sweet on the surface, but mixed with something vaguely reptilian, that evoked an ancestral, irrational fear in the soul of the barbarian.

"Lotus!" Shangor whispered to the Amazon, shaking his head to free himself from the intoxication. The warrior-woman frowned, and the couple stepped inside the room.

It was large, and dark, apart from the faint light produced by heavily decorated braziers projecting strange, monstrous shadows on the tall walls and elaborate columns of the room.

"Welcome, my guests." A soft, educated, voice spoke. It was calm, placid, almost sleepy, but the two adventurers shivered

at the sound, like a mouse hearing the low purr of a cat.

Sitting on an elegant throne on the far end of the room there was a man. Tall and slender, his complexion was that of a person very careful in avoiding the touch of the sun. His jet black hair, long and liquid, fell on his shoulders like a waterfall in the night. Only his eyes, grey and cold, watched the adventurers, lifeless as stones.

Two women stood at the sides of the throne, immobile as statues. They were perfectly shaped, with gorgeous bodies and bald heads. And they were naked of course, following the Tricarnian tradition.

"What do you want from us, Sarkanar?" Zandorra said, suspiciously. The sight of fellow women in that depraved condition made her upset.

A low growl emerged from the darkness among the columns, where a crawling mass of tentacles, fangs, and non-descript claws stirred.

The two adventurers instinctively retreated a step, their hands looking for their weapons, before remembering they were in the hands of the palace's guards.

"You must forgive Zzzannn," the man on the throne said, softly. "He angers easily when my proper title is forgotten."

Zandorra breathed heavily before repeating: "What do you want from us... Prince Sarkanar?"

The creature in the darkness calmed down, and a small smile appeared on the face of the Priest Prince, while he looked at the luscious shape of the Amazon with hungry eyes.

"We'll talk of it later. I am sure you'll enjoy my hospitality in Tricarnia."

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Welcome back to the Dread Sea Dominions!

This book is devoted to Tricarnia, the decadent kingdom of the Priest Princes, last heirs of the ancient empire of Keron.

In the following pages you'll find everything you need to venture into the fog-covered ruins and walk in the marvelous palaces of the Priest Princes, where these ancient sorcerers are served by legions of slaves, while they worship their unholy deities and indulge in depraved pleasures.

The focus of this book is on Tricarnian characters, both slaves and nobles, and on their mysterious and ancient sorcerous tradition, one of the most ancient of all the Dominions.

In addition, since the concept of the noble family is very important in Tricarnian society, you'll find detailed rules on to create and run one.

Tricarnia is one of the most dangerous places in the Dominions: it is very easy for a man to fall into slavery and be used as puppet by the sly Priest Princes in their political games, but it is also a place of opportunity where a skilled, and ruthless individual can become rich and powerful... if he is lucky enough to survive.

So what are you waiting for? Turn the page, and venture into Tricarnia!

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:

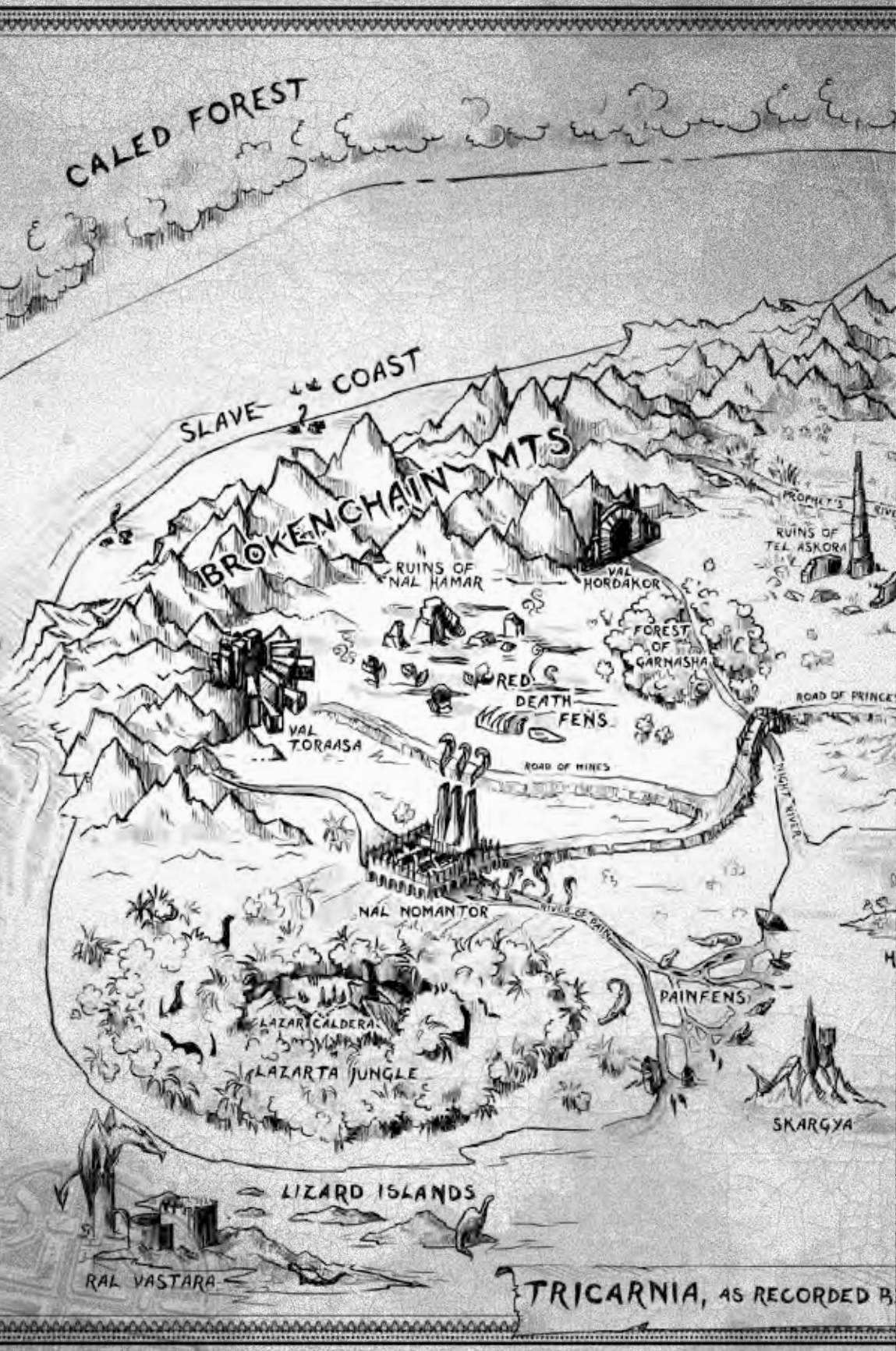
GE: Beasts & Barbarians Golden Edition

BOD: Beasts of the Dominions

JCT: Jalizar, City of Thieves

TB: Tattered Banners

GOD: Gladiators of the Dominions



CALED FOREST

SLAVE COAST

BROKEN CHAIN MTS

RUINS OF NAL HAMAR

VAL HORDAKOR

PROPHET'S RIVER
RUINS OF TEL ASKORA

FOREST OF GARNASHA

RED DEATH FENS

ROAD OF PRINCE

VAL TORAASA

ROAD OF MINES

NAL NOMANTOR

LAZART CALDERA

LAZART JUNGLE

PAINFENS

SKARGYA

LIZARD ISLANDS

RAL VASTARA

TRICARNIA, AS RECORDED BY



GOD AXE RIVER

BORDERLANDS

MUD-HILLS

NAL LAGAR

XALARYKA

RAL HORDAKA

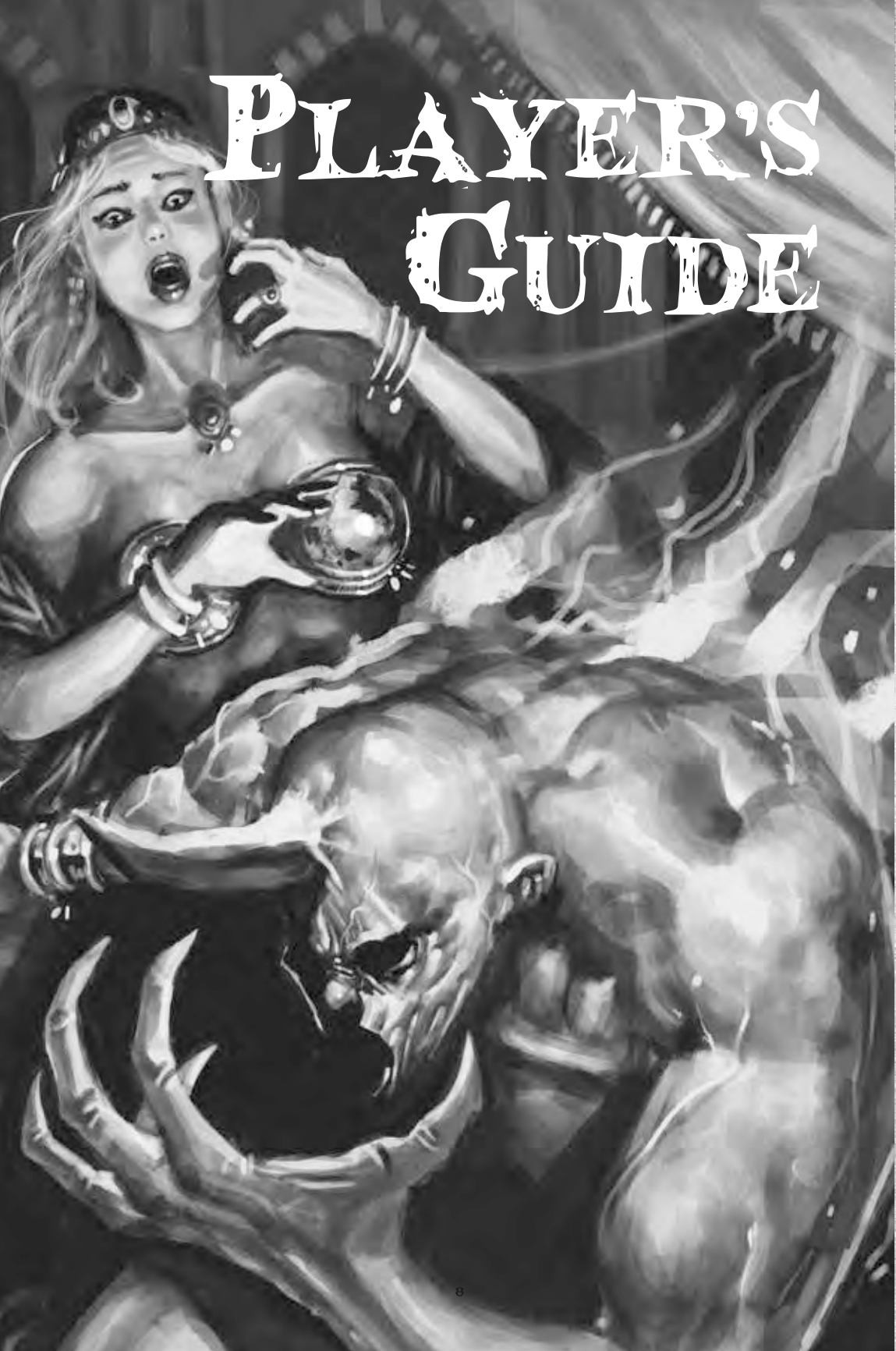
TEL VIKAR

TEETH OF THE NIGHT

ASCAIA

JUSTINUS THE RED

PLAYER'S GUIDE



THE BOOK OF LORE

*My beloved master Velastios,
A few months have passed since I
wrote you from Jalizar. You'll certainly
remember, I left the City of Thieves
headed for the southern lands, but my
journey was abruptly interrupted by
the capricious hands of fate.*

*The ship my friends and I were sailing
on was attacked and captured by a
Tricornian galley, and now I am
penning this missive from a cell in
the prison of Priest Prince Sarkanar,
in Tricornia. So, I hope you forgive
me for the quality of my words, but
I am writing on a piece of sail using
the only ink I can find: my blood. I
don't know if I will ever find a way
to deliver this letter to you, but in
this moment writing is the sole thing
keeping me from madness. Now
I must stop, the door of the cell is
opening... oh Hulian, Smith of Words,
what will be my fate?*

*From the letters of Justinus of
Syranthia*

HISTORY HINTS

A WORD OF CAUTION

Fear not, wise reader, for the fate of Justinus of Syranthia.

From what we know, the young sage wasn't killed by Prince Sarkanar or fed to one of his pet demons. Instead, the Tricornian Lord gave him an interesting task: writing a history of Tricornia for him, trying to make some sense of the various scroll fragments, old books and epigraphs which were collected in his family library.

The young Sage breathed a sigh of relief, and set off on the job, curious himself about the past of the ancient country, but he quickly discovered that telling the history of Tricornia isn't an easy task.

First, the foggy land is probably the oldest kingdom of the Dominions, and the written sources, especially for the most remote eras, are fragmentary and often contradictory.

In addition, since the Tricarnian's perception of time is different from those of the other races, the dates reported are sometimes weird and seem to conflict with the official ones reported by the Sages of the Library of Syranthia.

In the end he managed to write the following report.

Justinus doesn't always agree with what he discovers, and sometimes in the text you'll find his notes on what his personal hypotheses and theories are.

To you, wise reader, falls the task of discerning what of is historical truth and what is myth.

MEMORIES OF KERON

Although the fall of the Dread Star was more than twenty five centuries ago, the memory of that day is still preserved in Tricarnia today, through the words of the Book of Exiles, the holy tome telling the story of the end of Keron and the birth of Tricarnia.

If you pay heed to that ancient book, there were many signs in Keron, announcing the impending catastrophe, but for some reason the Princes of Keron decided to ignore them.

All except one.

Prince Salkor, who is remembered in history as the Navigator, had a mysterious dream in which he saw the Black Altar of the Temple of Darkness, sacred to Hordan, broken in two parts and a river of blood pouring out of it.

Scared, he stepped back, and then he heard a disembodied female voice speaking:

"Salkor, before dusk tomorrow load all your family, your beasts and your slaves on your ships, and sail toward the death of the sun. Pain, terror and solitude await you, but only when you sacrifice to me what you have held most precious will the path to glory be revealed, and in this the blood of Keron will be preserved forever."

When Lord Salkor woke up, puzzled and scared, he silently slipped away from the bed where he slept with his beloved wife, Hamarra, and went to the Red Palace of Keron City asking audience of the High Priest of Keron, ruler of the greatest Empire of the world.

In front of the whole court he told his dream, but he received only mocking words and laughter from the ruler and the courtesans, who returned to their decadent pleasures.

Enraged, Salkor left the palace and decided to embark his family and servants on ships and sail westward as the dream commanded.

Seeing what happened later, one wonders what the history of the Dominions would have been like if Salkor's words had been believed.

Seven nights later, the Dread Star fell. The impact was terrible and destroyed the heart of the Empire, creating a crater which was filled by the waters of the Endless Ocean. Salkor's fleet was far away from the epicenter, but despite this the terrible tsunamis destroyed the greater part of his ships, and only his ship, the *Naskarias*, and a handful of others survived.

The nights and the days following the fall were terrible: an eternal night fell on the world, as the sun was covered by an enormous cloud of dust generated by the

impact, and the very Earth cried out like a slave put on the rack for the pleasure of her mistress.

THE YEARS OF DARKNESS

As if guided by the hand of some unknown god, the remnants of Lord Salkor's fleet sailed westward, and in the end, when they were exhausted, they reached the far Mountains of Tricar, which today are called the Brokenchain Mountains.

The peaks, till some days before, had been placed on a high plateau, which now was totally submerged, but still the mountaintops peered from the water.

Salkor's people found shelter in the caverns in the mountains. The Priest Prince ordered his men to raise an altar upon which he sacrificed three young virgins. He drank their sweet blood from a silver cup, as tradition requires, and summoned

the Mistress of Night, but Hordan didn't appear.

He wasn't the only mage asking help of the demonic powers: other sorcerers tried to contact their supernatural patrons, but nobody managed to get an answer. For the first time in millennia, the Keronians were on their own.

For three nights the Navigator performed the same rite, but received no answer. So he understood that the Queen of Darkness had abandoned his people, and great was his fear.

With a single gesture of magic, Salkor lit the altar and the remnants of the girls upon it. They burned with greenish flames, which didn't consume any combustibles, and the fire howled with the echoes of the hells.

The flames were imbued with a mysterious magic so that any surviving mage of Keron



could see them for hundreds of miles with his mind's eye.

These fires, called the Calling Flames, acted as a lighthouse and in some months other surviving Princes, guided by them, reached the Mountains of Tricar, with their retinues of slaves.

These nobles, who were called the Green Fire Seekers, had the luck to be at the periphery of the Empire at the moment of the cataclysm and this saved their lives.

There are many of them, but the most famous ones are three brothers: Askerios the Warrior, Caldaios the Young and Jestiriel the Wise.

These are names that cast great shadows on the history of the Dominions, and will be important later in the history of Tricarnia.

The Green Fire Seekers swore fealty to Salkor and become his first vassals.

After the arrival of the last of them, the fire extinguished, and the altar cracked. A thick, black substance, similar to blood, poured out of it. Salkor remembered his dream and was intimidated by the omen: he was sure at this point that Keron didn't exist anymore, and he and his followers were the only survivors of the millenary empire.

The first need of the exiled was finding a new home, and no other was available apart from the caverns on the mountains' tops; staying outside was too dangerous due to the dust poisoning the air and many other dangers following the cataclysm.

During this time the exiled ones embellished as best they could the deep caverns of the mountains where they had

found shelter, creating an underground city, which they called Val Hordakor, which in their language means "House of Darkness".

Despite being protected, life in Val Hordakor wasn't easy, and the survivors were forced to live on mushrooms, lizards and what few other resources the underground furnished, but there wasn't enough to sustain the mass of people brought by Lord Salkor and the newcomers.

Many nobles, who had always lived a pampered life, decided to escape from that terrible condition; some of them committed suicide, but others drank the Water of Eternity, falling into a slumber lasting centuries.

If the nobles had a hard time, for the slaves it was a real nightmare, and they were ready to rebel for the first time in the history of Keron. Lacking the food to nourish them and the slave-soldiers to keep them pacified, the Keronians let a good part of them, the most rebellious ones, escape.

Most of the fugitive slaves died of famine and pestilence in the mountains, but some of them managed to reach the deep woods in the north, beyond the Tricar Mountains, which were partially safe from the cataclysm. There they broke their slave collars and swore to never be put in chains again, becoming the precursors of the current Caleds, mixing their blood with some of the primitive white men living there.

Centuries passed unnoticed and slowly the waters raised by the cataclysm receded from the base of the mountains, and then from the plateau, finally occupying the large body of water called the Dread Sea.

At this point Salkor and his people cautiously ventured onto the plateau, now transfigured by the water, and called it Tricar Nya, which means "Flooded Land" in their ancient language.

It was 630 AF.

THE GIFT OF HORDAN

The survivors explored the plain, and found it desolate; it had never being a very populated area, but the waters' fury had totally wiped from it any form of life and civilization, with a single exception: a Keronian fortress, guarding the pass leading to the plateau.

The water's force had killed all the people, but the walls and part of the buildings survived the cataclysm. The only difference from before was that now the waters of the new sea licked the walls, transforming it into a coastal city.

Salkor and his people took control of the citadel, and called it the City of the Prince, which over the centuries became

the City of Princes, the capital of present-day Tricornia.

The first thing Salkor did on entering the city was to take his most trusted servant, the slave guard Ghoro, and sacrifice him on the highest tower. The heart of Ghoro burned and fizzled in the holy brazier, but even then Hordan refused to speak. The only answer the Navigator received was the voice of the red sea, which bubbled like the cauldron of an evil witch.

It was to be more than six centuries before any Keronian managed to enter into contact with their deities again, and despair ran deep in them.

According to the Book of Exiles, it was 653 AF.

A few nights later, the Snow of the Multicolored Death started.

It began as a strange, slow, snowfall: first dozens, then hundreds and finally millions of multicolored particles fell down from the sky, probably they were part of the dust created by the Dread Star, and wherever they landed, terrible

HERO'S JOURNAL:

THE BOOK OF EXILES

This ancient book is the holiest in all Tricornian culture. The original copy is preserved in the Palace of the Silent Lord in the City of Princes. Written on white sheets of virgin skin and in black ink, it is the diary of Salkor the Navigator, wherein the great ruler reports the Fall of Keron and the first centuries of the Tricornian kingdom.

The copy of the Book of Exiles held in the City of Princes isn't the only one; others exist, both in Tricornia and in other places of the Dominions. These copies aren't perfectly identical to the original. In some cases they are wildly divergent, telling totally different versions of the Fall of Keron. Both the sages and even some Priest Princes wonder if the real one is only a ruse to conceal some terrible secret about what happened in the terrible days of the Fall of the Dread Star...

things happened: plants and beasts died in horrible ways, covered in blisters; a few survived, but their shapes and their very natures were changed by the alien snowflakes.

The effect of these snowflakes on humans was even more remarkable: the greater part of people hit by them caught a strange pestilence and died, and they were the fortunate ones. Others survived, but their bodies and minds were twisted and mutated, so that they had to be sent away from the Citadel or imprisoned. A very few of them survived retaining their consciousness, and, after recovering, they reported incredible dreams and visions.

For this reason the Keronians called it Lotus, which in their language means "dream", and started studying it, experimenting on slaves.

Salkor and his people, given that returning to Val Hordakor was impossible, were forced to live locked in the citadel for several years, even resorting to cannibalism to survive, while the deadly rain continued. When it finally ended and they could leave the Citadel, they found a changed world: the Lotus in some way had managed to mix and change the local flora and fauna, creating a new world.

Again Salkor called for Hordan, but again the Mistress of Night remained silent.

And then the Navigator understood what he was asked for, and that his mind had refused to acknowledge for almost seven centuries; weeping, he kissed Hamarra, his beloved wife, for the last time, and then he slit her perfect throat with a dagger.

The blood of Hamarra formed a pool on the Lotus-tainted ground. A big snake crawled out from a bush to lick it, and then a portent happened. The snake's head changed, becoming that of the most beautiful woman ever to walk the Dominions.

Salkor and his people fell on the ground, recognizing Hordan, their Demon Goddess. The snake crawled upon the Navigator's body. Her perfect visage met his gaze and the goddess gave him a long, unbearable kiss. "In the end you served me well, Salkor," the goddess said, in a mocking tone. "And this is your reward. You and your blood will rule the new world, in my name. Keron is dead for its hubris and arrogance, but Tricarnia is born from its ashes, and you, the Tricarnians, will be my favorite sons, slaves and husbands, in the eternity of pleasure and damnation that awaits all of us."

Then the goddess laughed, and the snake fell on the ground, shaking. She died, but not before laying a large, multicolored egg.

That day is still remembered in Tricarnian religion as the Gift of Hordan (the first day of the thirteenth moon of the year). From that moment on the doors to the otherworld were open again, and demons and entities returned to answer the invocations of the sorcerers.

Salkor did several other things that day; first, he ordered the Green Fire Seekers to take their people and spread throughout the land, building their own cities, and forced them to swear fealty to his son, Korialkor.

Then he picked up the body of his wife and entered the catacombs of the Citadel, to bury her as a queen.

ETERNAL MEN

Reading the chronicle contained in the Book of Exiles, one wonders at how the same names seem to return. For example, Salkor the Navigator appears again two centuries after the Fall, when the survivors of Keron leave the Mountains of Tricar.

The Sages of Syranthia debate the question, and they believe that probably among the ancient Keronians there was a custom of giving the name of an important father to his son, so the various men bearing the names "Salkor", "Caldaios" and others are actually different persons.

But this custom was never confirmed by the Tricarnians, and this, in addition to the stories told about the Water of Eternity (see below), created the wild rumor that the members of this ancient race have a lifespan almost eternal, a quality that present-day Tricarnians, which have crossbred with inferior races, have gradually lost.

In particular, there are two figures in the history of Tricarnia which re-appear century after century: Caldaios and Jestiriel. Could it be that these ancient sorcerers, thanks to their magic, have survived for almost twenty-five centuries?

WATERS OF ETERNITY

This is the name of an ancient magical potion capable of putting a man in a state of deep sleep, similar to death, populated by pleasant, very vivid dreams. In this state they don't need any nourishment, and they don't age a single day. Some of the Sleepers, as they are called, have slept only for a short time, while others decided to move away from the world for months, years or even centuries.

The practice of Sleeping wasn't unknown in Keron, but started to be widespread during the troubled days immediately after the fall of the ancient empire, as many nobles, accustomed to pampered lives, could not bear the dramatic changes in their existences.

The exact recipe of the potion is lost, but it is sure that it included the glandular liquid of some demon, plus certain herbs extinct today.

While exploring old Keronian ruins or plundering the coffers of some ancient Tricarnian lord, it is possible to find some of it, always stored in small chiseled silver flask. They are worth a king's ransom, to the right people.

But in the Dominions no magic comes without a price: stories say that the imbiber must have a strong will to wake up after drinking the Water of Eternity; it can happen, in fact, that the sheer beauty of the drug-induced dreams entraps him for far longer than he planned, and he cannot be woken up in any manner.

Usually these unfortunate souls are buried in open sarcophagi in secluded mausoleums, surrounded by their most beloved belongings, waiting for the remote day when they'll finally wake up...

Some stories say he killed himself to join Hamarra in the cold embrace of death, others that he drank the Waters of Eternity and fell into a deep slumber, ready to return whenever his people need him again.

Whatever the truth, he never came back from the depths of the palace.

It was 674 AF.

***Justinus' Notes:** We consider it highly improbable that Princess Hordanas was hatched from a snake's egg, but this is a point several versions of the Book of Exiles agree upon. More realistically, Hordanas was probably the daughter of some vassal of Salkor, who exploited the power vacuum to advance his family's standing.*

TRICARNIA'S RISE

Korialkor, son of Salkor, gained power on his father's disappearance. The Green Fire Seekers, who had been forced to swear fidelity to him, bowed and moved in different directions across the land, apparently eager to obey the last order of the Navigator.

In truth they coveted dark thoughts of power in their minds.

But let's say something more about the most famous of them, the brothers Askerios, Jestiriel and Caldaio.

Askerios, called the Warrior, was the eldest of the three. A former general of the Keronian Empire, he was the one showing the most open interest in the throne. He had no army (his forces were lost during the cataclysm) but among his servants there were a number of eunuch officers of proven valor. He went north,



and started what in the centuries to come would become the commonest way of finding manpower in Tricarnia: he raided the eastern lands, where he found escaped slaves and some unfortunate white-skinned barbarians. They were no match for Askerios' eunuchs, and they were brought back in chains.

The new slaves had no training, and the task of properly preparing them fell on the surviving Keronian slaves, who found themselves in a position of advantage over the newcomers. In this way was created the basis of the current slave-caste system of Tricarnia, with eunuchs and other high-level slaves ruling over their inferiors.

The new slaves were in part set to building a great fortress, called Nal Askerion, and others were trained as slave soldiers, reinforcing his army. His brothers and Korialkor, obviously, watched him with preoccupation.

Jestiriel, the middle brother, was totally different from Askerios. A learned, but very bored, man he owned enormous knowledge, but only a single thing seemed to interest him: the human body and the many ways to inflict pain on it. Seeing the strange effect the Lotus had on living creatures he set off for the south-west, where the alien spores seemed to have proliferated very well in the fen's waters, and there he built his mansion: a beautiful but terrible place called Nal Nomantor, which means Palace of Pain. In these dread halls he and his followers experimented with the effects of the Lotus on slaves, and toyed with human life, trying to use the Lotus to produce mutations and strange crossbreeds.

Jestiriel's experiments went on throughout his long life, and the practice was continued in the next centuries the first ugly results

of Jestiriel's experiments became the base of the present-day Tricarnian slave breeds.

Caldaios was the youngest of the three brothers, and had no followers. A meditative person, he felt a strange compulsion to travel north-west. So he left his people and wandered alone, in a land full of danger. There he found a strange thing: a single Keronian observatory, built on a tall peak, which had somewhat resisted the devastation of the previous era. Guided by an unnamed desire, Caldaios climbed to the top of it, and, watching the dark sky of the night, he heard a chorus of alien voices whispering in his mind.

For many years Caldaios stayed in this place, which was called Tel Askora, which means "Tower of Revelation".

Nobody knew what the voices said the young Caldaios, or more importantly, to whom they belonged, but when he left his isolation, many years later, he was a different man, all traces of merriness washed away from his visage, substituted by forbidden lore that no man should know.

Like the Green Light Seekers, other noble families of Tricarnians started colonizing the new land, more or less in the same manner: they captured slaves to replace the dead ones, built fortresses and started taming the savage land. It was in this era that rice and silkworms, the main products of the Tricarnian economy, were introduced.

These minor clans were forced to ask the help of the major ones to survive, so a complex network of feudal oaths were sworn, and in few years two major political groups were formed: the retainers of Askerios, who called themselves the Silver Swords, and the people loyal to the

legitimate prince, Korialkor, who were called the Blood Swords.

The situation grew very tense, because it was clear to everyone that Askerios and his Silver Swords were fully intent on taking the throne from the heir of Salkor.

But let's see what Prince Korialkor had done in those years.

Korialkor hadn't expected to succeed his father and he wasn't ready to face the cruelest aspects of Tricarnian politics. Chronicles remember him as a dreamy, pleasant man with a passion for music, in other words, a lamb among wolves.

But he wasn't alone. Do you remember the strange egg left by Hordan?

As the tradition demands, the relic was bathed in human blood for thirteen moons, and, after this period, it hatched. Usually such gifts, in ancient Keron, brought into the world the Daughters of Hordan, woman-snake hybrids, but in this case it was different. Inside the egg there was a fully human baby, a girl who was named Hordanas.

Because everybody had seen the passionate kiss Hordan gave to Salkor (and knowing that the demons have strange ways of mating), Hordanas was considered Salkor's son, and Korialkor's sister.

Growing up, her inhuman nature was revealed in the fact that she was incredibly beautiful, in an almost supernatural way, and had no qualms about using this to achieve her agenda.

What Korialkor lacked in ruthlessness and ambition, Hordanas more than made up for; she easily seduced the weaker brother, and made him marry her

(consanguineous marriages weren't, and still aren't, uncommon among Tricarnian nobility). From that moment on, it was Hordanas who ruled the City of Princes from behind the throne, and she did her best to reinforce her kingdom; large slave hunts were carried out, the city's defenses were improved, and the army reorganized.

In 691 AF, finally Askerios made his move, gathering his army and his allies and marching with his army toward the City of Princes. It contained hundreds of soldier-slaves, guided by warrior eunuchs dressed in bronze.

Korialkor was ready, and with his army and his retainers, met the troops of the enemy on the swampy plain in front of the city, in the first real battle the Tricarnian had fought.

Jestiriel also had an army gathered in Nal Nomantor, but, true to his personality, he waited, probably to join the winner's side.

It is recorded as the Kin Swords Battle in the Book of Exiles.

Tricarnian warfare isn't a clean thing: apart from the soldiers, sorcerers of both factions summoned from the other world legions of demonic minions to fight on their behalf, and the battlefield was full of nightmarish creatures, so horrible as to make the minds of the soldiers melt in front of them.

The two armies fought for an entire day, but in the end, Korialkor's army started to vacillate, and to retreat. Askerios felt victory in his grasp, and swore in front of his generals that this night he would drink wine from the skull of the weak Korialkor and sleep in the same bed as Hordanas.

But things didn't go according to his plans: drums were heard coming from the north, and the ground thundered. Then the vanguard of Jestiriel's army appeared, first the giant-sized Stone Titans, which don't exist anymore, then the mighty Blind Maulers, the fast Death Seekers and the other aberrant warrior-slaves created by the experiments of the cruel mage.

The army fell on Askerios' forces from the rear and butchered them. Strangely, the golden and purple pavilion used by Jestiriel to move his bloated body wasn't present, instead the army was guided by a hooded man, riding an enormous Shadow Bat of the Tricar Mountains.

When the battle was over, this very man brought Askerios, in chains, in front of Korialkor and Hordanas, offering him with a deep bow.

"It is not the custom of a Prince to accept gifts, even one so important, from a stranger," Korialkor said to the mysterious stranger.

"Majesty," the stranger said. "You are a wise man, but I am not a stranger to you."

Then he dropped his hood, and everyone could see the face of Caldaios.

"Accept, my Prince, the life of my brother, for the eternal glory of Tricarnia," he said.

"Must I also thank Jestiriel?" Korialkor said.

"I don't think so," Caldaios answered with a wry smile. "He is sleeping from the spell I have cast on him. Otherwise, I would not have been able to steal his army and lead it here."

At Korialkor's side, Hordanas laughed with a full, throaty voice.

Askerios was executed that very night, his heart served as the main course in a banquet held for the Prince, his wife and Caldaios, who from that night was called the Cruel, for what he had done to his own brothers.

Jestiriel eventually woke up from Caldaios' spell, but he never forgave his brother, as will be clear later.

The Banquet of the Prince, as it was called, marked the restoring of peace in Tricarnia.

***Justinus' Note:** The Book of Exiles officially ends there, but apocryphal versions exist continuing the history. We used these and other assorted chronicles to go on with the historical reconstruction.*

TRICARNIA UNDER THE DEMON QUEEN

Korialkor's reign lasted for more than one hundred years. He never assumed the title of King, referring to himself as Prince of Princes, or High Prince, and the title stuck for the rest of Tricarnian History.

The reason for this is both political and cultural; Tricarnians are a proud and individualistic race. They could not bear the idea of a king, but they could accept a Prince of Princes, a sort of *primus inter pares* (first among his peers).

Throughout this period his wife Hordanas and his most trusted counselor, Caldaios (not called the Young anymore), were behind him, guiding every decision. Under this triple rule all the other princes bowed their heads to him.

The customs of the Tricarnians aren't like those of other races, but there were rumors that the conduct of Hordanas and

Caldaios was really outrageous, and, on the death of Korialkor, many said that his son, Kordaios, was in truth the fruit of the loins of his hooded counselor.

Kordaios was revealed to be a monarch more gifted than his father, but, sadly he lived only twenty years. A strange illness tainted his blood, and nothing, not even the dark magic of Caldaios or the pleas of Hordanas to her supernatural mother, could save him.

This wasn't an uncommon thing in that era: Keronians, who till some centuries before had been gifted with extremely long lives, had become frail. Their lifespan was still longer than that of the common man, but could not be measured in millennia as before. In addition maladies, illnesses and poisons took their toll on them.

The reasons for this change could be many; for some it was the effect of exposure to the Snow of Multicolored Death and to the Lotus, for others it was the fact that for many centuries the deities of the Tricarnian had abandoned them.

Whatever the reason, now aging and death was a reality even the nobles had to face. Only a few exceptions existed to this rule; the most powerful and ancient sorcerers, such as Caldaios and his brother Jestiriel, seemed to have maintained the traditional lifespan.

So, at the death of Kordaios, the throne passed into the hands of his mother, Hordanas. She had great experience in ruling from behind the throne, and was ready to seize the opportunity. Gifted with an inhuman beauty and a cruel temper, she was revered as the daughter

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE RED PLAGUE

The Tricarnian chronicles date the first appearance of the Red Plague to the Battle of Nal Hamar (735 AF), and cite its cause as the evil magic used by Princess Hordanas. Nobody truly knows if this corresponds to historical truth or not, but from that moment on that terrible illness periodically swept the Dominions: it causes the skin of the victim to become covered in pustules that blow off in a mass of infected blood. The few survivors of the malady gain immunity to the immediate effects of the illness, but they are doomed to die nevertheless; the disease slowly eats away their disfigured bodies, which rot into pieces. These unfortunate souls are shunned by other men and sent away. Usually they gather in groups, called the Red-Touched, and wander the roads of the Dominions, holding staffs adorned with small bells to alert people to their passage, while others, knowing they are doomed to die, embrace the way of arms, becoming relentless mercenaries, until their bodies can no longer sustain them.

RED BRINGERS

There must be something true in the legend of the Battle of Nal Hamar because even today, centuries after that ancient event, periodically a strange curse appears in that area: peoples' skin starts bleeding, and in few hours the poor victim is driven totally mad. At this point the Red Bringer, as he is called, must be killed or confined in some way because he becomes very dangerous and aggressive; in addition, the mere touch of his purulent skin is highly contagious. The Sages debate what the origin of this curse is, and the most widely-accepted theory is that it lies, dormant, in the tainted soil of Nal Hamar's fens. In the past there have been several outbursts of this plague, the last being in 2472 AF, causing a severe threat to all Tricarnia.

of Hordan, and was called the Demon Queen, a name she liked.

Hordanas was the only woman in the whole of Tricarnian history to take the title of Queen.

The Demon Queen's reign was a troubled one, and she had to face two great threats: first, the Daughters of Baachaga, and then the Lord of Scales, the last a name which left a bloody mark in Tricarnian history.

But let's take things in order.

After the ritual killing of Hamarra by the heart-broken Salkor, her family wisely decided to leave the City of Princes.

They moved north-west and found shelter in a boggy land, in the shadow of the Tricar Mountains, where they built a fortified city, called Nal Hamar.

There they licked the wounds of their offended honor and brooded on their hate for Salkor and his family, but, more wisely than Askerios, they kept their real sentiments well-concealed. Their hate was so strong that they eventually turned their faces from Hordan, and devoted their prayers to another demon-god, her enemy: Baachaga, Lord of Shapes.

Under the protection of the toad-shaped deity (see page 44), the Hamarrans, as the family was now called, prospered, acquired both the support of other minor families of the area, and managed to enslave to the demon of madness some of the tribes of ex-slaves dwelling in the Tricar Mountains.

The Hamarrans were strong, but they knew that they were not a match for the Prince of Princes, so they patiently waited, like swamp cats in the weeds, for the right occasion.

When Kordaios died, they found it.

The heads of the House, were, at that time, twin daughters, Vanara and Marala, deceptive and malevolent as only a Tricarnian woman can be. Marala had a son of age, Marolvor, and the two sisters proposed Hordanas marry him, so that two of the greatest houses of Tricarnia could be united again.

The age difference between the groom and the bride was great, several centuries, but this wasn't really a problem: Hordanas was still of a fertile age, by Tricarnian standards, and the marriage could bring fruit and an heir. The Demon Queen first fought against this proposal, but the words of her counselors, and in particular of her old lover Caldaios, won her over in the end.



In the summer of 735 AF, in the Garden of Weeping Flowers in the City of Princes, Hordanas married Marolvor.

But the union wasn't destined to last: on the wedding night the eunuch guards of the citadel heard their High Princess calling for help, and they dared venture into her bedchamber. There they saw Hordanas, almost naked, fighting for her life, against a strange creature made of whitish goo.

Only thanks to the quick thinking of a guard, who used a brazier to destroy the monster, was Hordanas saved.

The creature, as was discovered by the court mages, was a Talaxakah, a shape-changer demon, summoned by the Daughters of Baachaga for a precise objective: the Talaxakah's reproduction method consists of melting the flesh of its victim, transforming her into a copy of itself. If the plan had been successful, the Demon Queen would have been killed and nobody would have discovered this, because the morning after an exact copy of her would have been found. And both monsters would have obeyed the commands of the devious Daughters of Baachaga.

But Hordanas' nature wasn't fully human, and her flesh was immune to the Talaxakah's vicious touch.

The Demon Queen flew into a rage: she called for Caldaios, but the sorcerer wasn't to be found anywhere. As her old lover was one of the strongest supporters of the wedding, a terrible suspicion poisoned her mind, that he was in league with the Hamarrans. So she ordered her best assassins and sorcerers to find the former counselor and bring him to her in chains.

After the wedding banquet, Caldaios had returned to Tel Askora and it was there that Hordanas' men found him, sleeping in the deep meditation induced by the Black Lotus. Only because of this could they manage to capture him and bring him to the court.

Hordanas' accusations were stern and Caldaios' answers cold. In the end the High Princess condemned her old counselor to eternal torment. No man knew what this meant at the time, but more than one noble trembled on hearing it. Only Caldaios remained silent.

In truth, nobody knows what the real involvement of Caldaios in the murder attempt was.

Then Hordanas took care of the other culprits. She gathered her army and moved them toward Nal Hamar, where the devious Daughters of Baachaga had quickly retreated after the failure of their scheme.

The battle wasn't expected to be an easy one, because the Hamarrans were well-entrenched and ready to defend themselves.

But a fair fight wasn't part of Hordanas' plan.

She ordered the vanguard of her army to enter the bogs to engage the enemy's troops, and then she made her move. She walked into the swamp, cut her wrist to mix her blood with the murky water, and asked for her mother's intervention.

Then a terrible magic happened: the bewitched blood flowed through all the swamp like oil in a frying pan and every creature touched by it cried in pain, as his flesh and skin started bubbling. In few

hours, the army of the Hamarrans and the vanguard of Hordanas' troops were dead.

But the plague didn't end there; the curse leaked into the water sources of Nal Hamar, and everybody drinking from them was hit by a similar illness. A week later, Nal Hamar surrendered. The few survivors, including the Daughters of Baachaga, crawled out of the city, their bodies reduced to a disgusting pulp of reddish flesh.

Hordanas let them go, as a living warning of her power. This was an error: the disease infesting the surviving Hamarrans was later revealed to be contagious, and in the following years this caused the first epidemic of Red Plague (see sidebar on page 66).

The very ground around Nal Hamar was tainted, and even today the plants and the ground have a reddish color, and strange things crawl among the weeds.

As a final act, Hordanas' followers entered the Temple of Baachaga, defaced the statue and killed all the priests.

Hordanas's magic wasn't without a cost: when she came back from the swamp she wasn't herself anymore. Her body had suddenly aged, and the marvelous woman was now an old, frail crone, sustained only by her sheer force of will.

Her servants brought her back to the City of Princes and placed her on the throne, where she stayed, weak and frail and nourished like an infant, till the end of her life.

Hordanas didn't forget the sentence of Caldaios; she summoned Jestiriel from the depths of Nal Nomantor. Yes, Caldaios' older brother was still alive, and although

he never moved from the depths of his ghastly palace, his skill in twisting bodies and minds was unsurpassed.

The Demon Queen asked Jestiriel for a way to keep Caldaios entrapped, despite his magic, and to inflict pain on him. Jestiriel smiled and retired. A month later, he presented his queen with the Black Chain.

It looked like a sort of whip, made of several segments of black metal, perfectly interlaced like the scales of a snake. Jestiriel deftly stroked Caldaios with it and the whip coiled around the neck of his victim, like a real snake. Caldaios fell down, sapped of any strength and magic.

"My Queen," Jestiriel whispered, handing the whip to the feeble hand of Hordanas, "The power of the Black Chain lays in the cruelty of who wields it; through it you can inflict whatever pain you want on the slave bound in the coils."

Hordanas took the strange object and Caldaios fell to the ground, blind and in pain. The queen smiled.

Jestiriel bowed and returned to Nal Nomantor, to continue his experiments.

THE LORD OF SCALES

Twenty years passed, during which Caldaios constantly suffered and nobody, in Tricarnia, dared to openly oppose the will of the Demon Queen.

This doesn't mean that nobody plotted, schemed or tried in some way to weaken the power of Hordanas.

The most dangerous of them was Tovakor. History doesn't say much about the past of this man, but rumors say he wasn't of true

Tricarnian breed; his grand-grandfather was fabled to be the famous Salkor, who conceived a son with a bed-slave, and from this line Tovakor descended.

Tovakor was a strong warrior gifted with an iron will, probably fueled by his non-Tricarnian blood. He spoke publicly against Hordanas, and, when the Princess' eunuch-soldiers came to capture him, he fought bravely and escaped.

In the ensuing years he created a band of rebels, cadet sons of minor nobles, but he was never more than a bandit lord and a minor nuisance to Hordanas.

Finally, in the summer of 754 AF, Tovakor's band was trapped in southwestern Tricarnia, just south of the Painfens, and was annihilated by Hordanas' troops. Tovakor barely managed to escape, wounded and feverish, into the Lazarta Jungle, an impervious and wet land full of strange plants and beasts.

It was an almost unexplored area in the southern extremity of the kingdom, with the reputation of being very dangerous.

Tovakor knew he was going to die; enemies were on his tracks, and even if he

was able to cross the forest, the sea was in front of him, blocking his way.

Defeated, he laid on the ground, ready to die, and chanted an old funeral ballad his mother had taught him years ago. The mourning song was for his dead comrades and for himself.

At the sound of Tovakor's voice something crept out from the forest. It was a serpentine creature, several yards long, but its body had a couple of wings, cruel paws and forelegs.

It was similar to an enormous lizard, and so in his mind Tovakor called it Lazarta, the ancient Keronian word for this type of beast.

The monster approached, and Tovakor closed his eyes and continued to sing, waiting for death.

But it never came; the Lazarta smelled him with its long, serpentine tongue and licked him. Puzzled, Tovakor opened his eyes and stared at the beast. He felt something, a tingling in his mind echoing the notes of his song. In that moment from the bushes a slave warrior burst out, axe ready to chop off the rebel's head.



As if guided by an external will, the Lazarta snapped the soldier's neck, killing him on the spot.

Tovakor, in that moment, understood that he was his will that, through the song, had ordered the beast to kill the slave. For some reason, he was able to feel the thoughts of the Lazarta and to communicate with it through the song.

Tovakor continued to sing for several minutes, and his mind filled with visions of dozens, hundreds of reptilian beasts similar to the one facing him.

Slowly the battered rebel rose up from the mud and followed the Lazarta into the thick of the forest.

Two years later, Tovakor's new army met Hordanas' troops north of the Forest of Garnasha. The rebel had already won several battles, and many of the defeated had joined his banner.

He was a worthy enemy for the Princess of Princes, now.

The two armies were more or less equal in size, but Hordanas' one included many demons, summoned in answer to ancient pacts made by her ancestors, while Tovakor's army included only men, even if brave ones.

At the horns' sound Hordanas' troops charged, and Tovakor's men stood against them. Then Hordanas' mages unleashed their terrible creatures and prepared to enjoy the massacre.

Carnage happened, but it wasn't that expected by the sorcerers: a single, crystalline voice rose up from Tovakor's army. A chorus of savage shrieks echoed from the foliage and a horde of flying

lizards of various shapes and sizes burst out.

Now, the main strength of a demon in battle is the raw fear it causes in men, but the lizards of Tovakor felt no fear, and they attacked both demons and men with unmatched ferocity.

Hordanas army's shattered and Tovakor marched toward the City of Princes, ready to sustain a long siege.

But he found the gates opened and the palace in total turmoil.

He reached the throne room and found Hordanas dead. A skeletal man, with haunted eyes, was upon her, still holding the Black Chain he had used to strangle the daughter of Hordan.

He was Caldaio, who whispered: "I waited twenty years, but tonight I discovered that it is the person suffering the whip, not the one wielding it, who is the real master."

Then he bowed in front of Tovakor and said: "Accept, my Prince, the life of my love, for the eternal glory of Tricarnia."

Tovakor was crowned Prince of Princes few hours later. He offered Caldaio a place among his counselors, but the ancient sorcerer declined, and went away.

That very night, Jestriel, in the depths of his palace, woke up and trembled.

THE TOVAKORIAN ERA

Tovakor's blood may have not been pure, but he was probably the best ruler Tricarnia ever had.

First, he pardoned and freed the various rebels Hordanas had jailed and tortured over the previous years. Then he created the Council of Princes, a sort of senate where every noble could freely express his thoughts without risking his life for his words.

This was a very important act, totally unheard of in the history of Tricarnia and Keron, and it was the basis of the present-day law which declares the City of Princes neutral ground.

For these reasons he was called the Singing Prince or the Lord of Scales, this having a double meaning: the scales of the Lazartas serving him and scales as the weighing instrument, to represent his fairness.

But not everybody liked Tovakor's acts, in particular when he made the Edict of the Bowed Heads. It was so-called because when it was read aloud the nobles present in the Council room vehemently protested, but Skyviss, the High Prince's Lazarta, growled terribly and this caused all the Lords to quickly bow their heads.

The content of the edict was simple: the High Prince donated to the landless sons of the nobles of the various houses, the part of Tricarnia east of Nal Askerion, to favor the expansion of the kingdom. But the critical point was in a footnote: to help the young nobles in their colonization effort, the Edict took some of the slaves of the major families of Tricarnia (in particular the ones that had sided with Hordanas) and gifted them to the colonists.

In this manner Tovakor achieved three goals: first, he created a strong and loyal group of retainers, second he weakened his enemies, and third he gave a great boost to Tricarnia's power, creating a

spirit of dynamism that was unique in its history. The New Lords, as these cadet sons were called, were quite important in the later history of Tricarnia and they built a number of citadels and palaces, the most important being Nal Lagar (Fortress of the Lizard).

In addition, Tovakor started a number of public works, in particular the reclamation of part of the swampy land through a series of canals and the construction of the Elevated Road, a path built of solid stone several feet above the water level, connecting the City of Princes first to Nal Askerion, and then to Nal Lagar, usable even during the floods periodically submerging the country.

The construction of the Path cost countless slave lives, and was finished by Tovakor's successors, and then only partially; the original intention was to extend it to the north, to the Caledlands border, but this never happened.

And what about the Lazartas?

No sage or sorcerer of the kingdom ever managed to understand how these mighty beasts obeyed the mental commands of Tovakor. The main hypothesis was that, in the past, an ancestor of Tovakor had sealed a pact with the King of their race, and that the beasts respected it even after many centuries.

Tovakor, during his reign, resorted to the reptilians only twice more, and on both occasions he had to personally enter the Lazarta Jungle and lure them with his songs. Only Skyviss remained with the Prince of Princes all his life, and the two were always very close, even sharing the same bedroom.

When Tovakor finally died, the animal produced a pitiful bellow and passed away near the bed of his master.

In the following centuries other people appeared in Tricarnia with the same gift as Tovakor, even though a lot weaker. They are called Tovakor's Blood, because they are thought to be descendants of the Prince of Scales.

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE LAZARTA

The Lazarta are more a family of beasts than a single race; they exist even today in several shapes. Some of them are entirely bipedal, and only have vestigial wings, others are quadrupeds, while some have the traditional shape of winged snakes. Over the centuries they have expanded from their original habitat, can be found in almost all of southern and central Tricarnia, and come in a variety of shapes and sizes; some of the smaller specimens are the size of cats or dogs, while the largest ones can become as big as elephants.

THE YEARS OF THE BROKEN CHAIN

Tovakor's family ruled, uncontested, till 1220 AF.

During these years, the strength of Tricarnia slowly, but constantly, grew. The Edict of the Bowed Heads, and similar laws promulgated by Tovakor's successors, on the one hand increased the size of the kingdom, but on the other hand required an increasing number of slaves, which could not be supplied by the

breeding pits of Nal Nomantor and other nobles. Slave raids were made on the nearby lands (a few were also attempted northward, against the Caleds, but the Tricarnians soon discovered they weren't worth the cost), plus a new opening was found: the sea.

Isolated travelers had brought rumors of settlements made by the white barbaric populations around the Dread Sea, and the Tricarnians began, after many centuries, to build ships again, in order to reach them.

First small ships, then true war galleys appeared, manned by crews of slave rowers and full of soldiers, directed at the southern lands. Whenever they landed, the Tricarnians pillaged, razed, and more than anything else, they took slaves.

In a few years, the ships with the Mistress of Night as their figurehead become the nightmare of the coastal towns of the future Faberterra, Syranthia and even Kyros.

It was in these days that the hate of the southern populations for Tricarnia was born.

Tricarnia's flesh markets were literally flooded with slaves, and despite there being a lot of demand for them, they brought two great problems: first, how to nourish them; second, how to keep them under control.

The first problem was easier to solve, but required a number of years' effort: Tricarnia, which is in great part swampy despite the reclamation works, slowly became an enormous plantation of rice, the sole food capable of nourishing so large a mass of persons.

The second problem was a tricky one: Tricarnian slavery is quite different from that in the rest of the Dominions. The slaves of the sons of Hordan are born in that condition, are educated from birth to obey the eunuch overseers and in general have a reverential fear (that in certain cases became an insane affection) toward their Lords.

But the new wave of prisoner-slaves was totally different: warlike and savage, they could be scared and tortured, but not forced to obey. Between 1000 AF and 1100 AF a number of slave revolts happened in Tricarnia, and many slaves managed to escape. Most of them took refuge in the Tricar Mountains, which from that time on were called the Brokenchain Mountains. The Tricarnian Lords decided to let the escaped slaves live on their own, knowing they weren't far away and could easily be captured again. In truth, for many Lords, slave hunting is a delightful pastime.

But the problem could not be ignored: slaves must be kept under control, and this was done by introducing Khav. This cheap Lotus, mixed with rice, formed the Slavemush, which became the common food for slaves. In a couple of years the slaves of Tricarnia became peaceful again, and plantations of Khav started to appear in the gardens of every Lord of Tricarnia.

In 1221 Akarian, the last member of Tovakor's bloodline, died without an heir. The succession was quite bloody, with several noble houses fighting openly in the kingdom, but the City of Princes, as per Tovakor's law, was left untouched and in 1224 Kalamadian of Nal Ramasha, which today no longer exists, was declared Prince of Princes.

The day after Kalamadian's crowning, in the remote barbaric land of Faberterra, an ignorant priest of the feeble god Hulian discovered iron.

At exactly the same moment, an otherworldly howl of pain was heard in the Temple of Darkness in the City of Princes and all the priests of Hordan present were struck blind.

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE HIGH PRINCE AND TRICARNIAN DYNASTIES

*As mentioned before, the High Prince of Tricarnia isn't a real king in the strict meaning of the word. Sitting on the Throne of Ivory, a relic brought by Salkor the Navigator from old Keron, he rules over the City of Princes and has a strong personal army, including the dreaded Gilded Warriors, a caste of highly trained warrior-eunuchs, but in truth he is only *primus inter pares*, first among his peers, and his real power depends on the influence he can exert on the other members of the Council of Princes. There are several ways to do this; treaties, bribes and dynastic marriages are the commonest ones, but threats, blackmail and even sorcery aren't uncommon.*

This doesn't mean that the High Prince is a puppet king; but behind him there is always a strong noble house, which through him rules all of Tricarnia. In Tricarnian history there have been many dynasties of Priest Princes. Many of them are long forgotten, but the name of the most famous ones echo even today.

THE WARS WITH FABERTERRA

The Blinding of Priests, as it was called, was a dramatic event for Tricarnian religion: although many centuries had passed, the Sons of Keron still remembered the dark centuries during which the Queen of Darkness had abandoned them, after the Fall of the Dread Star.

Kalamadian, still fresh from his coronation, had to make some difficult decisions: first he ordered the Moon of the Red Roses, a thirty day long series of gladiatorial combats in honor of the Tricarnian goddess, and in the meantime he called for the two most ancient sorcerers of Tricarnia: Caldaios and Jestrirel.

For centuries both of them had lived in isolation, refusing to leave their respective sanctuaries. There were rumors that the two Green Fire Seekers were fighting, at a distance, a terrible battle of will and sorcery. There must be some grain of truth in these stories because at night the skies over Tel Askora and Nal Nomantor were populated by horrible ghosts locked in a perpetual struggle.

But it was a wasted effort: no messenger sent to the mages ever returned.

In the meantime, the Moon of Red Roses came to its apogee. As the tradition demands, the final sacrifice was an unmarried Tricarnian Princess, chosen at random, and fate picked Kalemala, daughter of the High Prince. At dawn, the girl was placed on the Inklivium, the deadly torturing machine devised for this ritual, and at dusk when finally a merciful blade of the Inklivium stabbed her heart, she shouted aloud a single word: "Hulian".

The name of the enemy of Tricarnia was finally revealed.

Sages and sorcerers, summoned in secret, frantically looked in ancient scrolls for references to this unknown name, and bargains were made with demons of knowledge, but no clue could be found.

Eventually, this highly-sought piece of knowledge was revealed by Balsalus, a humble slave, who, on duty as cupbearer during a meeting, revealed that Hulian was the god of his people, the Faberterrans.

Spies were sent and they came back making accurate reports, but the Priest Princes wondered what threat a feeble god of farmers could be to the Queen of Darkness, especially because Faberterra was hundreds of leagues away.

Without this underestimation, the history of the Dominions would probably be very different today.

The years passed, and the memory of the Blinding of the Priests somewhat weakened the faith of Hordan in Tricarnia. Faith in Baachaga, the Toad God, was resurgent, and other long-forgotten demon lords found places in Tricarnia: Cylatrix of the Dozen Tails and Tirain, Master of Cages.

In the south the Faberterranean confederation grew in power, while Tricarnian nobles were busy plotting and scheming among themselves.

In particular the coastal citadel of Ral Hordaka ("Port of Darkness"), which over the last three centuries had become a slave market rivaling the City of Princes, tried to seize the High Prince's seat. The mind behind the conspiracy was Dakarasha, a Daughter of Hulian who managed to enthrall and seduce the ruling Prince.

The Hordakan Rebellion (1522-1526 AF) kept the Princes busy, so that when two years later the Iron Phalanxes of Faberterra attacked from the west, they weren't at their full strength.

Nevertheless, despite the superior equipment of the Phalanxes, the Confederacy's soldiers weren't ready for the demons and other abominations fighting side by side with the slave-soldiers of Tricarnia, and so the invaders were soundly defeated and forced to retreat to the border, in the Battle of Midnight, so called because the sky went suddenly dark from the legion of blood-sucking bats the Tricarnian sorcerers called from their grottoes in the Brokenchain Mountains.

Historians debate why, after the victory, Kalamadian II of Tricarnia did not pursue the invaders and attack an almost defenseless Faberterra. The answer is probably in the Tricarnian mentality: they are, after all, a hedonistic race, more interested in satisfying their needs than expanding and building an empire, and the Battle of Midnight gained them a lot of slaves and loot, so they turned back to their citadels and enjoyed the sweet taste of victory.

That taste turned suddenly sour when, in 1549, Faberterra mustered another army. This time the Faberterrans came prepared, and, for some reason, the scrying rituals of the Tricarnian augurs weren't able to foresee anything, apart from the name of the opposing leader: Domestan.

Anticipating the invaders, the Tricarnian forces crossed the border and dug in on the northern bank of the Northland River (which from that day on was called the River of the Elephants) and waited for the Faberterrans to cross it.

But Domestan's strategy was far better: unbeknownst to the Tricarnian generals, a second Faberterranean army had already crossed the river, many leagues north, and they attacked the Tricarnians from the flank, while the main army crossed the river from the south. Closed in an iron pincer, the army of the Princes played their best card: dark magic and demons.

But this time the Phalanx would not retreat: among the grizzled soldiers there were men clad in shimmering armor and wielding weapons of an unknown metal. They were the Smith Priests of Hulian, wielding steel, and the demons tasting its cold bite howled and disappeared.

At this point Tricarnia could still have won: even without the demons, they were in a good defensive position and with reinforcements incoming, but then a mighty bellow was heard, the Phalanxes opened and the mighty war elephants of Kyros came forth, making the ground tremble at their passage.

To the honor of the Tricarnians, they fought well that day, and many of these noble beasts found their death in the cold waters of the river; but in the end they managed to cross and hold the riverbank till the Phalanxes arrived.

Then it became simply a massacre: Kalamadian II himself fell, a lucky arrow passing through the eyeslit of his helm, and the Phalanxes swarmed into Tricarnia.

IMPERIAL TRICARNIA

The situation was desperate.

The surviving lords of Tricarnia, gathered in the City of Princes, struggled to find a way to save their country, but they found

none. Maldavor, son of Kalamadian II, was losing control of them because every Prince wanted to return to his fief to defend it from the invaders.

It was at that point that a cloaked figure, which had silently crept into the hall unnoticed, spoke.

“You are fools, unworthy of your fathers, and you deserve to die for your stupidity.”

Angered, the nobles turned, to see who dared speak to them in such a manner.

The man lowered his hood and everybody in the room recognized Caldaios the Cruel, even if centuries had passed since his last visit to the City of Princes.

“What you lost with weakness we’ll conquer back with cunning.”

“Your words are bold, Ancient One,” Maldavor said “But we don’t have any weapons against the brute barbarians of the south.”

“You are wrong. We have one, and a very powerful one.”

With a gesture, Caldaios invited another person, who was in the shadows behind him, to step in.

She was a young Tricornian woman of exceptional beauty. Her name was Salkaria, and she was the last living princess of the blood of Salkor, the Navigant. Her eyes were violet as those of Hordan and any man staring at them felt subtly stirred.

“Swords are made of metal. But men are only made of flesh.” Caldaios said.

The rest of the story is well known. That very night, using an unknown means

of travel, Caldaios brought Salkaria to Domestan in person, and negotiated the capitulation of Tricornia, its annexation by the Iron Confederacy, and more importantly, the marriage between Salkaria and Domestan.

In truth Domestan and his followers never suspected that the mysterious Tricornian envoy was the ancient sorcerer, and they had no occasion to investigate him, because after the marriage he went back to his solitude.

It was 1551 AF.

From that day, Tricornia was formally an Imperial province, but in reality its power extended, like the web of a monstrous spider.

Faberterra sent a Governor to the City of Princes, but so great was the subtlety of the Priest Princes that they easily managed first to corrupt him, and then to make him marry the daughter of Maldavor.

In the meantime, in Faberterra, Salkaria did her best to seduce the Emperor and to infiltrate Tricornian nobility into his court. Most important, she managed to discredit the hated cult of Hulian, culminating in the Salkarian Reformation (1660 AF), which outlawed the cult of Hulian and introduced the false deity of the Divine Couple, a mocking union of Hulian and Hordan which has the objective of spreading the cult of the Queen of the Night among the barbarians.

So Tricornia’s fate married the fortune of the Iron Empire and for long time they prospered together: the Priest Princes were always very careful about keeping the Imperial bloodline mixed with their own.

For more than five centuries, Tricarnia lived in peace, and prospered. Riches and slaves flowed constantly into the fog-covered land, and the Priest Princes could continue indulging in their pleasures and their occasional scheming. The official policy of the Iron Empire was to avoid interference in internal matters.

After Salkaria's marriage, Caldaios returned to his citadel and there he stayed, in isolation, till 2057 AF, when something strange happened: at dusk a dark fog surrounded Tel Askora, and when it dissipated at dawn, the citadel of the sorcerer was surrounded by an army of soldiers and demons wearing the golden and purple of Jestiriel. Even the pavilion of the bloated mage was present, not far away.

A terrible battle started, with sorceries of every type cracking the air and creatures of unknown shapes killing each other in a paroxysm of violence.

After three days and nights of combat, Tel Askora, like a beehive under a rainstorm, crumbled to pieces.

Jestiriel exulted in his tent, and ordered his servants to bring him the body of his hated brother, but despite an extensive search, Caldaios' body could not be found anywhere.

Some later said they had seen a black bird, probably a crow, fly away from the window of the tallest tower of Tel Askora few moments before its destruction, but the rumor could not be confirmed.

Jestiriel declared his younger brother dead at last, and came home to gloat in his own dark citadel, but not everybody believed him; some years later, in fact, rumors arrived in Tricarnia of a new

kingdom in the south of the world, called Caldeia, and ruled by a king called Caldaios the Cruel.

Nobody knows what the reaction of Jestiriel to this news was.

***Justinus Note:** This last event, although told in many books, couldn't possibly be true! This would mean that the kingdom of Caldeia was founded, and probably ruled, by an ancient Keronian sorcerer more than two thousand years old.*

THE CALED WARS

After Caldaios' disappearance, nothing really earth-shaking happened in Tricarnia for the next three centuries. Then, without any warning, Caled war-parties sneaked out of the Caled Forest, north of Tricarnia, and attacked Nal Ramasha, the foremost citadel of the Sons of Hordan.

It was 2334 AF.

In truth the relationship between Tricarnia and its former slaves had never been peaceful. In the past some Priest Princes had tried venturing into the Caled Forest, looking for slaves, but they never returned, and at the same time occasional raiding parties came out from the depths of the Forest, venturing into northern Tricarnia.

But the attack of 2334 wasn't a simple raid: it was a real invasion, and a well-organized one. While some clans surrounded Nal Ramasha, preventing the troops of the local Prince from leaving the fortress, the other clans swarmed down.

Even today the reasons behind the Caled attack are unknown, but over the years voices whispered the name of

the Lord of Crows, a powerful and very ancient druid, who had gathered under his rule the various tribes of the forest. At this point the rumors disagree: some say that the Lord of Crows was very ancient, one of the former slaves escaped from Val Hordakor in times of yore, and recently awakened to take his vengeance.

Whatever the truth behind the reasons for the war, the attackers weren't only warriors: strange things crept out from the northern wood, obeying the will of the druids; living plants, savage beasts and even darker creatures, which had lain hidden among the foliage for countless ages.

Tricarnia was slow to react: initially the southern lords saw the attack with pleasure, because it weakened the strength of the northern noble houses, but they changed their minds when the Caleds reached the walls of Nal Askerion and tried storming them. At this point Tricarnia asked for the support of the Iron Phalanxes, but in this era they were greatly reduced in number and the few remaining ones were busy defending the empire from other threats: Valk in the east, Northlanders and Cairnlanders in the north.

So Tricarnia had to fight alone, and they did it by resorting to their best weapon: dark magic.

Demons were summoned, answering to ancient pacts, and everywhere slaves and young virgins were sacrificed on ancient altars to appease the dark powers.

Valentios, the Imperial Ambassador in the City of Princes, vehemently protested against these acts, blatantly against the religion of the Divine Couple.

The response of Vardakor of Hordaka, the High Prince, passed into history: "No stinking barbarian steps into the Hall of Princes shouting orders to us, the rulers of the world. At this very moment your daughter and your wife are being taken to the Temple of Darkness, where their red blood will satiate Hordan's thirst. Tomorrow all of us will have the pleasure of seeing you scream and die on the torture rack."

This sanctioned Tricarnia's secession from Faberterra and it was clear to everyone that the age of the Iron Empire was finally ended.

The Caled Wars lasted six years, during which time Tricarnia was pretty much isolated, and fought bitterly: the Caleds were merciless and entire citadels were totally erased by their fury.

It's no secret that it was only thanks to the slave warriors sent from Nal Nomantor that Tricarnia eventually managed to repel the invaders, but, despite the danger Jestiriel hadn't left his home. Rumors said he was suffering from a terrible illness and that the city was actually ruled by the Masters of Pain, a council of eunuchs.

Whatever the truth, Tricarnia was grateful for the help and, in 2340 AF the last Caled warriors finally retreated into their forest.

The war left a half-depopulated land, especially in the north; but across almost the entire kingdom ruins dotted the places where, only a few years before, proud palaces had stood. Perfectly-tended rice fields had turned back to savage swamps and the ghosts of the victims, of both sides, wake up from their graves and howl their discomfort on nights of the full moon.

But the heaviest toll was paid by the northern lands: the magnificent citadel of Ral Namasha, which gave birth to dynasties of Princes, was reduced to ruins, and, more importantly, all the surrounding lands were invaded by Tovakor's River and transformed into a bayou, covered in fog and populated by strange trees, typical of the Caled forest, that somehow managed to grow there.

With the bayou, strange sicknesses came to Tricarnia, so Tovakor's River was renamed Fever River and beasts unseen before appeared in the foliage.

TRICARNIA TODAY

Almost two centuries have passed since the Caled Wars, but Tricarnia, like an old man hit by a malady, hasn't fully recovered and probably won't do so in the near future.

In the years immediately after the war, an effort to reinvigorate Tricarnia was made by the reformer Kiramas. The brother of the High Prince, Kiramas dreamt of reclaiming the Fallen Kingdom of Keron and expanding Tricarnia influence overseas. The High Prince, who saw in him a dangerous rival, graciously agreed and a great investment of men and resources was made to prepare the expedition.

As everybody knows, Kiramas' expedition failed, and nobody came back from Keron, this causing another severe loss of resources to Tricarnia.

Today Tricarnia is severely underpopulated, with ruins and ghost-infested palaces dotting the land.

The Priest Princes still rule over their mansions and palaces, but they have lost

their vision as a nation: each of them constantly plots against the others to climb the social ladder, and they ignore the real problems of the country, which are threefold.

The first problem is the mysterious plague called the Dream. It started some years after the Caled Wars ended, in the northern parts of Tricarnia. People started getting sick, suffering from a strange fever, which saps the strength and causes strange dreams. The fever mainly strikes the non-Tricarnian part of the population, and usually pure-blooded Tricarnians are immune to it, although several exceptions exist (see below). In many cases the Dream isn't fatal, in the short term, but can become so in the long run.

This sort of illness isn't unheard of in Tricarnia; as the country is a swampy one, fevers are common, but this one is special: after a while the fever ends but the dreams continue, becoming more vivid night after night, and rumors spread among the slaves that they are messages from a deity, called the Sleeping God, which communicates with his followers in this manner. In a few years a mysterious cult was born, called the Cult of the Dream, or the Cult of the Sleeping God, totally separate from the traditional Tricarnian deities. Its center is in the north of the country, under the shadows of the Brokenchain Mountains, in an almost desolated area. The priests of this cult, who call themselves the Asans, promise equality and freedom for everyone, slaves included.

The Cult of the Dream is directly connected with the second problem: the slaves. While the servants of the various noble houses are heavily guarded and kept pacified with Khav and training,

during the Caled Wars a lot of slaves escaped from their masters and took refuge in the Brokenchain Mountains, joining the local communities of freemen. Recently raiding expeditions were made to recapture them, but, a thing unheard-of in history, the slaves fought back, organized and well-armed, repelling the Priest Princes.

Nobody knows who is behind this slave organization, even if many suspect the dreaded Priests of Tosar, or, even more dangerous, the followers of the Dreamer. If they aren't stopped soon, in a few years Tricarnia could have to face another invasion like the Caled War, but this time invasion by the freemen of the Brokenchain Mountains.

The third problem is internal politics. In the City or Princes the young Ivakor rules from the Ivory Throne over the other Tricarnian lords, but his voice is seldom heard. Of melancholic temper, he loves music and history, but the sad truth is that he cannot quit thinking of sweet Vardella, his wife, who died some years ago in childbirth, leaving the kingdom without a heir.

There are other rumors, even more disturbing, that Ivakor is actually suffering from the Dream, but these are unconfirmed.

Whatever the truth, the other nobles, like wolves smelling blood, consider Ivakor

weak, and many of them are thinking that it is time for a new High Prince to hold power. The Askerions of Ral Askerion and the Hordakans of Ral Hordaka are the most likely candidates, and the two families are taking steps to fight each other to eliminate a dangerous opponent, in an underground conflict which is already named the War of the Moon and the Night.

If they haven't yet unleashed their forces against each other, is because they both waiting to see who Nal Lagar, which doesn't have a candidate for the Ivory throne but is indeed powerful, will support. In the meantime Ral Hordaka is courting the always-unpredictable Lords of the Hills, while Nal Askerion is trying to arrange a dynastic marriage with the heir of Val Toraasa, the miner lords of the west.

With such turmoil stirring, today Tricarnia is a dangerous place, but one where an adventurer willing to risk his life and his soul could gain power and riches to make his name resonate in history for a thousand years...

***Justinus' Note:** This last paragraph isn't included in the report we did for Prince Sarkanar, but it is our personal memorandum for the Library of Syranthia. May Hulian, Smith of Words, allow this document to reach the hands of my beloved master Velastios.*

TRICARNIAN TIMELINE

Here follows a condensed timeline of the main events of the Tricarnian history, as reported by Justinus of Syranthia. (BF = Before Fall, AF = After Fall).

3000 BF	<i>Apogee of the Keronian Empire</i>
0 BF	<i>Fall of the Dread Star</i>
5 AF	<i>Foundation of Val Hordakor</i>
5-600 AF	<i>Years of Darkness</i>
630 AF	<i>The sky clears</i>
653AF	<i>City of Princes founded, Snow of Multicolored Death</i>
674AF	<i>Gift of Hordan, Salkor disappears</i>
691 AF	<i>Kin Swords Battle</i>
692-703 AF	<i>Reign of Korialkor</i>
756 AF	<i>Battle of Garnasha – Hordanas' death</i>
756-812 AF	<i>Reign of the Prince of Scales</i>
812 -1120 AF	<i>Tovakorian Dynasty</i>
1000 -1100 AF	<i>Slave revolts in Tricarnia</i>
1224 AF	<i>Blinding of Hordan's priests. Hulian revealed.</i>
1522-1526 AF	<i>Hordakan Rebellion</i>
1528-1529 AF	<i>First Faberterranean-Tricarnian War</i>
1529 AF	<i>Battle of Midnight, Tricarnia wins the war against Faberterra</i>
1545-1550 AF	<i>Second Faberterranean-Tricarnian War</i>
1551 AF	<i>Battle of the Elephants' River, Tricarnian Capitulation, Salkaria marries Emperor Domestan</i>
1560 AF	<i>Salkarian Reformation</i>
2057 AF	<i>Caldaios' Exile</i>
2334-2340 AF	<i>Caled Wars</i>
2335 AF	<i>Tricarnia declares independence</i>
2403 AF	<i>Kiramas' Folly</i>
2510 AF	<i>Today</i>

INHABITANTS OF TRICARNIA

Tricarnia is inhabited by two different races: true Tricarnians, the heirs of Keron, and the rest of the population, mostly slaves.

HIGH TRICARNIANS

High Tricarnians, the true breed of Keron, are only a minority of the population of the country.

As stated in GE page 27-28, Tricarnians tend to be tall, of light frame and elegant features, with pale or (rarely) jet black complexion, without any bodily hair apart from that on their heads, which is very fine and silky.

In truth they aren't really humans, but a similar, parallel race, which can interbreed with mankind. Over the course of the centuries, Keronian blood gradually weakened due to crossbreeding with lower races; the High Tricarnians of today are much weaker than those of a thousand years ago, and this is a process that will continue in the future till they become normal humans.

This is reflected mainly in their longevity, health and physical features.

A pure Keronian was practically immortal, his lifespan measured in thousands of years, and his body almost immune to the passing of time, if the legends are true. After the Fall of the Dread Star, the lifespan of the High Tricarnians fell down to five and then to three hundred years.

Today very few of the original Keronians are still around: only two, Caldaios the

Great and his brother Jestriel, who probably are at least three thousand years old.

Currently a Tricarnian Lord is expected to live around 120-140 years and his body starts decaying after a century of life. The Sons of Keron are obsessed by this, and many of them resort to dark magic and powerful Lotus concoctions to extend their lifespans and preserve their youth (see sidebar).

As well as longevity, the ancient Keronians were gifted with an almost legendary immunity to common illnesses and a resistance to poisons and drugs. With the appearance of the Lotus, the organisms of the Tricarnians gradually weakened, and now they are equal to other races, even if their wounds usually heal without leaving scars, probably a heritage of the ancient past.

There is a saying in the Dominions: "She sings like a bird of the Gardens of Princes", referring to the voices the heirs of Keron have: members of this race can reach a pitch slightly higher than normal human vocal capacity and, at the same time, they can hear sounds slightly outside the standard human frequency range. For this reason their beloved music (see below) sometimes sounds strangely odd to lesser races, because they cannot perceive all its complex harmonies and higher pitched sounds.

Sages argue that probably this small quality was the one of the causes of their original familiarity with demons. Tricarnian's voices and ears can speak with and hear supernatural beings better than other races, including Valk.

LESSER TRICARNIANS

The great majority of the dwellers of Tricarnia are Lesser Tricarnians, and usually they aren't very happy about it. The reason is simple: apart from the nobles and a small number of freemen, the rest of the population is made up of slaves.

Slavery in Tricarnia is age-old, and the origin of slaves is varied, including members of almost any race which, through war, slave trading or simple bad luck were caught by Tricarnian slave hunters. Apart from first generation slaves, which are a minority, and are pure members of their original race, the large majority of Lesser Tricarnians is the result of generations of interbreeding with other races and even with their masters.

So a typical Lesser Tricarnian doesn't exist; some of them are big, others short, white, jade or black-skinned and with many different racial features.

What's said above is true for common slaves, but Tricarnia has for centuries practiced selective slave-breeding to create very specialized types of servants. Often breeding is supplemented with the use of Lotus and sorcery to create beings which are very unbalanced in one aspect or another.

These unfortunate souls are members of the Slave Castes, and, depending on the effort necessary to breed one of them, they may be quite precious.

A number of Slave Castes exists, each of them with some peculiarities, and new ones are created and studied even now. In particular, in Nal Nomantor, Jestiriel has been toying with human life for centuries and the Slave Castes created in his breeding pits are both marvelous and disgusting at the same time.

Nobody has ever calculated what percentage of Caste Slaves are of the total, but probably



it's around twenty or thirty percent, with the others being common people who have endured no special twisting.

The last part of the Lesser Tricornian population is made up of eunuchs. Eunuchs are usually made through castration, but in some cases, especially for very handsome men, the genitals are left but they are deprived of the capacity of reproduction. It is done for a pretty utilitarian reason: eunuchs are the upper echelons of the slave castes, acting as overseers, assistants and generally making the Tricornian society work for their aloof patrons. Eunuchs sometimes reach a position of great power in Tricornia, but the fact of being childless prevents them from creating dynasties, which in the long term would damage the social structure of Tricornia.

They are also divided into castes, and their bodies are somewhat modified by drugs and magic, but some attention is given to not ruining their capacity to think.

The majority of eunuchs are selected when boys, but sometimes it can happen that an adult is given this questionable social elevation.

LIVING IN TRICARNIA

Detailing an entire culture in few pages isn't easy, but in the following paragraphs you'll find an examination of several aspects of the Tricornian way of life.

TECHNOLOGY

Alchemy. The Sons of Keron were great alchemists even before the Fall of the

Dread Star, when they created marvelous elixirs such as the legendary Water of Eternity. They also witnessed the apparition of Lotus in the Dominions and were the first to study it, gaining, in twenty five centuries, a deep knowledge of what can be done with it, lore inferior only to that of the Alchemists of Gis. Unlike other cultures, where Lotus is mainly used for concoctions, in Tricornia Lotus is used, in conjunction with medicine, to permanently alter living beings, in particular humans, for the objective of creating over-specialized slaves. Lotusmasters studying this immoral field of knowledge are called Breeders, and Jestiriel the Wise is the most skilled of them.

Architecture. Tricornian buildings are marvelous to see: elegant and tall, they seem ready to fly away into the sky. They derive directly from ancient Keronian culture and employ building techniques unknown in the rest of the Dominions. Being a race of astrologers and mages, they use sorcery to strengthen them. The very organization of rooms, positions of statues, fountains, even the shape of trees in gardens contribute to creating structures of power meant to protect the lord of the citadel from hostile influences and to enhance the powers of magic rituals performed inside. Tricornians love towers (they use them to watch stars), but also beautiful gardens and dreaded torture rooms (both of which satisfy their twisted hedonistic spirits). In addition, as they are very suspicious, secret passages and corridors are quite frequent in their buildings.

As Tricornia a swampy land, many citadels are built on water, using massive pillars planted in the ground, which in certain cases, especially among poorer Lords, are simply made of wood, like the rest

of their fortresses. Despite the skill of the Tricarnian architects, buildings on water should not last very long due to the condition of the ground; but instead they are surprisingly enduring. According to the Sages of Syranthia, the Sons of Keron manage in some manner to alter the flow of the energy passing through the land to give them strength. But these are wild theories, like the ones saying that Tricarnian citadels are kept standing by demons.

Economy. The base of the Tricarnian economy is agriculture, specifically rice, which they produce in quantities so big as to be exported. The other important commodity of the Land of Princes is silk, of many colors, which is highly sought for its quality. But Tricarnia lacks a true merchant caste, so the wealth deriving from trade enters into the coffers of the nobles who use it for pleasure, embellishing their homes and strengthening their armies, without reinvesting. On the import side, apart from some luxuries, Tricarnia imports slaves, mainly but not exclusively from Caldeia, and Lotus, in particular Khav.

Entertainment. Tricarnians are famous for the introduction of the Blood Sports into the Dominions. Originally holy rites for their bloodthirsty gods, they evolved into forms of entertainment. For an exhaustive treatise on gladiators, see *GOD*. But Tricarnians enjoy also other forms of fine art: poetry, literacy, and above all, singing. They have a variety of musical instruments unknown to the other races, some of them built to produce sounds so high-pitched that only a Tricarnian can hear them (see page 101). From this derives the common saying “loud as a Tricarnian tavern”, to mean a very quiet place. But of all musical instruments, Tricarnians love the human voice, and

skilled vocalists are highly prized among them. Male slaves revealing good skills in that area are often castrated to keep the voice pure after puberty. A small sacrifice for a slave, because this means he'll live a much better life than his companions.

Food Production. Tricarnia is basically a large swamp, which over the centuries has been transformed into large rice fields to support slaves. Today, the greater part of the rice fields have been abandoned, but the quantity of rice produced is still more than enough to meet Tricarnia's needs. Farming techniques are quite primitive, and all the labor is done by the hands of the slaves, with very few tools. They don't know about crop rotation.

Funerary Customs. For the Sons of Keron, the integrity of the bodies of the dead is very important. So they follow strict rituals of mummification, which preserve the corpses as they were in life. In ancient times, Keronians practiced the removal of internal organs (liver, brain and heart) and saved them in canopic jars. Another custom that survived from the Keronian era is the importance of the dead being accompanied on their last journey by some of their most faithful servants. Most slaves in Tricarnia are simply buried in communal pits, but for the ones chosen to accompany their Lord there is a complex ritual which includes ritual murder, boiling the body, removing the tissues and gathering the main bones (cranium, pelvis, arms and legs) in special silk bags. The purpose of these slaves isn't to serve the master in the next life, instead they are used as currency and gifts from the dead Lord to buy back his soul from the demonic entities which await him in the otherworld. In truth, nobody knows if this trick really works.

Tricornians, except in rare cases, don't have graveyards in strict sense, but usually the dead of a noble family are kept in crypts under their palaces. They are beautiful, if creepy, places: sarcophagi are finely engraved to mimic the aspect of the dead, and in many cases the bodies are left exposed on fine stone slabs, the Lotus essences with which they are imbued preventing rats and other things from devouring them. Astrologers and sorcerers sometimes prefer to be buried in sealed tombs on the top of their observatory-towers, but they are a minority. Sleepers, those who drank the Waters of Eternity, are also placed in tombs. Usually they are surrounded by useful things (weapons, garments and personal effects) plus some precious stones, which will be useful when they wake up.

Although they try to conceal it, Tricornians are scared of death: apart from finding the idea of the body's decay disgusting, many of them sell their souls to powerful demons, which are eager to receive their payment. Severely ill Priest Princes, when they feel death is coming, use Waters of Eternity (or some other weaker form of Lotus with similar effects). But this is only a temporary measure; sooner or later their debts must be paid...

Government. Tricornia has a feudal system, but with some unique points. A Priest Prince is the sole lord of his land and his house. Everything on his land belongs to him (including the possessions of strangers, freemen and guests). Priest Princes are organized in families, with only the eldest having the true title of Prince and the real power, but the same title is granted, as a courtesy, to the other members of the family. Noble families are linked in a complex network of vassalage, with weaker families subordinated to stronger ones. In times of war, weaker

families are supposed to answer the call of their lords, but this doesn't always happen. The Council of Princes, held in the City of Princes, is a gathering of all the Priest Princes of Tricornia, where they discuss matters. In theory, every Prince is free to express his opinion, but in reality weaker families align with their masters, creating factions. The Council of Princes chooses, with the blessing of Hordan, a High Prince, who is the first among his peers. The High Prince has the strength of his family to support him, plus all the resources of the City of Princes, fleet and army included. The title often becomes hereditary, until another great family becomes strong enough to win it, usually with some bloodshed.

Literacy. Tricornian nobles are all literate: they speak and write in low Tricornian and use High Tricornian, a derivation of Ancient Keronian, for official occasions, religious ceremony and, of course, sorcery.

Slaves are for the most part illiterate, with the exception of eunuchs: those dedicated to administration are able to read and write in Low Tricornian. In Tricornia, speaking in High Tricornian is considered a serious offense if you aren't a Priest Prince.

Medicine. The old Keronians had a deep knowledge of the human body, and Tricornia has maintained a good part of the lore. The reason for this is very dark: a good knowledge of anatomy is necessary to inflict torture on victims without killing them too fast. Despite their origins, Tricornian healers are very good, especially in the use of leeches, a technique they have transformed into a real art: Tricornian leeches, nurtured with special Lotus, can drain poison, seal wounds, even drain blood and transfer it to patients. They are also very skilled in mummification and body-preservation.

Metallurgy. Tricarnians are good smiths but poor smelters. Their technology halted at bronze-working millennia ago, and even during the Imperial era, they haven't moved to iron. Probably the main reason is cultural: as they are convinced they are the greatest people of the Dominions, they look with contempt on the findings of other races. The greater part of their minerals comes from the dreaded mines of Val Toraasa.

Tricarnian bronze is very good, as apart from copper and tin they add to the alloy a good quantity of arsenic, in which the Brokenchain Mountains are rich. Tricarnian smiths then use the alloy to create items which are often very beautiful and elegant to see. In particular, for weapons and armor destined for the nobility, sorcerers reinforce arsenic-enriched metal with ancient Keronian incantations, creating a substance which is called Ensorcelled Bronze.

Travel. Tricarnians know horses, and like them too, but for some reason these beasts don't cope well with the climate of the country, so they must be imported. Tricarnia is a swampy country, so the few important roads are paved and built several yards above the ground, and even so during floods they end up underwater. As an alternative, barges are a viable solution to travel in the Tricarnian swamps. They exist in various shapes and sizes, from the one-man coracles used by fisherman slaves to the imposing war barges of the Priest Princes. At sea, Tricarnia is a power too: they employ slave-manned ships, both for trading and war. They aren't as fast and agile as the Amazons' hawk ships, but have the advantage of working even without a favorable wind. In addition, Tricarnians have an advantage unique in the Dominions: flying mounts. Usually only employed by sorcerers who

summon them from their grottoes in the Brokenchain Mountains, Shadow Bats are large enough to carry messengers, act as scouts on battlegrounds, and attack from above. In some citadels there are also darkened aviaries where these creatures can stay during the day, and a caste of riders specialized in taming them. Due to their cost, savagery and the fact that Shadow Bats fly only by night, they are used in very small numbers. In certain places (see Gazetteer) different types of flying mounts are employed.

Warfare. Tricarnia doesn't employ a national army. Every Priest Prince has his own, relatively small, army but is obliged to lend help to his liege-lord, when requested. The bulk of these armies consist of slave-soldiers, relatively poorly trained and armed warriors, usually drugged with a Lotus mixture, which are led in battle by eunuch overseers.

The real strength of the Tricarnian army lies in three principal factors: warrior castes, war beasts and sorcery.

While the majority of slave-soldiers are only conscripts thrown into battle in numbers to die, among them are a number of slave-warriors belonging to specific castes, which are the fruit of physical alteration through selective breeding, a diet laced with Lotus and rigorous training (see sidebar). They form the small elite of the Tricarnian army.

The armies of the Sons of Hordan also employ beasts of war: as well as the traditional Shadow Bats used for scouting and attacks from above, they have a plethora of war beasts, armored turtles and similar abominations grown in the breeding pits of deranged Lotusmasters. Some of these creatures are often called "demons" (even if, strictly speaking, they

aren't) to increase the fear they cause on the battlefield.

Sorcery is the final and most fearsome weapon employed on the battlefield by Tricarnia: the capacity to alter climatic conditions, shroud enemies in darkness and even bring fiery death directly on opponents can alter the outcome of a confrontation, but nothing has a more dramatic effect than unleashing a demon into the fight. Although these horrible creatures can cause a great slaughter, they can be kept on the battlefield only for a relatively short time; but the effect they have on enemy morale is devastating.

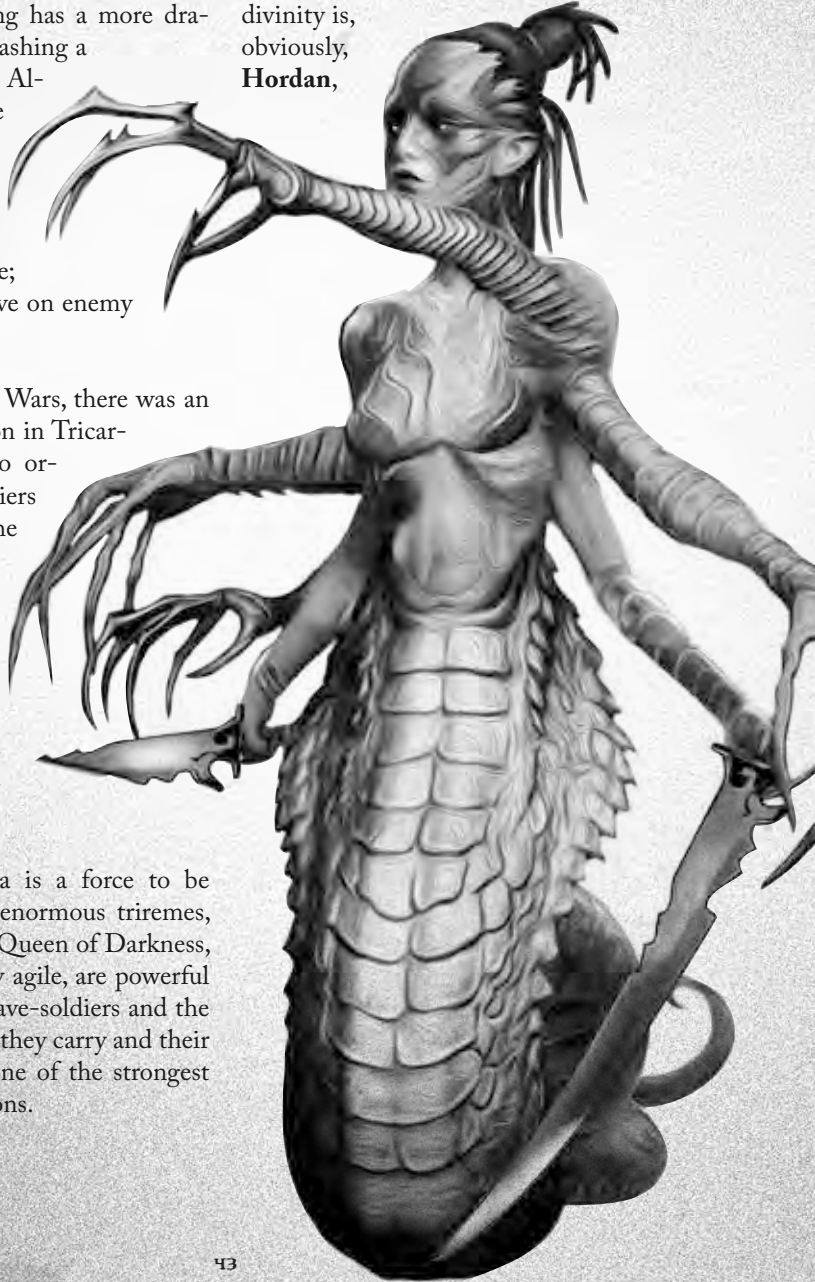
After the Faberterran Wars, there was an effort at modernization in Tricarnian armies, trying to organize the slave soldiers as phalanxes, but the bulk of their armies lack the training, the gear and, more than anything, the motivation to be real soldiers, so they are only a mocking imitation of their Faberterran counterparts.

On the sea, Tricarnia is a force to be reckoned with: their enormous triremes, with the effigy of the Queen of Darkness, despite being not very agile, are powerful in battle due to the slave-soldiers and the terrible war machines they carry and their rams, making them one of the strongest navies of the Dominions.

BELIGION

Tricarnia has a strong relationship with faith. The social structure itself is ratified by the religion: princes are also priests and the justification for their position comes from their deities.

The most important divinity is, obviously, **Hordan,**



Queen of Darkness, who is also called the **Mistress of the Secret Pleasures** by the Sons of Keron. In truth, Hordan is a very powerful demon, and she has been linked to the fate of Tricarnia since the very beginning of the kingdom. She is constantly venerated with offers of blood and pleasures (especially carnal ones). Being basically a demon, there are unconfirmed rumors that sometimes she is evoked in moments of desperate need, but this is always a very dangerous affair. The Queen of Darkness is mischievous at best, and probably no living sorcerer is strong enough to control her with magic. There are many festivals held in honor of Hordan, some of them are ritual orgies (the most celebrated one is the Carnival of the Twin Stars, held in the City of Princes at the beginning of the Keronian year), while others are human sacrifices. Although Hordan enjoys slaughtered girls like almost every other evil deity, she is particularly fond of handsome men. In certain cases Hordan herself manifests in the Dominions to mate with the victim, and only a few of them survive the supernatural lust of the Mistress of the Secret Pleasures. It is uncertain if the goddess really appears or not, because during the ritual both the victim and the cultists consume great quantities of hallucinogenic Lotus, but sometimes after these unholy unions are found strange eggs, gifts of the goddess, from which hatch the much-feared Daughters of Hordan (see *GE* page 145), so a physical manifestation of some sort probably happens.

The holiest feast to Hordan is the Moon of the Red Roses, a particular festival that can only be declared by the High Prince, during which human sacrifices are offered for thirty consecutive nights. The Moon ends with a particular killing, during which the victim is placed on an ancient throne-like torture machine, called the Inklivium.

The tradition states that only the Blood of Keron can sit on the Inklivium, so an unmarried Priest Princess is selected at random for the seat, an honor that cannot be refused in any manner (it has happened that the chosen one was the daughter of the High Prince, and even she could not be saved). The legend says that the day the Inklivia Scelta (as the chosen girl is called) escapes her fate Tricarnia will fall.

Hordan is the main goddess, but not the only one. In their ages-long history Tricarnians contacted and made deals with a number of other entities, some of them of comparable power.

Among them is **Baachaga**, the **Toad God, Master of Shapes**. Baachaga is represented as a huge toad, covered in multicolored pustules. When summoned by his worshippers, he often takes control of particular species of giant toads, breed for this specific purpose. Baachaga is the god of ever-changing shapes, and mutations. It masters both physical and mental mutations: Baachaga is also the god of ecstatic drug-induced revelations. Often the followers of Baachaga lick the skin of particular frogs, called Eyes of Baachaga, during their secret rituals which grant them visions and mind-altering states. Baachaga is a devious deity, he prefers to scheme and plot in darkness rather than openly facing enemies. Baachaga has a long-lasting hatred towards Hordan, whose beauty and might he envies. In 735 AF the cult of Baachaga was almost totally eradicated when Hordanas destroyed Nal Hamar, center of the cult, because the Daughters of Baachaga tried to kill her using a shape-shifting demon. That can be seen as one of the major acts of war between the two deities. In the following centuries the cult slowly returned, and today is followed again, mostly in the country by

minor Lords, but there are rumors that at least one of the main Houses of Tricarnia has secretly turned away from Hordan to worship the Toad God and built a huge temple somewhere.

Cylatrix the Huntress is another demon-goddess of Tricarnia. Usually she appears as a tall lanky woman with four breasts and a jackal-like head. She has long black hair, attired in twelve long braids, at the bottom of each of which is tied one of the heads of her victims. For this reason she is often called Cylatrix of the Dozen Tails.

Cylatrix is missing her right eye, because of Tosar (see below). She exists for a single purpose, hunting, and is always followed by a pack of Demonic Mastiffs. The Huntress is the terror of any slave, especially escaped ones. Usually she is summoned to track down someone, and she does it in a marvelous manner.

In truth Cylatrix doesn't want to really capture the prey: she nurtures of the fear of the quarries and she can make a hunt as long or as short as she wants. When she finally manages to take her victim, she drags him away with her long, clawed hands and kills him, devouring the marrow of the neck bones. Being killed by Cylatrix is only the beginning of the torment, because the souls of her prey are transformed into new members of her supernatural pack. There are rumors that many centuries ago summoning Cylatrix was easier, thanks to a powerful artifact, a large cauldron, but it was lost somewhere in the North. Cylatrix isn't as powerful as Hordan or Baachaga, but she is not a creature to disturb lightly; if, for any reason, her promised quarry escapes, she takes revenge on the summoner.

Another demon-god worshipped among the Sons of Keron is **Aalisha, Mistress**

of Songs and Sorrows. This she-demon usually appears in almost human form, taking the semblance of a beautiful girl, naked apart from her long, silvery hair which matches the liquid color of her eyes. Aalisha is the patroness of singers and musicians. Nobody has ever heard her speak, but she sings wordless songs so beautiful as to break the hearts of mortals. This is both a metaphor and the crude reality: the throat of the Mistress of Songs can produce a sound, the Eighth Note, so perfect as to melt bones and rend flesh. Aalisha isn't cruel, per se, but she is often hungry and after killing or driving mad victims with her voice, enjoys eating them alive with her double set of filed teeth. She is also known as the Mistress of Sorrows and Lady of Vengeance, because if the legends are true, millennia ago, she fell in love with a man, Aaleso, who betrayed her with a mortal woman.

When Aalisha discovered this, she sang a song which made Aaleso kill his lover with his own hands. Aaleso, the stories say, is still alive: he wanders in the Dominions as a traveling musician, cursed to live countless existences, never forgetting the face of his lover and hearing Aalisha's song every night.

Apart from the four above, many other demons are worshipped in Tricarnia, but they are all cults of the nobility.

Another powerful demon is sometimes evoked by Tricarnian sorcerers, even if no real homage is paid to him. He is **Tirain, Master of Doors and Cages** (see *B&B* #3 – *Green World*). Tirain is an enigmatic creature: a traveler between worlds, he enjoys locking his victims in complex traps and labyrinths, some of which aren't even in our world, and is absolutely obsessed by doors, locks and generally impenetrable places. The relationship of Tirain with

Tricornia dates back to ancient Keron; according to one very weird story, mankind is in the Dominions because Tirain dragged them there for one of his devious games, but this is a theory which today has very few supporters.

The slaves usually continue to worship the gods they had before being captured, even if they must do it in secret. But in a few generations the memory of them fades away and so most slaves grow up godless, or forced to venerate the dark deities of their twisted masters.

A few of them, follow **Tosar of the Burned Hand** or **Tosar the Liberator**.

Tosar is a foreign god, the legend says he was a gladiator-slave in the arena of far-away Faberterra. Hated by an evil queen because he refused her love, the gladiator managed to kill every monster and demon the wicked woman threw at him in the arena. In the end the evil queen ordered assassins to burn Tosar's right hand off, so he could not hold a sword, but, even one-handed, he managed to fight for and win his life in the pits.

In the end he was condemned to death, but he achieved immortality.

The story of Tosar is detailed in *GOD* page 33-34, but the version of the deity worshipped in Tricornia is quite different from the Faberterranean one. For the Tricornian slaves, Tosar is the Breaker of Chains, the Liberator of the Slaves. According to the local legend, Tosar was the man leading the first escaped slaves away from the Keronians. He has been killed many times, but he always returns, in another incarnation, to help his brothers. He has a blackened hand because, the legend says, he broke bare-handed the slave



collar of his wife, Karela, and it seared his hands forever. Today the Priests of Tosar are a secret organization, working undercover among the slaves of Tricarnia to help them reach the freedom of the slave camps in the Brokenchain Mountains. They are mercilessly hunted, in particular by the followers of Cylatrix. According to legend, Tosar was the first person to escape from the jackal-demon, and he even managed to blind her in one eye. Priests of Tosar, if captured, face a horrible death, but they don't fear it, because Tosar lives forever.

The youngest, but not the least important, cult of Tricarnia is the mysterious **Cult of the Dream**. Worshippers of this cult aren't recruited as happens for other religions, instead they catch a strange fever, after which they start seeing the deity in their dreams. The description of the god, who is simply called the **Dreamer**, is vague: for some it is a figure of light, emanating a strong sensation of love, while for others it is a shapeless mass of darkness, the origin of all the pains and anguish of mankind. Resisting the call of the Dreamer is impossible, in the long term; people who try end up mad or even dead. The only way to cope is surrendering, and accepting His will. The priests of the Dreamer call themselves Asans, and are all persons who have experienced the might of their master. Unlike other priests, the Asans are gifted with supernatural powers, similar to the ones manifested by the followers of the Path of Enlightenment of far Lhoban.

They are led by a mysterious figure called the Dreamer's Voice, and there are stories of entire villages of these people, for the most part runaway slaves, who live hidden in the swamps intoxicated by strange Lotus and experiencing a state of almost continual hallucination.

The Asans say that the Dreamer isn't fully awake, but he will be soon, and then he'll reward all his followers and punish the unbelievers. The Cult of the Dream crosses all the social strata of Tricarnia. Noble, eunuch, slave: nobody is immune from the fever and the calling. The chosen ones, more numerous every day, abandon their former lives to escape into the north, where the rumors say the base of the religion is located. The Dreamers are becoming a serious threat to Tricarnia but so far the High Prince hasn't acted against them.

HERO'S JOURNAL: TRICARNIAN TORTURE MACHINES

At inflicting pain on other human beings, nobody can beat a Tricarnian. To reach perfection in this art, they build mechanical devices, made to cause specific mutilations and pain to victims. Some of them are very refined, and artisans capable of crafting such marvelous objects (according to Tricarnian standards) are prized, even if sometimes the commissioning Lord requires the artisan to test his creation himself.

Today, the mechanical arts aren't very well developed, so the best machines are those built by the ancient Keronians. Of these, the Inklivium is the most famous: it is built to resemble a splendid looking throne, and when not in use it looks almost harmless. It is designed to keep the victim alive exactly from dawn to dusk (even if the duration of the daylight isn't constant) and the tortures it inflicts take him to a level of unbearable pleasure. It isn't uncommon for victims on the Inklivium to have prophetic visions during their agony.

CUSTOMS

Here follow some hints on the common life of Tricornia and on the personality of the members of this cruel race.

CLOTHES

Tricornia is a rather warm land, despite its position, even if often humid. For this reason Tricornians, both Princes and slaves, prefer light clothes. They are usually made of silk, of which Tricornia is the main producer in the known world. Silkworms, the legend says, were brought by Salkor on the *Naskarias* from ancient Keron and are one of the last heirlooms of the past. There are various species, from the simple Willow Worms to the dreaded Black Worms, which must be nourished exclusively with human blood and produce the finest cloth of the Dominions. Tricornian silk is tintured with a very unusual process: particular drugs are ministered to the Silk Worms, each of them causing the cloth to assume a specific hue, and for this reason it is very prized.

Material apart, Tricornian like simple but elegant clothes: long tunics, loincloths, sleeveless jackets and light, almost evanescent cloaks, especially for women. The traditional colors are white, silver-gray, blue and black for Princes, while gold and red are usually reserved for eunuchs. Brown, green and other colors are for the slaves.

Tricornians enjoy the beauty of the human body, so nudity is quite common among them, especially at home.

An accessory no Tricornian will renounce, whether male or female, is jewellery; bracers, rings and hair decorations are the commonest items, while earrings and other ornaments which pierce the body

are usually avoided. The reason for this last preference is an ancient superstition: alterations to the human body change the flow of its supernatural energies and can expose it to hostile magic. Ornaments are both a habit and a necessity; given the nature of Tricornian politics, many of them are magical talismans made for defense or offense, and others store small quantities of Lotus concoctions.

Slaves are dressed in a number of ways, but the most important ornament all of them wear is their slave collar. It can be a crude piece of metal for the lowest slaves or an exquisite jewel for the most pampered bed slaves, but the meaning is the same: they are non-persons, only a resource of the Princes. The majority of collars are sealed, and cannot be opened; for a slave, removing his collar is a capital offense, punished by death.

When a slave is freed, his collar is broken in a solemn ceremony, but on his neck is tattooed a decoration with the same shape, called the Ring of Freedom, to remind the slave of his past and the condition to which he could always return. The sons of freemen don't receive this mark, hence the saying that a slave is never really free, even if his sons can be.

Breaking the slave collar is one of the first rites performed in the tribes of ex-slaves in the Brokenchain Mountains.

FOOD

The staple Tricornian food is rice. They are its biggest producers, largely because they can count on almost free manpower, and they export the surplus to other countries.

For slaves, proteins are furnished by fish and other river animals, in particular frogs. A particular species, the Chalag, grow big

as chickens, and are bred in special pools. Guinea pigs and other types of rodents are also quite common, and, in time of famine, the eunuch overseers mix the rice with some tasty swamp rat.

Slave alimentation is one of the key factors of Tricornia society: the majority of slaves are fed the Slavemush, a mix of rice, some meat and Khav crafted to keep them calm and submissive. Various recipes exist for Slavemush, every family having its own variation.

For lords, alimentation is more varied. Tricornians like complex, exotic food, and the plates presented at the tables of the Princes are often a pleasure for the eyes and a joy for the palate. They love game, especially birds, seafood, and river snakes, and worms, plus a variety of fruits, seaweeds and vegetables. Cow meat is almost unknown among them and the dishes are often seasoned with particular spices, many of them being weaker forms of Lotus, which enhance the taste or produces a light state of mental alteration.

Tricornian nobles are educated from infancy to pay particular attention to the taste of food: poisoning is a common way to solve political problems among the Sons of Hordan, and the job of food-taster, despite being an easy one, usually ends in gruesome death.

There is a common story about Tricornians, according to which they are cannibals. There is some truth in this: they consume human meat, but only during special ceremonies, such as religious rites to Hordan, and only in very small quantities. In the past, at the end of a battle between two Priest Princes, it was the tradition for the winner to hold a banquet, offering the heart of the defeated Lord to his family,

but today this decadent habit is rarely followed.

Even so, some of the eldest Tricornians, and the few surviving Keronians, are said to eat only human meat, probably because this preserves their purity and prevents aging.

CRUELTY AND LOVE FOR BEAUTY

Tricornians are renowned throughout the world for their cruelty. This is true, and cannot be denied, but there is much more to the Sons of Keron than simple hate for other living beings.

Just the opposite. Tricornians are deep hedonists and esthetes.

They revere beauty over all other things: even their Dark Queen, Hordan, though a terrible, mischievous and corrupt creature, has a stunning beauty.

Tricornian love for beauty is expressed in many forms: they like art, poetry, fine food and drink, and the perfection of human body. Even their torture implements are exquisitely crafted.

On the other side, the hedonism of Tricornians comes along with an incredible solipsism. For a Son of Keron, only a single being really exists and is truly important: himself.

Tricornian cruelty is a direct consequence of this: provoking strong sensations, such as pain, fear, anguish and similar emotions in their victims is for them an act as interesting as drinking a bottle of good wine. Apart from a few cases, there isn't any real malice in Tricornians' evil deeds.

They consider them only interesting experiments.

Another factor directly linked to what's said above is respect for human life: Tricarnians have very little of it. Surrounded by expendable slaves, to a Priest Prince, lives are only a commodity. The only really important existence is their own.

Hedonism and solipsism are probably the reasons why Tricarnia is mired in decadence and the heirs of Keron will never conquer the Dominions: they are too busy experiencing the sensations of the world to bother with domination.

Even when they are moved by greed or ambition, their drive for power is a purely personal one, they don't seek it for their family or their House. The few people breaking this pattern are the exception, for example the Prince of Scales, who was driven by the dream of creating a strong, powerful state.

LAW AND COURTESY

Tricarnian law is peculiar at least. Starting with the slave castes, their situation is simple: they have absolutely no rights, and a Priest Prince can dispose of them as he wants.

For freemen the situation is different, but only slightly: freemen are a concept relatively new in Tricarnian society and the majority of the nobles tend to consider them "slaves without an owner" or "potential slaves". No freeman is truly safe among the Sons of Keron, a noble could decide to enslave a freeman simply because he can, without any reason.

Matters are a bit more complicated among nobles. Priest Princes are very

individualistic but consider any other Prince a peer, more or less. During the ancient times of Keron, there existed a complex codex of law called Thavarasdan (meaning "Word of the Righteous") to handle disputes, but it was lost during the Fall. Salkor recorded long segments of it in the Book of Exiles, but they aren't the original words. Till the Tovakarian era, matters of justice between Priest Princes were handled by referring to tradition; this meant that a noble was free to exert his will and take his vengeance against an opponent, if he had the strength. The only factor restraining him is that any noble family is connected to others by complex links of marriage, vassalage and alliances, so an attack can unleash a series of repercussions on many levels, and in the past this caused many bloody feuds.

With the advent of the Prince of Scales, the creation of the Council of Princes and the declaration of the City of Princes as neutral ground, the situation improved a bit and open battles diminished, but this simply means that the conflicts became less visible, moving into the realms of subtle threats, diplomacy, poisoning and the occasional use of sorcery.

This complex state of things explains another aspect typical of Tricarnian society: courtesy. Because it is so easy to upset a Prince, people in Tricarnia tend to be very formal and extremely polite. You'll rarely hear a lord shout orders to a slave. A simple polite word, or the raising of an eyebrow is enough to make them tremble, because they know that in the Land of Hordan, punishments are hard and fast.

WEATHER

Jalizaran merchants visiting Tricarnia say “it’s wetter than a monkey’s armpit”.

Probably they exaggerate, but not too much. Thanks to the barrier of the Brokenchain Mountains, the land of the Sons of Keron is sheltered by cold air currents coming from the north. This, plus the unnatural warmth of the Dread Sea, makes it rather hot. What transforms a rather pleasurable climate into an inferno of mosquitoes is the large quantity of marsh water covering the surface of the land, and an area of constant low pressure around the Lazar Caldera.

Generally speaking, Tricarnia enjoys mild winters, long springs and autumns, and rainy summers. It rarely snows, apart from on the Brokenchain Mountains, in the Mud Hills and on the Caled border, but, especially in summer, heavy rain can happen.

During almost all seasons fog is also present, caused by the marshes all around.

The climate of Tricarnia is altered by a strange anomaly: the Lazar Caldera is unnaturally warm, probably due to thermal springs, and this, apart from transforming the surrounding area into a jungle, causes the peculiar climate of the whole land.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The land of the Sons of Keron, given its particular climatic conditions, presents a wide variety of plants and beasts, some of them mundane and harmless, others dangerous and fantastic.

Concerning plants, everybody knows that the most important crop in Tricarnia is rice: an unknown variety, probably coming from ancient Keron, it is very resistant to disease, and has a high yield. It exists in



different varieties, from the common gray rice given used to prepare Slavemush, to the tasty black rice and the precious white variety, destined for the tables of the nobility.

In the same swampy areas as the rice fields grow a variety of bamboos, which are used to make every sort of thing: from tools to rafts and so on. Despite the bamboo being very good, Tricarnia is always hungry for proper timber, which comes mainly from the Drylands, an area of solid ground between the Night River and Prophets' River, in particular from the Garnasha Forest, which is made of oaks, elms, alders, beech and chestnuts.

But let's return to the swampy fields. Among the rice can be found several swamp flowers, and many varieties of Lotus: from the almost harmless Sneezer Lotus, an annoying blue flower whose pollen causes throat irritation, to the uncommon Heart Lotus, a deep red rush, whose roots are used to concoct powerful poisons (in truth this plant is probably infected with the Red Plague).

In the rice fields you can see islands of floating trees wandering in the water, called Yathis (see page 77): they are mainly made of willows, privets and a particular twisted oak called Hag Claws, because of the shape of the branches. Legends say that the spirits of dead slaves hide in holes in the trunks of these plants.

Going northward from the rice fields, we enter the dangerous bayous of Ramasha. They are populated by huge, nameless trees that, according to the stories, walked on their roots down from the Caled Forest. Similar to enormous oaks, they are simply called Caled Trees, and many strange vines, mosses and Lotuses grow upon them, but nobody dares climb up to

harvest them, because these plants are evil, and in some way they manage to make you fall and break your neck.

In the shallow water of the bayou grows the omnipresent Kuzdu, an invasive floating weed. It exists in many varieties, some of them dangerous. For example, the Yazda Kuzdu hides under its foliage colonies of small insects. When a beast or man crosses the Kuzdu, stirring the water, they enter a frenzied state and attack the trespasser, with the same ferocity as the red ants of the desert. Kuvara Kuzdu, also called Lotus of the Restless Ones, is instead a black-looking plant which releases a poison into the water. Creatures in contact with the water start feeling drowsy and then pass out, usually drowning. But this isn't the end of them: stories say that people dying in this manner return as undead creatures, their spirit eaten away by the roots of the plant.

But it is in the Lazarta Jungle we find the greatest variety of plants: bananas, baobabs, and mangroves are the commonest ones. Since the land is largely unexplored, nobody truly knows what marvels it contains, probably several species of pre-Fall flora, waiting to be discovered by an enterprising Lotusmaster or Sage...

Speaking of animals the variety is similar, or even bigger.

Foreigners think that the greatest danger of the swamps is the Tricarnian alligator: this huge beast, which can grow to become really big (in the Painfens there are specimens fifteen yards long), is surely treacherous, but isn't the worst thing living in the muddy waters.

The real king of the swamps is the leech. Tricarnians are fond of leeches: they use them for many things, from medicine to a

way to inject Lotus into patients, even as food. In the swamps there are a number of them, of every size: from the smallest Thumb Leech (which is appropriately big as a finger), to the Bamboo Leech, which is big as a cat, to the Death Curtain, a monstrosity tall as a man, which can engulf a person in a few moments. There are also a number of ground varieties, which hunt in the grass or, in certain cases, climb the trees and fall on their victims. But nothing is more dangerous than the Swamp Shark. This water leech, which can grow up to twelve yards long, has a rudimentary spine, which allows it to raise up its body like a coiled snake, a thick skin (which is quite prized) and a nightmarish mouth full of teeth. It is a treacherous predator: it swims underwater and then rises up to bite its prey.

The swamps also host a number of other beasts: from turtles of many sizes and shapes (the beast masters of Nal Lagar breed a giant variety which they train for battle) to snakes and lizards of every type, including the legendary Lazarta (see page 209).

As well as reptiles, there is also a goodly number of mammals: from the swamp cats, which Tricarnian lords love to tame as pets and hunting beasts, to several types of rodents. Among them there are the curious Striped Beavers: these very intelligent animals seem to hate Tricarnians and try in every manner to damage their cultivations. They are, however, quite fond of the slaves: when they see one starving they bring him fish or other scraps of food. According to the stories of the slaves, the Striped Beavers are actually the souls of the many slaves who died in the Tricarnian swamps. They were friends of Tosar too, leading him and his people out of the fens.

It is highly unlikely that this is true, but nobody can deny that these strange creatures show a degree of intelligence and piety lacking in many men.

The skies of Tricarnia are ripe with life too: aquatic birds abound, from ibis to pelicans and water quails, which are excellent and tasty to eat, but fly in an erratic way that makes it very difficult to shoot them down (in fact they are usually hunted with nets).

But is during the night that the skies of Tricarnia become dangerous: from the caverns in the Brokenchain Mountains, Shadow Bats fly out to hunt. One the biggest flying creatures of the Dominions, they can pick a man up without problems, and sometimes do. The sorcerers of Tricarnia, over the centuries, developed several spells to bind these creatures, so that they are used as mounts and to deliver terror on the battlefield. In particular, in the Teeth of Night, the basalt islands in front of Ral Hordaka, there is a colony of a particular race of giant bats, vampire creatures called Yalaruka, which have a strong bond with the rulers of the citadel (see page 72).

The caverns of the Brokenchain range host other creatures apart from the bats. Among them are the dangerous cave bugs: giant insects, organized in hives which are a danger to any miner, and the Night Slug, a nasty creature which can grow big as a man, and is constantly hunting for food.

GAZETTEER OF TRICARNIA

The land of the Sons of Keron is large, ancient, and for the most part abandoned. In the following pages you'll find a

description of its main features. For each entry you'll also find a story, a legend or another similar hook useful for the GM to devise an adventure or simply as additional background.

BROKENCHAIN MOUNTAINS

The Brokenchain Mountains are the main mountain range of Tricarnia, protecting the country from the cold wind blowing from the north. Very ancient, they provided shelter to the surviving Keronians hundreds of years ago, when they were still called the Tricar Mountains.

The Brokenchain's mountain tops are dotted with the ruins of ancient observatories, where the Keronian astrologers retired to watch the sky and elaborate their alien rites. Many of these places still exist today, but they are generally avoided, because their old owners left them well protected by enchantments and curses. Sometime, a daring soul or a thief, greedy for the sorcerous knowledge stored inside, tries to break in, but the majority of these people don't come back.

For many centuries the mountains have been a refuge for escaped slaves, who live in tribal camps in the many valleys and canyons of the range. Some of them,



the luckiest ones, found refuge in some abandoned ruins, where they could survive better than their companions. Until a few years ago, the former slaves were doing only this: merely surviving.

The Tricarnian Lords accepted this, they were even amused by it, and used the Mountains as their personal hunting reserve, when they want to capture or kill some wild, two-legged beast.

But things are changing. Under the guidance of the Priests of Tosar, the escaped slaves are becoming more organized: the priests give these people weapons, and the training to use them. Plus, more importantly, they give them courage, which is the most powerful weapon against the holy terror the Tricarnian Lords and their servants instill in the commoners.

The last Prince who dared to enter the mountains was ambushed and his army destroyed. Only he and his personal guard managed to escape.

The catalyst of this revolution is Tosar himself; according to the holy stories, the god has been killed many times, but always returns to fight alongside his people. Well, this is the case: Tosar is reborn, rumors say, he is alive, in flesh and bone, and is gathering the slaves around him!

The Slave Coast. Not every escaped slave lives in the mountains. The most motivated managed to cross the mountains and found a long, woody coast on the other side, not far from the Caled Forest. Many of them settled there, not believing they had found a place to call home for the first time. In a few generations many coastal villages were born, and the residents prospered. But the fruit of the gods' garden always has a bitter taste; when the Tricarnians

discovered this, they began to periodically send a fleet to raze the villages and retake some slaves.

In addition, the Caleds seem not to be too enthusiastic about the freemen and launched several raids on the area. The tactics of the freemen under these attacks are instinctive; they abandon everything and hide in the mountains.

This was the situation till a few years ago, then after the Caled Wars the Tricarnian incursions ended; they simply had not the resources (or the will) to arm a fleet for some rag-tag villages. But, despite this, in recent months a growing number of the Slave Coast villages have been found empty, the people simply disappeared. Nobody knows how or why this happened, and even nearby villages, the few still populated, have no answer to this question, apart from praying to the gods to be spared.

THE CITY OF PRINCES

Nothing represents Tricarnia better than the City of Princes. Pre-dating the fall of Keron, this Citadel is built on the sea and sports an ample port where ships from everywhere in the Dominions dock to unload and load cargoes of every type.

The City of Princes is the most multicultural place in Tricarnia, but also the most traditional one. You can find merchants and ambassadors of any race in the citadel, speaking their own tongues and dressed in barbaric clothes, but everybody stops talking and bows, as tradition requires, every hour when the gong of the Temple of Darkness sounds to announce another victim being offered to Hordan. The Gilded Warriors, the personal guards of the High Prince,

watch the behavior of people closely on these occasions, and any impious act is punished with arrest and sacrifice in the temple: it may seem a harsh measure, but Tricarnians still remember the Blinding of Priests and don't want to attract the rage of their demon-goddess again.

This hard law contrasts strangely with the Peace of Princes, an age-old edict according to which the citadel is considered neutral ground and no open show of violence, even between rival Princes, is permitted.

This doesn't mean it is a safe place: treacheries of every type, poisoning and similar things are the order of the day.

The City of Princes is officially ruled by the High Prince, but in truth the Golden Servants, a large caste of eunuchs, really runs things; even when the High Prince changes, the eunuchs remain the same, because they swore fealty to the office, not to the person holding it. This means they have great, even if not apparent, power and any High Prince wanting to stay in power (and stay alive) must keep a close eye on them.

According to tradition, on the day of his crowning, the High Prince and all the eunuchs drink a golden-colored potion, called the Lotus of Fidelity. Then the High Prince pronounces a particular spell by which he can now kill every person who drank the potion simply by exerting his will.

Nobody knows if this potion truly works or not, but every Golden Servant must drink it every day of his life, included the high echelons of the caste, and this is the cause of their golden-hued skins, from which their name derives.

The wealth of the City derives from two sources: first, the trade passing through the city (which is now diminishing due to the rising importance of Val Hordaka), and second the taxes every other lord of the country must pay to the High Prince, which is one of the reasons why the post of High Prince is so coveted.

Actually Ivakor, the current High Prince, is in a really bad situation. His family, which originates from the Askerions, has held the Throne for four generations, and during these years their connections with the Askerions have loosened, so that Ivakor cannot count anymore on a strong family to support him. On the other hand, he seems quite aloof and detached from the political life of Tricarnia, and this means he is more isolated every day.

The Apparition. In recent months, various people in the citadel have seen a strange thing: a woman, wandering the corridors and halls of the palace, completely naked. The apparition, because there is nothing else to call her, is identical to the dead Princess Vardella, the beloved wife of Ivakor. The sightings happen only by night and are unconfirmed, but they are enough to cause a lot of turmoil in the City. The High Prince himself tried to summon the ghost of his beloved, but she refused to answer. He consulted the oldest grimoires of Keronian sorcery contained in the Temple of Darkness, but he found no hint about what is happening. In the meantime the Hands of the Prince (see sidebar) are quietly searching the city trying to find if something more mundane is behind this strange happening.

HERO'S JOURNAL:**THE HANDS OF THE PRINCE**

From the times of Tovakor, it was clear that the High Prince is in a difficult position. He may be the first among the Priest Princes, but this title also isolates him. For this reason Tovakor created the Hands of the Prince, a secret organization of spies, interlopers, agents and even assassins at the command of the High Prince.

This organization survived down the centuries and today they are a secret society answering directly to Ivakor. Anybody can be one of the Hands: a slave, a woman, in certain cases even a foreigner. They are organized in a pyramid, at the top of which is the High Prince.

The Hands of the Prince also deliver his justice, and are known to have broken the Peace of the Prince in the past.

Often in Tricarnian history people in very strange positions have been revealed to be members of the Hands. At the moment there are rumors that at least one of Iron Hand, the bandit-chief of the Brotherhood of Roads, Drakovor the pirate of the Lizard Islands and the Silk Queen are in truth agents of the High Prince.

Probably all these rumors are false, and the Hands are someone else, even more above suspicion.

Situated in the Drylands, the only area of solid ground in Tricarnia, it is crossed by the Night River, the watercourse originating by the gates of Val Hordakor. The forest has for centuries been the main source of lumber for the City of Princes, and the nearby Lords have always based their wealth on this prized commodity. The forest is populated principally by oaks, chestnuts and beeches, many of them centuries old. The forest of Garnasha is also famous for being the site of one of the most epic battles of Tricarnia, where the forces of Tovakor, Lord of Scales, defeated the army of Hordanas, the Demon Queen, employing Lazartas as war beasts. The exact location of the battlefield is unknown, but sometimes the woodcutters find old weapons and the skeletons of men and beasts buried under the moss.

There is a road crossing the forest called the Shadow Path, but it is rarely frequented: strange things lurk in the thick of the foliage, plus it is said that it is the base of the infamous Brotherhood of the Roads (see below). The Night River is navigable, and is used for moving timber. Several woodcutters' camps are built on its banks, but they are all seasonal, and during winter the slave workers return to their pens in the citadels of their owners. Possession of the forest has always been a troubled matter; officially it belongs to the High Princes, but in truth it is worked by several vassal families, constantly bickering between themselves for control over the woods. Periodically, these quarrels explode and a small scale war bursts out for a couple of years till a new equilibrium is found.

THE FOREST OF GARNASHA

The forest of Garnasha is a probably the only real forest of Tricarnia, if you exclude the Lazarta Jungle.

The Maidens of Val Garna. Centuries ago, the whole forest belonged to the proud family of Garnash. They lived in a marvelous Citadel, built entirely of wood, in the middle of the forest. They were a

kind family, by Tricarnian standards; they loved music, songs and even their slaves were happy and well fed. But they were rich, too rich, and this drew the jealousy of their neighbors. One day, at dusk, the jealous lords set an ambush for the Priest Prince of Garnash and his sons, when they came back from the woods after a hunt, and they murdered all of them. Then, during nighttime, they stalked into Val Garna where the splendid daughters of the Lord and the slaves were awake, waiting for their father and brothers. The assassins viciously set fire to the palace and watched the slaves and princesses die horribly, in the flames. Since that day Val Garna no longer exists, except in songs and ballads.

But this isn't the end of the story; some nighttime travelers in the forest swear they have seen lights in the place where the ancient palace once stood. The few courageous enough to approach report seeing the palace restored and resounding with feminine laughter and music, as happened in the past when the Princesses of Val Garna held feasts. But the same people, returning to the place during daytime, cannot find anything apart from old carbonized planks and a wild, dark wood grown where marvelous Val Garna stood.

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROADS

During the Tovakarian era the most important highway of Tricarnia, the Elevated Road, was built. The wise Prince created a military force, with the task of maintaining the road in good shape and clear from dangers. It was called the Brotherhood of the Roads, and was a sort of experiment, because it was open to every free Tricarnian (but also included a number of slaves for manual labor) and was under the direct control of the City of Princes. The Brotherhood attracted many younger sons of nobles and other talented people who lacked the means to advance in society. In the past they formed a sort of additional, personal army for Tovakor and his heirs.

Today the force still exists, but it is very different from the past; they are now a large organization of bandits and cutthroats, infesting the Elevated Road, the Road of Princes and any other communication route in Tricarnia, including waterways. The band still includes landless nobles, but only the most desperate ones, plus an assorted rabble of escaped slaves and common lowlife. The Brotherhood has always been a nuisance in Tricarnia, but in the last few years their attacks are becoming bolder every day, especially since the old band leaders were replaced by a charismatic figure: Iron Hand, the legendary bandit who always wears a strange metal gauntlet. Under his skilled guidance they moved from simple banditry to daring robberies at the expense of the nobles and even kidnapping important people for ransom.

The band has several camps and hideouts all around Tricarnia, in addition they can count on the support of slaves and of the cult of Tosar. Voices say their main den is hidden somewhere in the Forest of Garnasha, but so far nobody has found it.

An interesting note for every enterprising adventurer; there is a bounty of several thousand Moons on the head of Iron Hand, which is increasing month after month...

HAMALARRA, THE FLOWER OF HAMARRA

Hamarra was the wife of Salkor the Navigator, who sacrificed her to win back for his people the favor of Hordan. Stories say she was beautiful and sweet as a spring day. A few years after her sacrifice, Korialkor, Salkor's son found this small island south of the City of Princes, and was so impressed by its mild beauty that called it Hamalarra, which means "Love of Hamarra", in memory of his mother. The island was devoid of any people, but on it stood the ruins of an old temple of

white marble, which didn't belong to any demon or god of Keron. On Hamalarra peace seems to reign uncontested; a strange calmness falls on the spirits of men while they stay on the island and even predators, like foxes and falcons, eat only old and sick game.

Korialkor, deeply touched by this place, declared it holy ground and ordered that no blood could be shed on it. For some reason Hamalarra has always been deserted, or very sparsely populated. Periodically, small colonies and villages were founded on it, but in a few years they

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE RUINS OF TEL ASKORA

Tel Askora was the fortress and Sanctum Sanctorum of one of the most powerful warlocks of the Dominions: Caldaio the Cruel.

After the surprise attack by Jestiriel in 2057 AF the whole structure, an ancient Keronian observatory, crumbled and fell to the ground. Jestiriel's followers searched through it, looking for something in particular, something that could not be found.

The screams of rage of the Master of Pain were heard throughout the valley and he punished his incompetent servants with tremendous tortures, before returning to Nal Nomantor, from which he never emerged again.

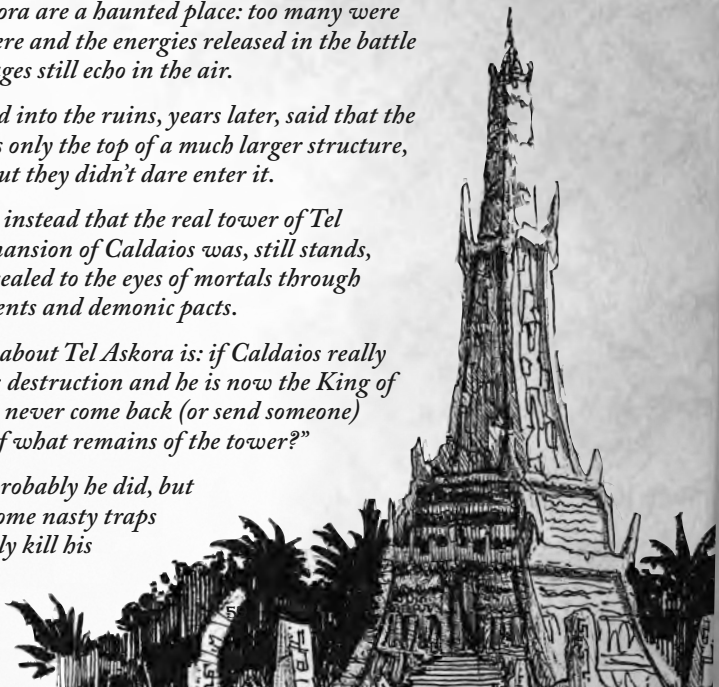
The ruins of Tel Askora are a haunted place: too many were the sorceries kept there and the energies released in the battle between the two mages still echo in the air.

People who ventured into the ruins, years later, said that the tower of Askora was only the top of a much larger structure, dug underground, but they didn't dare enter it.

Other persons claim instead that the real tower of Tel Askora, where the mansion of Caldaio was, still stands, but is invisible, concealed to the eyes of mortals through powerful enchantments and demonic pacts.

A common question about Tel Askora is: if Caldaio really survived the tower's destruction and he is now the King of Caldeia, why did he never come back (or send someone) to claim possession of what remains of the tower?"

The answer is that probably he did, but Jestiriel surely left some nasty traps in the ruins, to finally kill his hated brother.



were found empty, as if the occupants abandoned them.

Over the years this created all sorts of weird legends about the island. Some say that the strange enchantment of this place forces people to get lost in the woods of the island, while others say that the island's peace is only a ruse, hiding something much more sinister, which periodically gets rid of all the unwanted people on it.

The Smiling Priests. Recently the old temple on the island was restored, and a small community of holy men took it over. Dressed in white tunics and always smiling, these men and women belong to various races, and are very peaceful. Skilled healers, the fame of their ability to cure all sorts of ailments is quickly spreading and now desperate people come from every part of Tricarnia, and even from further abroad, to be healed by them. They are very mysterious and nobody knows what deity they worship or anything about them. They always smile, but, for some reason, they don't talk, probably to respect some religious obligation.

THE LAZARTA JUNGLE

Nobody knows how old this forest in the far south of Tricarnia is. Some say it was there even before the Fall of the Dread Star, while other says it grew in a single day after the Snow of Multicolored Death, when Lotus appeared in the Dominions. Whatever the truth, this place is very strange, for a number of reasons.

First, it is a jungle: it has exotic plants of many types usually found only in the far south of the world; mangroves, baobabs and orchids of the weirdest colors, plus other forms of vegetation unknown in other parts of the Dominions, including

some species of dangerous and voracious carnivorous plants.

Second, it is the home of the Lazarta. Tricarnians use this term to describe a large number of related species of reptiles, from very small bird-like ones, the Quetzal, to the ferocious human-sized Snappers, to the Great Lazar, an enormous winged snake, capable of swallowing a rider, mount included, in a single bite. The origin of these beasts is unknown. Probably they are the remnants of a forgotten era when reptilians ruled the world, or maybe they are simply the effect of some Lotus-induced mutations. Lazarta rarely leave their homeland, even if some of them can be found on the Lizard Islands (see below) which are effectively part of the Lazarta Jungle, and others sometimes leave the protection of the multicolored leaves of the jungle to hunt in the Painfens.

The Lazarta Jungle is largely devoid of civilized man, even if there are rumors that some savages, probably descendants of slaves escaped in the remote past, dwell in the thick foliage. These strange people are called Colored Men due their custom of smearing the body with foliage of different colors for concealment from predators.

Lazar Caldera. In the middle of the jungle there is a large flat mountain, constantly surrounded by fog and vapors. The mountain hosts the Lazar Caldera, a sort of large basin filled with tepid water and small islets. The temperature there is very high, and the water is often seen bubbling, probably due to the fires of the earth still burning deep in the caldera's innards. The Lazar Caldera is a place full of marvelous plants and beasts: Lazarta of unknown types, talking flowers and, if the stories are true, even an old crumbled

city, the mythical Lazartana. If you pay heed to the stories told in the seaports of half the Dominions, Lazartana was an ancient Keronian city from before the Fall of the Dread Star, and it is full of ancient treasures ready to be plundered. Many have tried to reach the fabled Lazartana, but very few have returned, always feverish and ill. After a few days they usually die, babbling incoherently in a forgotten language that nobody understands.

THE LIZARD ISLANDS

There is an archipelago immediately south of the Lazarta Jungle, made up of small, heavily forested islands.

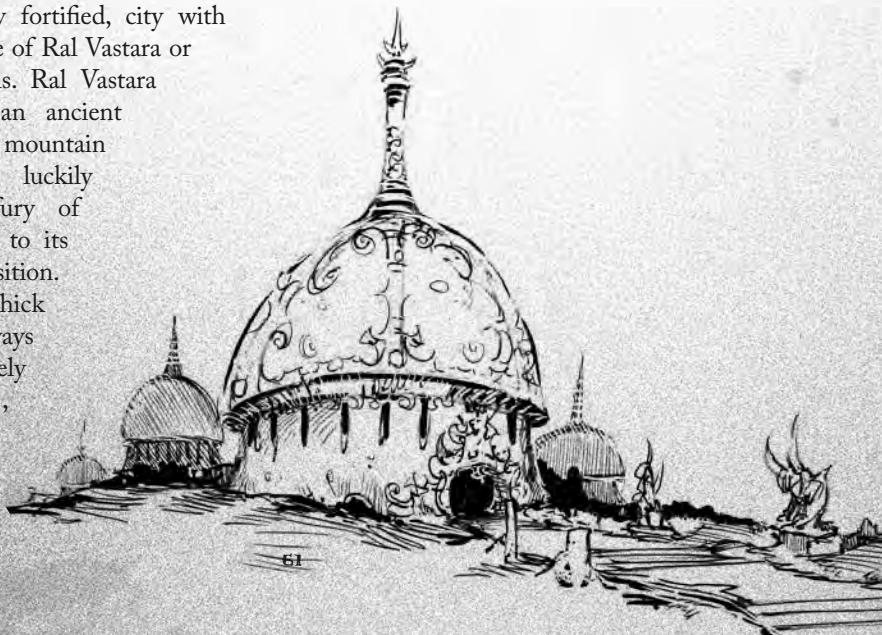
The Lizard Islands, as they are called, are an integral part of the Lazarta Jungle, sharing the same type of vegetation. It is a colorful place, where live large colonies of monkeys, talking birds and multicolored snakes. It is also a place where a particular type of Lazarta lives, the Monitor Lizard, a big four-legged monster, quite peaceful if you leave him alone.

The Islands host several small villages, mainly inhabited by escaped slaves, and a small, heavily fortified, city with the showy name of Ral Vastara or Port of Marvels. Ral Vastara was probably an ancient Keronian mountain fortress, which luckily escaped the fury of the waters due to its elevated position. Surrounded by thick walls, it has always been fiercely independent, and a nest of pirates.

Today the lord of Ral Vastara is Drakovor, an adventurer and pirate of Tricarnian origin who brags he is the heir of Tovakor, the Prince of Scales.

In the past the Lizard Islands, in particular Ral Vastara, were used as a stopover port by ships travelling to the south of the Dominions, because it is quite easy finding fresh water and fruits on the islands, but today the greater part of ships avoid them, due to the danger of Drakovor. Pirates of any sort are an exception to this rule: they are always welcome to spend their loot and to join Drakovor's ranks, and the city's lord is known to frequently visit the Cove, where he is welcomed as a friend and fellow.

Drakovor is becoming a real problem for Tricarnia; he refuses to pay taxes and homage to the High Prince and his fleet of assorted pirates brings danger and ruin all along the coasts of Tricarnia, ransacking without any fear. The only city having a fleet strong enough to face him is Ral Hordaka; the lords of the City of Night are too busy plotting against Nal Askerion and don't want to lose important resources fighting against a petty pirate, but Drakovor has started



attacking their black ships too, so sooner or later the Lords of Port of Darkness will have to deal with him.

Drakovor is very ambitious, and has declared that one day he will march on the City of Princes, seize the throne and behead the High Prince. There must be some grain of truth in Drakovor's words: reports say the adventurer has a terrible monster under his control, a huge Lazarta, big as a house, which obeys his orders. Drakovor calls him Karos, which in Tricarnian means "vengeance" and rides him into battle.

The Lighthouse of Ral Vastara. Like any important coastal city, Ral Vastara has a lighthouse, and a peculiar one: a tall, elegant tower, built of stone, with nine windows, placed to match the compass points. In truth the Lighthouse of Ral Vastara was probably a Keronian observatory, and quite an important one, given that the ceiling of the uppermost room hosts a complex fresco representing with amazing accuracy the position of the stars over the Dominions. But that isn't the weirdest thing: on the very top of the roof, there is a statue, of unknown material, representing a warrior with a raised sword. Mariners who have seen it swear it is identical, size aside, to the famous Guardian of Askerios, the huge statue protecting the seaport of Askerios, far away in Syranthia!

THE MUD HILLS

The area comprised of the Higher Fever River and the border with the Borderlands is collectively called the Mud Hills. It is a strange land for Tricarnia; a hilly impervious is a space missing? many camel humps gathered all together. While the tops of the hills are generally dry and

rich in vegetation, mainly brambles and trees, the bottom is frequently invaded by water, so it is a constant quagmire when the weather is dry and an enormous, muddy river when it rains. Probably the Mud Hills are the reason why Tricarnia never expanded eastward; passing through the hills with an army isn't easy, and in all of Tricarnian history only the Faberterranean Phalanxes did it, and then only because they met a very favorable climate and were guided by a traitor Hill Lord (see below).

The lands are ruled by the Hill Lords, or Mud Lords as the other Princes mockingly call them, each of them controlling a small citadel perched on a crest, and feuding with the neighbors fiercely. The Hill Lords are looked on with contempt by the other Priest Princes; centuries of contact with the barbarians of the Borderlands have mixed their blood and corrupted their customs. They even dropped the titles of Priest Princes, and took those of Lords. Second, being quite poor by Tricarnian standards, they don't employ slave-soldiers, instead leading into battle assorted bands of relatives, friends and servants, who are free men and are collectively called Companions, a thing totally unheard-of in Tricarnia!

A Hill Lord fights, sleeps and eats side-by-side with his Companions, as the barbarians do.

In the past, the Hill Lords fulfilled an important function in Tricarnia, acting as a buffer against the neighboring states, but were hardly rewarded. For this reason, when the Faberterranean Phalanxes arrived from the east, many Hill Lords sided with them, to take revenge on their stuck-up cousins.

Today that ancient hatred is forgotten, but nobody truly trusts the Hill Lords. They don't answer directly to the High Prince, instead they swear fealty to the most powerful of them, the Guardian of Tel Vikara, or the Vikario as he is called, and obey his orders, more or less. Tel Vikara, which means "Guarding Tower," is the sole traditional Citadel in the Mud Hills: it marks the start of the Road of Princes and in the past has had the task of warning Tricarnia of incoming attacks.

Today the Hill Lords are becoming a force to be respected: despite being divided and unruly, their small familial armies are an important force, plus they control access to Tricarnia from the east, because both the Road of Princes and the Elevated Road pass through their land, and they aren't shy about raiding caravans to fill their bellies. In particular the Lords are causing trouble to Princess Lagara of Nal Lagar: they systematically rob every man heading to the City of Three. Embassies were sent from Nal Lagar to the Vikario, asking what he wants to stop the raiding, but the answer was rude at best: "Princess Lagara naked and ready in my wedding bed."

The Vikario knows he can get away with such offenses because he is also courted by the Lord of Ral Hordaka, who wants his support in the incoming conflict with the Askerions.

The Night Shadow. The Mud Hills have never been a safe place: bandits, beasts coming out from the nearby swamps and predators of many types are common, and the Lords must be prepared to defend their people and their herds if they want to keep them. But from some years a danger of unknown proportions has made its nest in the Hills. A creature

which attacks isolated citadels and villages by night, destroying them and killing beasts and people. "It is big, bigger than a house," the few survivors say, "Black as the night, and it flies silently as death itself." In a few years this unknown creature destroyed more than ten Citadels of the Hills, and ate hundreds of people. It attacks and then disappears; strangely it doesn't devour the body of the prey, but the poor bodies are always found pale and drained of all blood. Probably it has a nest concealed somewhere in the hills, but nobody has managed to find it yet, despite the Vikario himself and his chosen warriors hunting it. The suspicion is that the monster is the servant of someone more sinister, someone who wants to extend his grasp over the fiercely independent Hills...

NAL ASKERION, CITY OF WARRIORS

The City of Warriors, as is called, was founded millennia ago by Askerios the Green Fire Seeker, and still observes the martial nature of its founder.

The Lords of Nal Askerion used to ride Balkoths, great War Beasts similar to lions, so Nal Askerion is also referred to as the House of the Horned Lion.

Nal Askerion is surrounded by tall walls, taller even than those of the City of Princes, and is protected by ancient war machines of unknown making. According to one legend they were built by Askerios himself, while another says one of the Princes asked an Alchemist of Gis to build them to earn back his freedom.

Whatever their origin, these massive devices throw fire, acids and even worse things, but they haven't been used for

centuries and in truth the artillerists of the city are unsure they will function again.

Nal Askerion has a martial tradition: the Princes are all warriors, and they lead their armies from the front line, wearing their customary silver armor.

Nal Askerion is a rich city: it directly controls a large area around the Prophets' river and can count on a number of faithful vassals. Nal Askerion is densely populated by comparison with the rest of Tricarnia, but you can still find a number of ruins there, old scars of the Caled Wars.

The Silver Lords of Askerion, as they are called, are one of the more powerful families of Tricarnia today, and never hid their ambitions for the Ivory Throne of the City of Princes. But naturally they aren't

the only ones with that in mind; their greatest rivals are the Hordakans, who are almost their equals in power (see The War of the Moon and the Night sidebar).

The City of Warriors currently has two Princes: Askevor and Valekor. Askevor, the older, as tradition demands, rules the city and holds the title of Prince, while his brother, slightly younger, commands the army. This could be a problem in any other Citadel, but the two brothers respect deeply each other and this is more a point of strength than weakness.

At this moment the Princes are holding a delicate negotiation with the Silk Queen of Val Toraasa, trying to arrange a marriage between Sovar of Val Toraasa and Princess Valenya of Askerion, the daughter of Askevor. But whispers say this will



never happen; for some unknown reason Valenyia refuses to marry, regardless of the pressure her family is putting on her.

Turmoil on the Prophets' River. The vassal lords of Nal Askerion are reporting many escaped slaves, and even some rebellion. This is almost unheard-of, because for centuries the slaves have been constantly fed with drugs to keep them calm. The reason, it seems, is the Dream, which in this area is becoming a real problem; every day, people catch the strange fever and, if they survive, in a few days try to escape, headed toward the Brokenchain Mountains or the secret villages the Cult of the Dream has in the thick of the swamps.

According to some, the origin of the Dream could be in the waters of the river, which infects whoever drinks it. Probably this is false, but a disturbing fact is that people sleeping in proximity to the Prophets' river, even sane ones, have a lot of weird dreams.

In addition, hunters have reported strange plantations in the thick of the abandoned areas, where escaped slaves are growing a lavender-colored flower, probably some sort of Lotus, which seems to be very important to the Cult.

Finally, Asans, the masters of the cult, are making their appearance throughout the land, proselytizing among the already-infected slaves: slave hunters are sent against them, and rich bounties placed on their heads, but, so far this strategy has had no success, because the population protects and hides them. The Silver Lords, till now, have paid little attention to this problem, because they are totally absorbed in their political maneuvers against the Hordakans, but if they don't quickly take some countermeasures, they could have a slave rebellion to handle soon.

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE WAR OF THE MOON AND THE NIGHT

It is not a secret that Tricarnia is going to explode. The High Prince is weak, or at least is considered so, and the Hordakans and the Askerions are ready to tear apart the kingdom to get their hands on the Ivory Throne.

Alliances are being made: the Askerions with Val Toraasa, the Hordakans with the Hill Lords, and both of them are courting Lagaria of Nal Lagar. To add another element of uncertainty to the mixture, nobody knows how the Eunuchs of Nal Nomantor will react to these moves.

So far nobody has acted openly, but a number of underground conflicts are underway: minor lords from one or another faction bickering, marriages arranged, ambassadors mysteriously disappearing and lot of espionage by both sides.

In addition somebody wonders if High Prince Ivakor is really so weak or if he is playing a complex game to expose his opponents.

Whatever happens, Tricarnian poets and singers are already calling this period the War of the Moon (the Askerions, who wear silver) and the Night (the Hordakans, who live in darkness) even if it hasn't already started.

It is a period during which adventurers, or even a minor House of Tricarnia, can achieve a position of power if they play their cards well, and if Hordan is on their side, obviously.

NAL HAMAR, THE BLEEDING ONE

Nal Hamar, the proud citadel of the Daughters of Baachaga, is the persistent warning of how terrible the rage of Hordan and her followers can be.

In the past Nal Hamar was rich and powerful, but when the Priest Princesses ruling it, Vanara and Marala, tried to kill Hordanas, the Daughter of Hordan used the power of her blood to taint the fens surrounding Nal Hamar causing a terrible malady that still exists today: the Red Plague.

Red is the commonest color in the fens: plants, stones, soil, even plants, animals and the few people living in the fens often have a reddish hue.

And wherever red touches something, there is the chance that corruption crawls in. Red-Touched creatures are hideous to see: their bodies are twisted and half melted from the malady, and their minds deranged. But they aren't the most

dangerous ones: Red Bringers are even worse. In appearance they are the same, the Red-Touched are slowly dying, but while their touch isn't contagious, that of the Red Bringers is, and a simple brush from one of them is enough to spread the malady.

Nal Hamar seems to be the heart of the Red Plague: festoons of red vines cover its old walls, and giant, deformed beasts use it as a den.

The region of the Red Fens is avoided by every sane traveler, but it is still inhabited by Red Bringers: in great part they are persons struck by the malady who try to find comfort among others with the same problems. Among them are also the descendants of the old dwellers of the city, who live covered in rags among the ruins. A curious legend also says that the Red-Touched are ruled by the Lady of Sores, a horribly deformed woman who is in truth Vanara, the last survivor of the Sisters of Baachaga. If this is true, she would be almost eighteen centuries old, but being a Keronian of pure breed, she could be.

HERO'S JOURNAL:

THE NATURE OF THE RED PLAGUE

Stories say that the Red Plague was caused by Hordanas, the Daughter of Hordan, who placed a terrible curse on her blood, spilled in the fen's water.

This explanation is arguable: recently Fildago, a Sage of the Library of Syranthia, supposed that the real cause of the Plague could be totally different: his theory is that the Red Plague is a minuscule Lotus spore, called the Red Lotus of Death, which exists naturally in the air, but it takes root only in certain conditions. When this happens, the plant infests whatever is available: beasts, plants, men, even stones and soil.

According to Fildago, discovering what the conditions activating the spores are is the key to curing the illness. Fildago's theories were rejected as gibberish by the other sages of the Great Library of Syranthia, but this, instead of convincing him to desist, made him more adamant in pursuing his researches.

Unluckily Fildago disappeared many years ago: he embarked on a ship bound from Kenaton to Caldeia, a vessel that never arrived at its destination.

The Wind of Death. It sometimes happens, luckily not more than once per year, that a strong wind blowing from the Brokenchain Mountains sweeps Nal Hamar, taking the polluted air away. When this happens, the people living around the fens say the Wind of Death is blowing, and they hide in their homes. After the wind ceases every lord sends his men out, armed with oil-soaked staves, looking for any patch of red they can find, to burn it. Despite this, outbreaks of Red Plague happen, not only in proximity to the fens, where the people are generally more attentive to the problem, but also in far-away countries, where the Red Plague is only a legend.

NAL LAGAR, THE CITY OF THREE

Nal Lagar is called the City of Three, because it is built at the crossing of three rivers: the Fever River which branches out in two: the Lesser Fever River and the Greater Fever River. In the past Nal Lagar was one of the powers of Tricarnia, given that the Elevated Road passed through it, bound to Nal Ramasha, but today that era is past, and Nal Lagar is slowly decaying.

Nal Lagar is the magical city par excellence: in no other place in Tricarnia you can find a greater concentration of augurs, petty wizards, sorcerers and followers of minor cults. The reason is that, being at the crossroad of three rivers, there is the belief that powerful magical energies flow through it.

Nal Lagar was famous for her giant turtles in the past; huge, heavily-armored reptiles trained to crush enemies, but in recent years the fertility of the eggs has dwindled, and they are much reduced in numbers.

Currently Nal Lagar is ruled by Priest Princess Lagaria. It is an uncommon thing for a woman to rule a noble house, but all her brothers died in recent years, in suspicious ways, leaving her as sole heir of the family. In the early part of her reign a power-hungry cousin tried to dethrone Lagaria, but was found in his bedroom totally mad, permanently affected by strange visions which never disappeared, probably the effect of some weird Lotus. Lagaria took him under her care, and from that day on, nobody dared challenge her power anymore.

Lagaria is a peculiar person, even by Tricarnian standards. She isn't married and does not seem to be willing to get married in the near term. Instead she has surrounded herself with a court of slave-lovers, a thing that many noblewomen do, but in private. The palace of Lagaria, stories say, is in a permanent orgy festival of continuous sex, Lotus abuse and other similar things, and Lagaria is at the center of it all. In truth this is probably only a ruse; Lagaria, despite her appetites, is a clever ruler, and she is playing a very delicate game with the Askerions and the Hordakans; she knows that her support for one of the two families could decide the name of the next High Prince of Tricarnia.

In the meantime she is trying to improve commerce in the city, halving taxes for foreign merchants, but she has problems with the rapacious Hill Lords, who frequently raid caravans headed to Nal Lagar and scoff at her ambassadors.

The Cult of the Shapes. Voices, very quiet ones, say that Nal Lagar is secretly becoming the center of the reborn cult of Baachaga, the Toad God, who is preparing his final revenge against the hated Hordan. Somewhere, hidden in the city, must be

the Great Temple of the Shapes where the cultists of Baachaga are performing their unholy rites. The question that many ask is what Lagaria's relationship with the cult is. Some say she is actively trying to defeat them, because they are a dangerous threat for her power, while others say she has made a pact with them and is secretly the lover of the Guardian of Shapes, the high priest of the cult. But the most disturbing rumor is another, that in truth Lagaria isn't a woman at all, but a demon summoned by the cult, ruling the city on their behalf.

NAL NOMANTOR, CITY OF PAIN

Nal Nomantor is probably the oldest citadel in Tricarnia, after the City of Princes. From the beginning of Tricarnian history, it has been the seat of Jestiriel, one of the Green Fire Seekers and probably one of the few Keronians still alive.

Nal Nomantor is very large, probably bigger than the City of Princes, and is built entirely of brownish stone. The peculiarity of the citadel is that it is built directly over the River of Pain, on massive arches of stone. The fresh water of the river enters the city from west, passes under the city, and exits from east, polluted by Lotus waste and other dirty things produced in the citadel.

The house of Jestiriel isn't a pleasant place; the very name means "House of Pain" because it was created by Jestiriel as a place to carry out his experiments on slaves. Nal Nomantor is famous for at least three things.

First, the Gardens of Lotus, a series of hanging gardens built on the highest ramparts of the town, where the most

exotic Lotus plants, even those coming from the remotest areas of the Dominions, are grown for the experiments of Jestiriel. Some of the gardens are even covered by glass domes to recreate the perfect climate in which particular plants can grow. The Gardens are heavily protected by the Guardians of the Lotus, or Green Guardians, a sect of eunuchs which tend the plants and protect them against theft; some of the plants grown there are more valuable than entire towns. Sometimes a thief tries his luck with the Gardens, but he rarely comes back; nobody knows if he is caught by the Guardians or if he is dispatched by the plants themselves... some of them are carnivorous!

Second, Nal Nomantor is famous for the Breeding Pits. A constant flux of fresh slaves, coming from the City of Princes, enters the pits daily, there to be subjected to all sorts of experiments and mutations at Jestiriel's direction. Most of them die horribly, while others survive, transformed into overspecialized creatures. The best specimens are kept, and forced to mate. The offspring are the basis of the Slave Castes of Tricarnia and are sold at high prices (see below). The Breeding Pits are ruled by the Guardians of Pain, or Black Eunuchs, another sect specializing in medicine, torture and Lotus ministration. The few slaves who survive the Pits rarely talk of them, but those few reports speak of a real nightmare.

Third, Nal Nomantor is known for the Flesh Market. There the Guardians of Flesh, also called the Red Eunuchs, the third sect of Nal Nomantor, maintain order in the market, oversee the sale of the best slaves created in the Pits, and buy the best specimens coming from outside to send them into the Pits. The politics of Nal Nomantor is selling and buying slaves from everyone, regardless of their

allegiance. It isn't uncommon for rival Priest Princes to buy warrior slaves side by side, take them to their houses and then war amongst themselves. The Guardians of Flesh are even ready to buy the slaves conquered by the winner, if he wants. But beware your manners in Nal Nomantor: no hostile act is tolerated in the market. If someone violates the Peace of the Market he is ruthlessly beaten by the Guardians and then thrown into the Pits, be he slave or Prince.

The Council of Three. From the outside, Nal Nomantor seems like a perfectly oiled mechanism, with the three factions of Eunuchs working well together, under the supervision of their master. The truth is very different: Jestriel hasn't been seen in public for centuries. The official version is that he is busy in his laboratory, but rumors filtering from the House of Pain whisper that he is severely ill or perhaps even a long time dead. The citadel is truly run by the Council of Three, the High Eunuchs at the head of the three castes. In the past these posts were held by men with absolute loyalty to their master, but today that isn't true anymore: each caste is trying to get the upper hand over the others, and the equilibrium is slowly breaking. There are even rumors that one of the Three is taking bribes from outside to influence the slave market and that he is smuggling forbidden Lotus.

Nobody knows how this will influence the future of Tricarnia.

NAL RAMASHA, THE GREEN

Nal Ramasha was the most powerful Citadel in Tricarnia before the Caled Wars. Founded by Ramor, the most trusted man of Tovakor, who received

from the Prince of Scales the task of building a strong fortress in the north and he did his best. Nal Ramasha was a bustling center of activity, and the Ramashans always demonstrated an uncommon sense of loyalty to the City of Princes. Nal Ramasha was a great agricultural center, and in times of yore the rice fields around the Fever River (which during these times was still called the Tovakor River) produced more food than the Xalaryka, plus they built gold mines in the Brokenchain Mountains.

Then the Caleds came down, and Nal Ramasha fell. Foreigners don't truly realize how much the Caled Wars changed the landscape of Tricarnia, and Nal Ramasha is the most blatant example: not only warriors came down from the Caled Forest, but the plants themselves moved down, invading the region. Stories say that bark and roots shrieked with pain, while huge, rotting trees walked down in the rice fields, killing the terrorized slave-soldiers and crushing demons with their wooden claws.

When the Caled War finally ended, and the plants stopped moving and became normal again, the rice fields of Nal Ramasha were no more, replaced by a large, haunted bayou, where the specters of old warriors continue to fight the ghosts of their naked enemies, in a struggle that will never end.

But the evil of Nal Ramasha isn't confined to the north: it pours down southward, like pus from an infected wound, bringing strange illnesses and fevers to the southern lands. People say that the Dream, like many other evils, arrived through these dreaded waters.

The Ruins of Nal Ramasha. Travelers say that although Nal Ramasha is ended, the



ruins of the imposing citadel, with its tall, spiraling, towers, still stand up in the thick of the Bayou. The same travelers also say that figures dressed in tattered cloaks still loom in the swamp, silent as ghosts and some, under the moonlight, have seen a glimpse of silver and green, the Ramashan house colors, under their rags.

From this, the step to talking of a Ramashan Lord still living in Nal Ramasha is a short one, and with the passing of the years the stories become wilder and wilder: first, that the Lord is surrounded by a court of soldiers, which came back from the dead, second, that the Lord is still alive, but constantly tortured by the ghosts of the Caled druids he killed, and third, that the Lord and his court look perfectly normal during nights of the full moon, but in truth they are specters and

any traveler accepting his hospitality is doomed never to leave the Citadel.

Probably all these stories are false, but what is surely true is that in recent years, a band of tattered men, led by a spooky warrior wearing Tricarnian war armor, has raided the lands immediately south of Nal Ramasha. The identities of these bandits are unknown, because they don't speak and don't leave the bodies of their comrades on the ground. What is certain is that they take refuge in the Ramasha Bayou.

THE PAINFENS

The Painfens are a large swampy area, created by the delta of the River of Pain. Unlike other similar zones of Tricarnia,

they are largely wilderness, untamed and not farmed. The reason is that the whole fens are heavily polluted by the wastes the River of Pain brings in, after passing under Nal Nomantor.

The Painfens are rich in animal and plant life, from the omnipresent giant bamboo, to the Fen Alligator, one of the more vicious beasts of Tricarnia. Several of these animals and plants are heavily mutated due to the Lotus influx: so it isn't uncommon to find beasts with two heads, or abnormally big or small specimens, or even weirder things.

Very few people dwell in the Painfens: some crazy old hermits (probably slaves escaped from Nal Nomantor) and a handful of desperate bandits. On this last topic, we must remember the fens are bounded to the south by the Lazarta Jungle: sometime beasts from these woods are stranded in the swamp and, occasionally, tribes of Colored Men move into the fens to hunt.

These swamps are also famous for a natural phenomenon, unknown in other parts of the Dominions, called the Kiss of the Fens. During particular nights, when the moon is in a special conjunction, a strange inverted tide happens, and the waters of the sea are sucked into the delta. Apart from suddenly raising the water level in the fens, this phenomenon is very dangerous for ships, which are dragged by an incredible force toward the swamp. At this point many of them simply break on the rocks, while others remain stranded when the water suddenly drops down. The fate of the crews of these unfortunate vessels is often bad: the creatures of the fen learnt that the relicts are full of tasty men, and often the Colored Men assault the ships too, looking for plunder and

slaves. But those aren't the worst fate: the Eunuchs of Nal Nomantor keep an eye on the water level, and immediately after the Kiss of the Fens they dispatch hunting parties to capture mariners and passengers who then meet their fate in the breeding pits of the unholy city.

For this reason the coastal area of the Painfens is dotted by a number of wrecks, in various states of decomposition, which is called the Fens Graveyard. Nobody truly knows what treasures, and what dangers, lie among the rotting hulls...

The Island of Skargya. Skargya is a small rocky island off the fens. A tall and bold pinnacle, it has a single easily defendable quay, so in times of yore someone built a stony fortress upon it. Nobody knows for sure who the original builder was, even if the most reliable sources say it was made by Syranthian merchants. Whatever its origin, a strange curse seems to hover over the Fortress of Skargya: whoever owns it is doomed to die in a horrible way. In the past the fortress has passed through many hands: the Hordakans, the Amazons, even the pirates of the Finger Islands. All of them were bloodily removed from their seats by war, poison, even pestilence or madness. According to the Songs of Valcuvius (see sidebar), in the caverns under the fortress there is a forbidden passage leading to the Kingdom of Death and this is the reason for the bad atmosphere on the island. Till a few months ago the fortress was empty, but recently signs of activity were seen on it, so probably someone has reclaimed these blood-soaked walls.

HERO'S JOURNAL:**VALCUVIUS THE GREAT**

Tricornians can be cruel, but they appreciate art, in particular music. And there is no singer they revere more than Valcuvius the Great. A former slave of a far-away country (probably Kyros), young Valcuvius, if stories are true, had a voice so sweet and pure as to make the High Prince weep.

Valcuvius lived around 2200 AF, and he wasn't only a singer, but also a poet and a composer. The incredible thing is that, being a normal human, he could not fully hear the highest notes of Tricornian music, but nevertheless he composed songs and ballads for the Lords, using sounds he could not hear. His body of musical and poetical work is one of the most important in Tricornia.

Valcuvius wasn't a eunuch: with his sweet words he managed to persuade the High Prince to keep him intact, saying that the mutilation would extinguish his poetical vein. Probably being a eunuch would have been better for him, because years later he was found in the bed of the High Princess and so condemned to die on the altar of Hordan.

Stories say that Valcuvius sang even while dying, to compensate his master for the offense, but the truth is that his final composition, the Sweet Death of Tricornia, was never found. A copy of this manuscript, if still exists, would be worth a man's weight in gold to many Princes.

RAL HORDAKA, PORT OF DARKNESS

Ral Hordaka means "Port of Darkness" and no better name can be found for the citadel. Built on the coast, it has a secluded port, the only access to which is by passing between three huge basalt islands, called the Teeth of Night. The islands are so near each other, and the waters are so treacherous, that only a very skilled helmsman can enter the port without being guided inside. Usually foreign ships communicate their intention of entering the port using mirrors or lanterns, and the guards watching the sea from fortresses on top of the Teeth send a barge to guide the newcomers into the port.

The Teeth also host the most powerful weapon of Ral Hordaka, a vast colony of Shadow Bats, of the sub-species called Vampire Bats, or Yalaruka, which made a pact long ago with the Princes of the Citadel. They defend the city and let the warriors of the Prince fly on their backs. These magnificent troops are called Nightriders and are the terror of any battlefield. In exchange for their favors, the lairs of the Yalaruka are protected and they are fed with their favorite food: human blood. The Blood Pact, as is called, is one of the many points of strength of the Hordakans, and it has lasted for centuries.

Ral Hordaka is built in a sort of rocky basin, surrounded by walls of natural stone and access to the Citadel by land is made through two tunnels, one from the east and the other from the west, through which passes the Road of Princes. The basin's walls and the Teeth of Night, despite making the citadel almost unconquerable, also condemn it to perpetual darkness, but this is a way of living the Hordakans are accustomed to, and the roads of the citadel are illuminated by the typical spherical lanterns, which project light of many hues.



Ral Hordaka is the most important port of Tricarnia, even more important than the City of Princes; it has the largest fleet of the kingdom, both military and commercial, and its black-colored galleys are feared throughout the Dread Sea. As a consequence of this sea power, the slave market of Ral Hordaka is enormous, and in the pits of the town is stored all the human flesh arriving from foreign countries.

But the wealth coming from trade isn't enough for the Hordakans. The noble house, which secretly wants revenge for the events of the Hordakan Rebellion (1522 -1526 AF), has always wanted the Ivory Throne of the High Prince. The current Priest Prince, Hordakor, is strong, motivated and cunning: he has smelled the blood of High Prince Ivakor, and finding him weak is preparing to make his move. But he isn't the only pretender: the Askerions of Nal Askerion also want the throne, and so a bloody war is going to happen. Nobody knows if it will be in

a week, a month or a year; for now both sides are gathering allies, but what is sure is that when Hordakor is ready he'll strike in a deadly way.

A Fondness for Blood. The Hordakans are a strange people. Their relationship with the Yalaruka is stronger than the common bond between a man and his pet or mount, especially for members of the Prince's family; all of them, women included, have a personal Bat at their disposal, which answers their calls and communicates with them using a language of shrieks. The Hordakans nourish their mounts personally, and enjoy seeing a poor slave killed and devoured by their hellish pets. Like the bats, they took the habit of drinking human blood too, finding it refreshing and tradition demands that when a prince is born in the house, his first food isn't mother's milk, but bat's blood; in this way the bond between the two races, humans and bats, becomes stronger with every generation. But this behavior has its

consequences too: many of the Hordakan princes develop a sort of addiction to human blood, and go absolutely berserk when they smell it. In certain cases this curse is so strong that the noble leaves his people, and goes to live among the bats in their dark caves in the Teeth, leaving his human family forever.

HERO'S JOURNAL: NIGHTRIDERS

All the members of the Hordakan family are Nightriders, but not all Nightriders are blood relatives of the Prince, even if this honor is only available to a Tricornian noble. A Nightrider receives his bat mount when it is a pup, and must learn to feed, understand, and train it. When the Yalaruka has grown big enough, he can fly on it, joining his peers in battle, at the order of the Hordakan Prince. Nightriders are used as scouts, messengers and heralds, but their main use is in battle, where the fear they cause is devastating.

Their number isn't very big: today Ral Hordaka has less than one hundred of them.

VAL HORDAKOR

The first city founded by Keronian survivors, Val Hordakor still exists today. Unlike the present-day Citadels, it is a large underground settlement, built in the caverns under the Brokenchain Mountains. The front door of Val Hordakor was forgotten and lost long ago; it is on the top of the mountains, and was the access used by Salkor and his retinue to enter the caves. What still exists is the back door or

Door of the Night. It is a large stone gate, tall as a giant, at the base of the mountains, through which passes the Night River, which spurts out from the depths of the mountains. Many are the marvels of Val Hordakor, where the Keronians lived for centuries, waiting for the external world to be safe again, but it has been abandoned for many centuries and voices say that a strange shadow now lives inside it, with a cohort of evil creatures at his service.

Probably this rumor is false, the spies of the High Prince say, and Val Hordakor is now occupied by a tribe of escaped slaves, which foolishly want to restore the old city and are creating a new, independent kingdom. "There is no need to intervene," they say. "The caverns themselves will get rid of them."

Nobody truly knows the extent of Val Hordakor and the network of caverns under it. Legends say they are large enough that a man can enter the mines of Val Toraasa, and exit in the outskirts of the Ramasha Bayou.

The Mysteries of the Night River. The caverns of Val Hordakor always hosted large colonies of Shadow Bats, and the Priest Princes developed enchantments to call and bind them at their orders. But they aren't the worst creatures living under the mountains. The Keronians weren't the only ones who used them to find shelter from the Dread Star. Other beings, older than them and infinitely more dangerous, sneaked into the caves, and found a spot to nestle and sleep. Some of them are sleeping even today, but others are slowly waking up. After many centuries in darkness, they don't like sunlight anymore, and they don't like walking either. Some of them dive into the Night River and let themselves be dragged by the water flow. Then they reach the outskirts of the Garnasha

Forest, find shelter under the thick foliage and await nighttime to sneak into the woodcutters' camps (see Garnasha Forest above) to kidnap slaves. Nobody truly knows the identities of these creatures; the few survivors of their ambushes swear they are humanoid, but only vaguely. "Night Stalkers" they are called, or "Flesh Stealers" by the slave-masters, but nobody knows what they do with their prey. They disappear completely, and no remains are found. Maybe they devour them entirely, or, as the old slaves say, they drag them under the mountains, where they endure a fate worse than death.

VAL TORAASA

Val Toraasa was founded around 1320 AF by Vasor the Blond, the second son of a minor noble, who received a plot of land from his liege as a reward for his courage in battle. The name of the lord is forgotten, but not that of the vassal, and the reason is simple: the lands surrounding Val Toraasa are poor, but the mountain is rich in metals, in particular copper, tin and arsenic, vital commodities for the Tricarnian economy as Vasor quickly discovered.

Val Toraasa is quite different from the other Citadels of Tricarnia, because it is built directly on the mountainside.

It isn't very pretty to see: the walls are too sturdy and thick for the traditional Tricarnian esthetic, but they are functional and over the centuries have defended the citadel from the rapacious attentions of the neighbors, envious of its wealth. Stories say that even the army of the Priest Prince besieged Val Toraasa for a year, but never managed to take it.

The citadel extends for good way underground, as the slave-miners working in it dug tunnels deep into the mountains. Nobody really knows how big the mines of Val Toraasa are, there are rumors that they join the vast network of caverns under the Brokenchain range, and this is the reason for the frequent disappearances of slaves: they simply go off into the darkness rather than living in chains all their life.

The slaves themselves deny this and say that their missing brothers are taken by the White Ones, creatures living in the mines, especially where the Demon Metal (arsenic) is found.

Whatever the truth, it isn't a problem: Val Toraasa is extremely rich and buys slaves from the coastal town at a very high rate, because the work in the mines is



hard and unforgiving. As well as digging up the metal, it must be brought to the surface and then smelted. In particular the slaves tasked with processing the Demon Metal die quickly from poisoning.

The overseers of Val Toraasa are among the most ruthless of all Tricarnia and the air around the citadel is always dark and smelly.

The Silk Queen. The current ruling family of Val Toraasa is quite small at the moment. Lord Toraasor is a widower in his sixties, with bad health. He has a single son, Sovar, who is bold and strong, but not exceptionally smart. In truth, the real power in Val Toraasa is Alimaya, a gorgeous bed slave of Kyrosian origin. With a mixture of cunning, malice and indubitable political skill, she now rules the Citadel. Several nobles are outraged by this, but they are very careful about demonstrating their contempt, because the adversaries of the Silk Queen, as she is called for both her appearance and her smooth tongue, have the habit of dying in strange ways. Actually, Alimaya is trying to convince Sovar to accept a dynastic marriage with the Askerions, even if she is continuing to talk with the Hordakans too. Sooner or later one of her petty intrigues will burst out, and then there will be a bloodbath in Val Toraasa...

HERO'S JOURNAL: TRICARNIAN ROADS

Travel in Tricarnia is a real problem; roads are frequently flooded, especially in this era of partial abandonment of the country.

There are two exceptions to this rule: the Road of Princes and the Elevated Road.

Nobody knows who the original builder of the Road of Princes was, but his work still exists today. It isn't a road in the strict sense, but a long wooden pier, built on poles, running all around the coasts of Tricarnia. Tradition and the law of the High Prince require the Lord of a land where the Road of Princes passes to maintain the part under his control in good shape, replacing rotting planks and wooden poles, with serious penalties for unscrupulous Lords. Today that law is no longer enforced and the road is slowly falling apart due to the climate and occasional sabotage by bandits.

The Elevated Road is totally different: built by the will of Tovakor, the Prince of Scales, it is built like the more modern Imperial roads, in paved stones placed upon a tall roadbed. Making it required a titanic effort, but the road is still usable today even if during great floods it ends up underwater. Also the Elevated Road receives little maintenance (but surely more than the Road of Princes), but the paving is extremely durable, probably because the master builders of Tovakor used tar from the Red Fens to fix the stones or, as some say, cast some enchantment on it.

XALARYKA, THE LABYRINTH OF RICE

This complex word means, more or less, “labyrinth of rice” and it describes very well the area comprised between the Lesser and the Greater Fever River. This flat area is a single, immense rice field, constantly tended by legions of slaves. It is totally flooded for much of the year, and apart from the Road of Princes (see sidebar) no other solid path crosses it. The place owes its name to two factors:

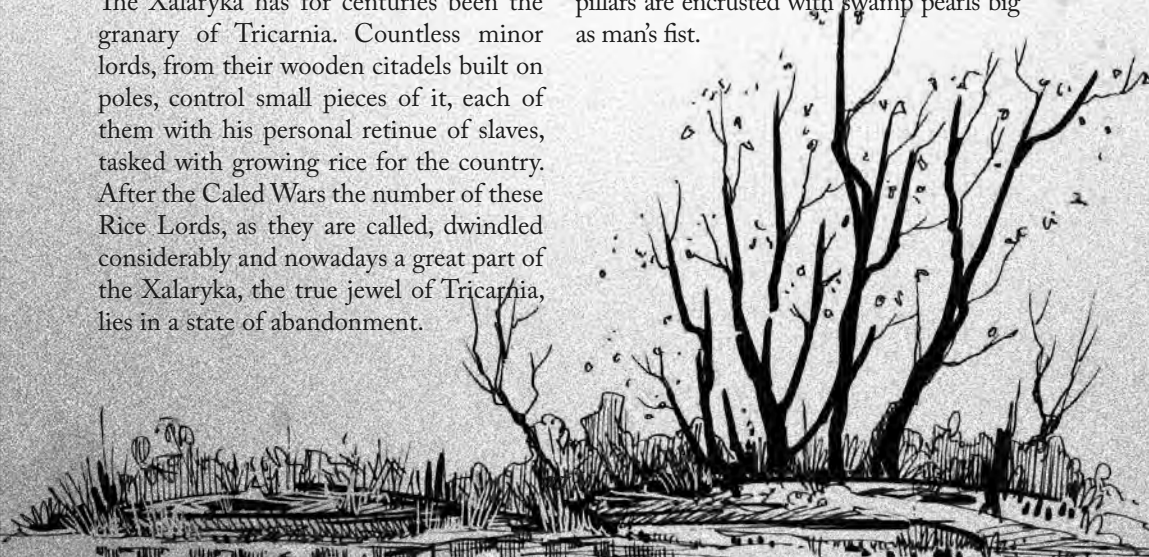
First, it is a really labyrinthine land, with channels, the occasional dry passage and the rice fields making a sort of maze of enormous complexity. Usually without a guide or a barge (for safety, it is better to have both) movement through it is very difficult, because no straight path is possible; you must always take a lot of turns to reach any location.

Second, it is difficult to navigate because the layout of the land isn't fixed: the Xalaryka is full of small islets, called Yathis (which in Tricarnian means “deceit”), which are made of floating plants grown together, with no attachment to the ground, so they constantly move, creating a region of constant change.

The Xalaryka has for centuries been the granary of Tricarnia. Countless minor lords, from their wooden citadels built on poles, control small pieces of it, each of them with his personal retinue of slaves, tasked with growing rice for the country. After the Caled Wars the number of these Rice Lords, as they are called, dwindled considerably and nowadays a great part of the Xalaryka, the true jewel of Tricarnia, lies in a state of abandonment.

In the past the Rice Lords obeyed the City of Princes directly, but for several centuries they have paid homage to the true rulers of the region: the Hordakans of Ral Hordaka and the Lagarians of Nal Lagar. In the last century, frequent wars happened between the two bigger citadels and the Rice Lords were obliged to furnish slave-soldiers and war beasts to their lieges, but today this never happens because almost all the Lords are subject to Ral Hordaka.

The Swamp People. Many beasts live in the ever-changing channels of the Xalaryka, but nothing is more feared than the legendary Swamp People. According to the stories these repellant humanoids have toad-shaped heads and a body covered by a gummy skin. An amphibious race, they dwell in, and especially under, the Yathis in half-flooded tunnels and halls. They are man-eaters, and for this reason they frequently kidnap slaves and travelers, who are dragged into their mossy homes under the water. According to the Sages of Syranthia, the Swamp People are the original dwellers of the swamps, while the Lords of Nal Lagar say they were men in the past, who worshipped the ancient demon-god Baachaga and ere twisted into this shape by their master. There are also stories that, somewhere in the Xalaryka, or under it, there is a city of the Swamp People, whose walls are made of jade and whose pillars are encrusted with swamp pearls big as man's fist.



GM'S TIP: KERONIAN GLOSSARY

Here follows a brief summary of the principal locutions of the Keronian (High Tricarnian) language from which many of the names found in this book are made. The Game Master can use them to create his own names, especially for place names.

Askor. *Revelation.*

Balk. *War*

(A)sker. *Warrior.*

Caria. *Water.*

Dan(ar). *Word.*

Garna. *Wood.*

Horda. *Darkness.*

(K)oth. *Animal, beast.*

Yathis. *Deceit.*

Lagor. *Crossroad, triangle.*

Lar. *Beauty.*

Lasha. *Devour.*

Lazar. *Lizard, reptile, dragon.*

Nal. *Fortress or fortified palace.*

Nya. *Land, earth, ground.*

Namas. *Fidelity.*

Naskarias. *Impetuous, name of Salkor's ship.*

Noman. *Pain.*

Ral. *Port.*

Rikos. *Rice, food.*

Ruk(a). *Bat.*

Thavara. *Justice*

Tel. *Tower, observatory.*

Toras. *Richness.*

Tricar. *Filled with water.*

Val. *House.*

Vikar. *Guard, sentinel, watcher.*

Xal. *Labyrinth*



HEROES OF TRICARNIA

This chapter details a number of new options to create characters born in or connected to Tricarnia.

TRICARNIAN CONCEPTS

Here follows a number of new concepts fitting for a Tricarnian hero. As always, mixing and tweaking them will result in a better and more interesting character.

Note that these aren't the only available concepts in Tricarnia; you can always find a place for those from *GE*, *JCT* and even *GOD*.

Ancient Sleeper. This character, for some reason, drank the Waters of Eternity in the past, or found another way to enter

hibernation. He recently awoke, alone, in a totally changed world: his enemies (probably) died, but so did his friends and family. He knows nothing of the present era, but has a deep knowledge of the past.

Beast Rider. There are demons and monsters in the land of the Sons of Keron. Enormous, terrible creatures, which join the armies of the Priest Princes in battle. You are one of the few people capable of taming, directing and even riding them. Among beast riders there are those who ride the Shadow Bats of the Brokenchain Mountains, and the masters of the giant turtles of Nal Lagar, but above all, the feared Nightriders of Ral Hordaka, the only ones who can stay in the saddle of the Yalaruka, the terrible vampire bats that dwell in the Teeth of the Night.

Bodyguard. Some call you “dog”, but you don't consider it an insult. You are your

master's best man, whether a slave warrior or a foreign mercenary, and you have only one task: protecting him, at the cost of your life if need be.

Diplomat. Tricarnian lords and families often have delicate matters to handle, and after centuries of bloodshed they understood the value of spoken words, treaties and alliances. You are an ambassador, a plenipotentiary, an envoy or a simple herald tasked to further the goals of your master, house or faction. But don't think this is an easy job; politics is often more dangerous than a raging barbarian holding an axe. In the Dominions the concept of inviolability of ambassadors isn't widespread and if you offend a Lord nothing prevents him from sending you to visit his torturers...

Dream Follower. You are a follower of the Cult of the Dream. Your powerful master sent you fever, nightmares and dreams. You endured all of them and saw him in his eternal beauty and splendor. But you aren't necessary a simple worshipper: you can be an Asan, one of those chosen to further his goals with your mind and soul. Or you can be a Templomos, who protects your people with the strength of his weapons and powers.

Eunuch. They castrated you and made you a slave. It is certainly enough to make a man angry. But, is it really so important? Now you have a position of respect; maybe you are the administrator of a potent lord, a chosen warrior of an elite caste or even an artist or an artisan. Yes, you won't have a child of your loins but you are well fed, well treated and will enjoy a life no other slave will. Is this enough to repay your loss... or not?

Epicurean. You are a noble, even if probably not a very important one. But it

doesn't matter, you have plenty of resources to help you enjoy life, experimenting with every type of sensation you want and no responsibilities to interfere. Food, sex, Lotus, torture, even sorcery: they are all pastimes to make your life interesting. But life isn't only pleasure and delicacies: sooner or later the darkest side of the Dominions could come asking you to pay the price for what you've enjoyed...

Freeman. You are in a dangerous position: you are a freeman in Tricarnia. Probably you are a foreigner visiting the place, a guest or a highly-paid specialist at the service of a Lord. Alternatively you can be a freed slave, with the Ring of Freedom freshly tattooed on your neck, or even a legal freeman, the son of a liberated slave. Whatever you are, remember: free men in Tricarnia are considered little more than potential slaves. You must find a position or a protector soon, or you will end in chains among the multitude.

Healer. People die and suffer as much in Tricarnia as they do in the rest of the Dominions. Probably more. You have the knowledge and the skills to save them. You aren't necessarily a good person, you could have learnt a lot about the human body by twisting it with sorcery or Lotus, or you could have studied the ancient anatomical treatises of Keron, or maybe you are a skilled leech master, capable of purging the body of a man of the direst poisons or enslaving him forever using a little, morbid, animal.

Hill Lord Companion. There are warriors and warriors in Tricarnia, but nobody is like you and your brethren: you don't serve your Lord, you aren't his slaves. You are his Companions: you eat with him, feast with him, suffer and rejoice with him. You are his close family and most trusted man. No other Tricarnian can understand this

relationship, they consider you and your folk barbarians. They could be right, but you prefer living like a free barbarian to licking the shoes of a master like a slave dog.

Liberator. There are slaves in Tricarnia, and you were one of them, till someone set you free. Probably you live in the Brokenchain Mountains, helping the other escapees by protecting them with your blade, or maybe you returned into the wolf's lair, in the rice fields or even in the palace of some dreaded Lord, acting as a spy, a saboteur or an assassin. You will die terribly if caught, but you have a dream: you dream of the day when all the chains will be broken and all the slaves free.

Musician. Tricarnians love art, in particular they enjoy music. They have a number of exotic instruments unknown to the other races, and they revere a skilled singer when they find one. You are one of them: with your music you can gain a place at the court of any Lord, win the heart of a woman or win back your life from a band of bored highwaymen. And, if you are skilled enough, maybe you can sing the Eighth Note, which only the Sons of Keron can hear.

Officer. There are armies to lead in Tricarnia, galleys to sail and guards patrols to organize. You are one of the people giving the orders. You could be a high ranking slave, a eunuch or even the younger son of a noble. Or you might even be a foreign mercenary, employed for your skills. But you know how to make men march, fight and obey, and you dream, one day, of rising above the ranks - and who knows, maybe something bad could happen to your older brother...

Outlaw. Social structure in Tricarnia is very rigid: you are a noble or a slave, rarely

a freeman. You are in a noble House or you serve it. But there are people living outside these restrictions; escaped slaves who now are bandits and brigands (such as the infamous Brotherhood of the Roads), a survivor of a defeated noble house, now hunted by his enemies, or maybe even a rebel, someone who wants to subvert the constituted order of Tricarnia and its whole corpus of rules and traditions. Some outlaws carve a comfortable niche in society, like mercenary poisoners or thieves, while others, like highwaymen or rebels, are always on the move to avoid retribution and death.

Priest of Tosar. Many gods exist in Tricarnia, but no other god is like Tosar. Breaker of Chains, eternally dying to save his people, he is the last hope of countless generations of slaves. You know in the depths of your soul that one day slavery will end, all the chains will be broken and men will be equal. But it is not today. And you could be asked to give your life to achieve such a result.

Red-Touched. The Red Plague touched you, but didn't kill you. Probably it would have been better to die, than endure what fate brought upon you. Your body is insensitive, you feel almost no pain, but it is slowly rotting, consumed by the malady. You can wear precious garments and cover your face with an exquisite silver mask, but everybody knows the horror beneath. And in the end, the malady will reach your mind and you'll have to be killed. But till that day you continue living your life, maybe helping others in the same condition, or simply selling your services to whoever wants to employ them. After all, a man that cannot suffer is a rare one.

Silent Hand. The High Prince has many ears, and hands. You are one of them. You may be a man, a woman, a noble or a

slave, even a foreigner or, in certain cases, a child. Someone recruited you, for the welfare of Tricornia. You must spy, cheat, love, betray, even kill at the order of the ruler of the Sons of Keron. And you must do it maintaining anonymity. Nobody must know until it is too late for him to reveal the secret.

Specialist. High Princes sometimes hire experts in some particular field, to use their skills or to train their own people or family. Some of them are even foreigners, and they are rewarded handsomely while they do their job. A specialist is a broad category which includes a number of people: from a retired Phalanx officer who works as a military advisor, to a historian teaching the Prince's sons, a sword master training the Prince himself, or even a cook or an architect.

Slave Warrior. You are a slave. Bred in the pits for a single task: killing whoever your master tells you to kill. Your body and

mind were twisted and modified in many ways to make you excel at this goal. People may find you disturbing, even repulsive, but you don't mind, so long as you have a sharp weapon, food and orders to obey. Maybe there is something else in you, but it is buried deep in your soul.

Torturer. Tricornians love pain; they drink it like a connoisseur tastes a good wine. And you are a particularly good vintner in your field. Maybe you are a slave too, or an independent agent hired when necessity arises, but your job is always the same. Inflicting tortures on victims, or, in certain cases, making them confess. It is a subtle art: many people fear the idea of pain more than the pain itself. Yours is a grim art, and you wear a hood or conceal your identity in some other manner to avoid being shunned, or even worse, subject to dire repercussions.



HERO'S JOURNAL:

NOBLES, SLAVES AND EUNUCHS

Tricornian society is very stratified so basically all persons are nobles or slaves, with a very small class of freemen. Into this equation we must also insert eunuchs who are formally slaves but have a very important role in the social structure.

Nobles and Petty Nobles. *To play a real noble, a character should take a combination of Standing Edges (see page 89 and 133). But in a campaign totally based in Tricornia, this could cause a generic flattening of the heroes.*

An option is playing a Petty Noble: not every Priest Prince of Tricornia is an important one. A Petty Noble only has an honorific title, probably he is in the retinue of some greater lord or something similar. He is above a freeman, but isn't considered a "true" noble (and he doesn't have to acquire any specific Edges).

If you are playing a noble of any type, check the Nobles Setting rules on page 133.

Slaves. *The concept of slavery is a little more complex. In this book you won't find a "Slave Hindrance," because the condition of slavery is too complex and varied: a eunuch overseer, despite being formally a slave, is more powerful and influential than many free men in the Dominions. On the other hand, a rice field worker lives in very poor conditions, but better than a leech fisher slave. You can handle the slavery condition with a mix of Outsider, Poverty, Vow (respect/fear for the owner), Enemy/Wanted (for escaped slaves) or the new Hindrance Slave Mentality.*

Eunuchs. *Being a eunuch is fairly common in Tricornia. Even in this case, you won't find a specific Hindrance, because the game effect isn't very important: the hero cannot reproduce anymore.*

In addition every character copes with his mutilation in different ways, which could be represented with a combination of various Hindrances.

He may or may not be interested in sex anymore: for example Tricornian Princesses keep sexually-functioning bed slaves, who are deprived of the reproductive capacity, and are to all effects and purposes castrated.

Even the physical alterations are variable: some eunuchs grow fat due to the lack of certain hormones produced in the sexual glands, while others keep a healthy physique through hard exercise and/or Lotus consumption.

Generally speaking a eunuch character could suffer a Charisma penalty against certain types of persons (like barbarians). If the player wants a particular social stigma on his hero, he can take the Outsider Hindrance.

NEW HINDRANCES

DREAM FEVER (MINOR)

This character has in some way caught the strange illness called the Dream, a fever that manifests in remove strange recurring visions and exhausts the body.

In game terms, at the beginning of each session, a character with the Dream Fever must make a Vigor roll or suffer a Level of Fatigue, which can only be removed by consuming a dose of Lotus of Dream (see Gear).

If he rolls a critical failure the situation is worse and he becomes Exhausted. In this case, if at the beginning of the next session the character suffers another level of Fatigue, he could die (it is very wise for the sick character to keep a dose of Lotus of Dream handy).

This chronic disease can be endured for many years, even for life, but can be ended if the character actively seeks out the Cult of the Dream to be trained to accept and embrace the gift of the Dreamer.

When it happens, in game terms there are two possible options.

First, the character joins the cult and is taught by the Asans how to live with the Dream. In this case the player replaces this Hindrance with another suitable one: for example Vow (obey the Cult of the Dream).

Second, the character can choose to reveal a real knack for the Dream, becoming an Asan or a Templomos. Rules-wise, he can spend an advance to acquire the Arcane Background (Dreaming) and must replace this Hindrance with another one. This

option is available only if the character doesn't already have another Arcane Background.

MELANCHOLY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

Living in the last days of a dying empire, surrounded by slaves and memories of past grandeur which will never return isn't very helpful for anyone's mood, but this character is naturally inclined toward sadness, constantly assaulted by a sense of futility and desperation.

Apart from role-playing, rules-wise, with the minor version of this Hindrance, the character is easy to overcome: if he ties an opposed roll, he loses the confrontation (just the opposite of the Killer Instinct Edge, SWD page 36, which is forbidden to him). With the major version of this Hindrance, the situation is worse; whenever the character is in a situation which could lead to despair (for example, a friend is ill, a very difficult battle is about to start and so on), the GM can ask him to check his melancholy, with a Spirit (-2) roll. In the case of failure he suffers a bout of pessimism and despair, which causes a level of Fatigue till the end of the scene. If the character rolls 1 on the Spirit die, the situation is even worse; in addition to the level of Fatigue, the hero is so sad he doesn't want to do anything except a contemplative or recreational activity (singing sad songs, brooding, drinking, weeping in a corner) till the end of the scene.

The GM can only ask a hero for a single check of melancholy per session, and the player can automatically pass it by spending a Bennie, if he wants.

RED-TOUCHED (MAJOR)

This character is affected by the terrible malady called the Red Plague, which luckily didn't kill him but condemned him to a fate worse than death: the slow, unstoppable rotting of his body. On the positive side the hero is almost immune to pain and gains the Nerves of Steel Edge, if he is a Wild Card, or Combat Reflexes if he is an Extra. On the negative side, at the *end* of every scenario the character must make a Rotting Roll (Vigor (-2)). In the case of failure the character's illness worsens, advancing by one stage and the player must choose one of the effects. At the fifth stage, the hero dies or is so badly damaged as to be incapable of joining adventures.

If the GM is playing very short adventures or stories packed in a very tight continuity, he can decide to reduce the frequency of the Rotting Roll to one every two scenarios.

Red Touched heroes begin at stage zero.

First Stage – The Illness Begins. All Thumbs (manipulation problems) *or* Anemic *or* Lame *or* Ugly.

Second Stage – Minor Rot. One Eye *or* One Leg *or* Small (the body twists up).

Third Stage – Major Rot. Delusional (Major – the illness touches the mind) *or* Elderly (general bodily collapse, no bonus Skill points gained) *or* One Arm

Fourth Stage – A Walking Monster. Reduce one Attribute by one die step (Agility *or* Strength) *or* Blind.

SLAVE MENTALITY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

This character was probably trained from birth to obey orders, for this reason it is very difficult for him to exert his own will. With the Minor version of this Edge, he suffers -2 to all rolls to resist mind magic and during Social Conflicts, because he lacks the capacity of imposing himself on others. With the Major version the situation is worse, and he suffers -2 to resist any type of Test of Will.



HERO'S JOURNAL: SLAVE CASTE CHARACTERS

A slave hero belonging to an exotic slave caste can be an interesting character to play.

During character creation you can choose Edges regardless of Rank requirements, but you must choose at least one physically altering Hindrance (i.e. Ugly, Fat, Bad Eyes) and you start with one fewer Skill Point.

This includes advances up to Seasoned Rank if characters start at that level.

All these advantages and limitations must receive a trapping of some sort to represent the fact they are the fruit of selective breeding, Lotus and intensive, overspecialized training.

In addition, remember that slave warriors are... well... slaves. Even if your slave is a runaway, probably his master or another slave hunter will be on his tracks!

Alternatively, extensively altered slave castes (like the gladiatorial ones) can be built using the Race rules (see SWD page 20) and GOD page 144.

For warrior castes it can also be useful to create a particular weapon typical of the caste (using the Slave Caste Weapons rules on page 125).

Here follow some examples of Slave Castes using the simple method above. The GM and the players are encouraged to create their own.

Value: This entry gives you a rough idea of the cost of the slave on the open market (and the effort the owner will use to retrieve an escaped one). Options are: Very Low, Low, Average, High, Very High, Unique.

BRONZE JACKAL

Bronze Jackals are among the most unfortunate slaves in Tricornia. During childhood their back is broken in particular places, so they are forced to walk in sort of four-legged lope. The objective is transforming them into a sort of man-dog: they communicate with wild howls and behave exactly as canines. Priest Princes make them wear peculiar segmented armor, arm them with javelins and daggers, and use them as skirmishers. Despite their posture they run extremely fast.

Customization: Extraction, Fleet Footed, Loyal, Ugly.

Gear: Bronze-tipped javelin, specially fitted light bronze armor, dagger.

Special: Some Bronze Jackals file their teeth to make them similar to dogs' ones, they deal Str+d4 damage but suffer -2 to Charisma.

Value: Average.

DESIRE'S BUTTERFLY (SHAYALIGA)

A gorgeous looking woman, a Shayaliga is chosen to take this role from infancy; her body is tattooed with specific patterns and she is taught ancient erotic skills. Desire's Butterflies, as they are called, emanate a particular fragrance which makes them incredibly attractive to any person with a matching sexual orientation. This derives from a Lotus concoction they must take daily, the Red Lotus of Blind Lust. This Lotus is both their blessing and their curse, because once they start taking it, they cannot quit, otherwise their marvelous bodies suffer an incredibly quick aging process. From this derives the common Tricornian saying "ephemeral as a Shayaliga." Shayaliga are very costly.

Customization: Charismatic, Habit (Lotus), Temptress, Very Attractive.

Gear: Bejeweled Bikini.

Special: A Shayaliga who doesn't take her Lotus fix for a week must make a Vigor roll or her body starts decaying very quickly (replace Habit (Lotus) with Elderly).

Value: Unique.

GRAY FACES

Gray faces are mud-colored men, or rarely women, with an absent expression and very similar features. They are almost immune to pain and very resistant to fatigue, but they lack any initiative. They form the bulk of many Priest Princes' armies, but require the strict control of eunuch overseers to fight properly. Noble houses tattoo them with a particular mark to make them recognizable.

Customization: Combat Reflexes, Hard to Kill (Wild Cards only), Quirk (absent-minded), Slave Mentality.

Gear: Caste bronze sword (Reach 1, -1 Damage), light leather armor, medium shield.

Value: Very Low.

LIZARD EYES

These thin but muscular slaves are usually dressed in lizard-skin cloaks and not much more else. They are the chosen archers of the Tricornian army, skilled in the use of the infamous Hamarran Bow. Their faces are horrible to see, with bulging eyes and elongated jaws, so they try to conceal them under the hoods of their tattered cloaks.

Customization: Trained Thrower (Lizard Bow), Ugly.

Gear: Lizard Bow, bronze dagger, lizard skin cloak (counts as light armor).

Value: Average.

LONG HEADS

Tall and lanky figures, Long Heads have a slightly cadaverous aspect, and abnormally long heads. They are gifted with eidetic memories, and many houses use them as living archives. They are very intelligent, but they were selected to have no personal initiative and be very shy.

Customization: Sage, Scholar, Slave Mentality, Yellow.

Gear: Robe.

Value: Very High.

IRON BULL

Calling this man a bull is a joke in bad taste, because he is a eunuch. With their enormous mass of muscle and fat, Iron Bulls are used as personal bodyguards by Priest Princes. They need no weapons, and are expert in many forms of unarmed combat, from rough pugilism to wrestling.

Customization: Brawler, Bruiser, Obese.

Gear: Loincloth.

Value: High.

MUD OX

An enormously big and strong man (or rarely a woman) with a very small head, the Ox Porters, as they are sometime called, act as human beasts of burden. They would be dangerous if they weren't so dumb, docile and slow.

Customization: Brawny, Clueless, Pacifism.

Gear: Loincloth.

Special: Very rarely do Ox Porters have Smarts higher than d4.

Value: Very Low.

RAZOR HEALERS

These slaves are mostly females, and totally bald. They have a quite frail physique but an excellent grasp of the human body. In addition, during childhood the final phalanges of their fingers are cut away and replace with small, very sharp, razors, which they use with incredible ability for suturing, sewing, cutting and generally performing medical activities.

Customization: All Thumbs (excluding Healing), Healer.

Gear: Healer bag.

Special: Razor fingers (Str+d4 – cause All Thumbs Hindrances), leather gloves.

Value: High.

STRIPED FACES

These slaves are always tall, muscular and very pale, with grayish hair. They are ferocious fighters, and usually paint red stripes on their faces using the blood of fallen enemies. Their greatest weakness is their bad sight, but they compensate for this with an excellent sense of smell.

Customization: Alertness (smelling only), Bad Sight, Frenzy, One Hand and Half.

Gear: Caste bronze sword (+1 Damage, -1 Parry), loincloth.

Value: Average.

TURTLE BACKS

These small, ugly warriors wear heavy bone armor, made of turtle shells, and similarly made helms. Despite their comical appearance they are quite dangerous, especially in large numbers.

Customization: Armor Use, Small.

Gear: Heavy bone armor, bronze tipped spear.

Value: Low.

NEW EDGES

Some new Edges are introduced below. Unless otherwise noted, they are also available outside Tricarnia.

Beast Friend and Beast Rider: Several new creatures are available as companions for a character with the Beast Friend Edge; some of them are really big. If a creature is large enough to be ridden, the hero must take the Beast Rider Edge instead of Beast Friend. The two Edges are similar, but while the Beast Friend allows the character to freely replace a dead animal, a Beast Rider must buy one or undertake a specific quest to find a replacement.

Bloodline Edges: Tradition and bloodline are very important themes in Tricarnia, and characters with certain ancestors can have specific birthrights. Normally these Edges require a character to be a Tricarnian, or even a Tricarnian noble, but with the GM's permission they can be chosen by other races too, this meaning that there is a Tricarnian ancestor somewhere in their bloodline and the character is probably an illegitimate offspring.

A character can only have a single Bloodline Edge.

Standing Edges: The social importance of a person is fundamental in Tricarnia and is calculated through Standing (see Setting Rules page 133). For this purpose the following Edges are considered Standing Edges: Charismatic, Connections, Fallen Noble, Noble, Rich, Filthy Rich.

BACKGROUND EDGES

ANCIENT PACT

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Charisma 0+, Noble *or* Fallen Noble, must be Tricarnian

The relationship of Tricarnians with demons is rooted deep in antiquity. In the forgotten past one of the ancestors of the character made a pact with one such entity, a bond that passed from father to son till today.

In game terms the character gains the *summon ally* Power, and can evoke a single creature (a Demon) up to Veteran rank. The creature is at least a Henchman and is a specific individual (i.e. Glaatush the Demonic Mastiff, not just any Demonic Mastiff). If the Demon is killed, he cannot be summoned again for the rest of the scenario or until proper rituals are performed (they cost at least 200 Moons/Rank of the creature).

The trapping of the spell is usually very simple: it requires the character to speak aloud the true name of the demon (see *B&B #3 – Green World*), or the possession of a particular item (player's choice). In the second case, the duration of the Power is increased by one round.

If the character doesn't have the Sorcery Arcane Background, he uses Spirit as his arcane skill and has a number of Power Points, dedicated to this power, equal to half his Smarts die plus 1/Rank. So a Seasoned character with Smarts d8 has $4+2=6$ Power Points.

If the character is a sorcerer, he can roll on Sorcery. If he already knows the *summon ally* Power he has the following advantages: he receives +2 to the Sorcery roll to summon the creature, the cost of summoning it is halved (round down, including the maintenance cost) and the Demon is automatically a Wild Card.

Demons obeying an Ancient Pact don't rebel when a 1 on the arcane skill is rolled, instead they ask to re-negotiate the price of the Pact (see Bargaining with Demons page 109). If the negotiation fails, treat this as if the creature had died (see above).

This Edge can be taken multiple times (but not more than once per Rank), each time a pact with a new demon is sealed.



ARCANE BACKGROUND (DREAMING)

Requirements: Novice

The true Followers of the Dream have access to a new Arcane Background, which is a variation of the Enlightenment. See page 116.

AWAKENED

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, must be Tricarnian, Wild Card

The character doesn't belong to this era. For some reason, long time ago, she drank the Waters of Eternity (or used some similar method) to fall into an enchanted sleep and woke up only recently. She can roll on Common Knowledge, instead of Knowledge (History) on any matters related to her era (see sidebar). This roll is made at +2.

A sleep so long changes a person deeply: she isn't the person she was in the past any more, her memories have faded and she has had to re-learn how to live in the current era, but this doesn't mean her old life is totally lost to her; the memories are there, they need only be retrieved, but this has a cost, of course.

Once per session the character can recover part of these memories: she can pick a Skill on her character's sheet and *permanently* swap it for another one linked to the same attribute. She can use this ability on a skill she doesn't have but also on a skill she already has, in effect swapping the two Skills.

One of the most logical Hindrances for an Awakened character is the Clueless Hindrance. A character with this Edge is naturally driven to integrate, so, whenever

she attains a new Rank, she can make a Smarts (-4) roll and in case of success the Clueless Hindrance penalty drops by -1. The second time she does it, the Hindrance wears off.

Example. Nalkaria is a Priest Princess of the era of the Lord of Scales, who drank the Waters of Eternity to avoid the enemies of her family. Recently awakened, the girl and Shangor are chased by a group of cultists of Baachaga. The couple eventually commandeers a fast four-horse carriage, but neither of them has the skill to drive it properly! Nalkaria's player decides now is the moment to use her Awakened Edge: she has Boating d8 (linked to Agility) on her character sheet and changes it to Driving. Suddenly Nalkaria remembers how, centuries ago, her father let her drive his couch during the seasonal competitions...

A few sessions later, Salkaria finds herself with a sword in hand, ambushed by two thugs. Her Fighting die is a meager d4, while her Driving dice is a now-useless d8. She uses this Edge again and swaps the two Skills. In a heartbeat, Salkaria remembers the fencing lessons Master Oorto, the master of arms of her noble house, gave her centuries ago...

HERO'S JOURNAL: AWAKENED ERA

Playing an Awakened character, a hero belonging to another era, can be a very compelling experience. It can also be a very good way to introduce a new player into the setting: after all, his hero doesn't know anything about the world, and will have to discover it during the game.

To add extra realism to an Awakened, his original era must be chosen. Creative players are free to choose one as they fit best, otherwise they can pick a card from the Action Deck or choose from the following table.

AWAKENED ORIGIN ERA TABLE

Deuce – Keronian Apogee!	(3000+ BF)
Three – Keronia Before the Fall!	(100 - 0 BF)
Four - The Years of Darkness	(5-600 AF)
Five - Foundation of Tricarnia	(600-700 AF)
Six - The Demon Queen and the Prince of Scales Era	(700-800 AF)
Seven - Tovakarian Era	(800-1100 BF)
Eight - The Years of the Broken Chain and the Priests' Blinding	(1100-1200 AF)
Nine – Tricarnia's Stagnation	(1200-150 AF)
Ten - Faberterranean Wars	(1500-1550 AF)
Jack – Early Imperial Tricarnia	(1560-2000 AF)
Queen – Late Imperial Tricarnia	(2000-2280 AF)
King - Caled Wars	(2300-2330 AF)
Ace - Tricarnian Independence	(2335-2400)
Joker – Focal Historical Event!	Choose a particular historical event (for example, the Battle of the Elephants' River): the character's background is deeply linked to that event.

BEAST RIDER

Requirements: Variable minimum Rank, Riding d6+, Spirit d8+, must be Tricarnian

This character is one of the most dreaded warriors of Tricarnia, because he has a terrible beast under his control and he rides into battle on it! In game terms he gains one of the creatures in the table below as his mount and animal companion.

The creature is a Henchman, absolutely loyal to the character, and can be promoted to Wild Card status by spending an advance. If the beast dies, it isn't replaced automatically, and the hero must buy or find and tame another one.

Note that having a big beast can cause several problems too (see sidebar).

BEAST RIDER TABLE

Creature	Minimum Rank	Extra Requirements
Balkoth	Seasoned	-
Great Yalaruka	Veteran	Character must be from Val Hordaka
Shadow Bat	Veteran	Must be Tricarnian or must know the <i>summon ally (shadow bat)</i> Power
Tyrant Lazarta	Heroic	Blood of Tovakor Edge
War Turtle	Veteran	Character must be from Nal Lagar

GM'S TIP:

HANDLING BEAST RIDERS

The Beast Rider Edge can seem very powerful but there are some points to keep in mind.

First, many of these beasts are nocturnal, this means that during daytime they must find a proper shelter to hide and sleep. If forced to act during daytime they suffer -2 to all rolls.

Second, these creatures are BIG, so they cannot enter small caverns or the majority of buildings.

Third, these creatures are scary. They are known and tolerated in Tricarnia, but a character bringing them elsewhere in the Dominions should expect to be received with fear or even with swords and arrows.

That said, the GM has the final call on whether to allow this Edge to player characters, or not.

BLOODLINE EDGES

BLOOD OF ASKERION

Requirements: Novice, Charisma 1+, Command, Noble or Fallen Noble, must be Tricarnian

The Lords of Nal Askerion always lead their men from the front in battle, inspiring them and being inspired by them.

This character is a true son of Askerion, and the blood of Askerios flows in his veins true and pure.

In game terms he gains the following benefits.

First, his Command Radius is increased by 1" per point of Charisma he has. So a hero with Charisma +4 has a Command Radius of 9".

Second, while the character is affecting a friendly character with one of his Leadership Edges, he gains the same bonuses himself.

Third, if there is a friendly Extra with the Loyal Hindrance within 3" from him, the hero can use the Fanatics Setting Rule, but only once per combat.

BLOOD OF HORDAKA

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, Vigor d6+, Noble *or* Fallen Noble, must be Tricarnian

The character is part of the noble house of the Hordakans, which for centuries has lived in symbiosis with the Yalaruka, a race of giant vampire bats, each drinking the others' blood.

A hero with this Edge habitually drinks human blood and becomes frenzied when he smells it; if any human being is wounded, or Shaken by a wounding effect, within 6", he gains +1 to attack and damage rolls in melee.

In addition, once per session a character with this Edge can drink a cup of hot human blood to make an unmodified Vigor roll. In the case of success he recovers a Wound or a Fatigue level. People usually find this habit disgusting and so the character suffers -2 Charisma if he is known to have this Edge.

Only a character with the Blood of Hordaka can take a Yalaruka as Beast Friend.

BLOOD OF TOVAKOR

Requirements: Novice, Persuasion d6+, Spirit d6+, must have at least some Tricarnian blood

In the character's veins runs some of the blood of the Prince of Scales, and he has inherited some of his gifts of reptile control and his enthralling voice. He gains +2 to Persuasion rolls if the voice is involved, and to opposed Sorcery rolls if the Power he is using has a song-based trapping.

In addition when he sings, reptiles of any type, including intelligent ones, must win an opposed roll of Spirit against the characters' Persuasion to attack him (the effect lasts a whole scene).

Only a character with Tovakor's Blood can take a Lazarta (of any type) as Beast Friend.

GM'S TIPS: TOVAKOR'S SONGS

There is a legend about the Prince of Scales saying that his magic wasn't in his voice, but in the songs he knew, which are in truth powerful incantations.

A character with the replace with: Blood of Tovakor Edge who learns them could fully experience the power of his birthright.

Finding and learning a new song could be a great reward for a character with this Edge. Learning the song requires at least a month of time and a Smarts (-2) roll. In the case of failure the roll can be re-attempted when he gains a new Rank.

Rules-wise each song is a Power, with a specific trapping (see below). The character uses Persuasion as his arcane Skill and has a number of Power Points, dedicated to this Power, equal to half his Spirit dice plus 1/Rank. So a Seasoned character with Spirit d8 has $4 + 2 = 6$ Power Points.

Some songs are described below, but the GM is free to add others.

Ballad of the Sirenya (Puppet). *A song about the sad love between a man and a woman of the swamp.*

Song of Charos (Beast Friend). *A story about how Keron the Great mated with Hordan. Works only on reptiles.*

Lamentation of Tyselis (Confusion). *Tyselis was a Tricarnian maiden, who lost her husband the day of her wedding. She asked Hordan for vengeance and obtained it... but paid a price.*

COMBAT EDGES

MIGHTY ROAR/WITTY

REMARK

Requirements: Seasoned, Intimidation or Taunt d8+, Fighting d8+

Combat is more than mere sword-bashing: barbarians roar before slashing you with their axes, while rapier-witted swordsmen puncture you with words before stabbing you with their blades.

When taking this Edge the player must choose either Intimidation (in this case the Edge is called Mighty Roar) or Taunt

(and the Edge is called Witty Remark). He can make a free Test of Will of the relevant type per round, which doesn't count as an action.

SPIRITUAL BLOW

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Dreaming or Enlightenment), Fighting, d6+, Spirit d6+

The character's body may be frail, but not his soul! By spending one Power Point, he can deal physical damage using Spirit in place of Strength for the current round. If the damage roll aces, the Power Point spent is recovered.

POWER EDGES

BLOOD AND SOUL!

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d8+, Sorcery d8+, must be a follower of an evil deity

The dark deities of Tricarnia enjoy nothing more than blood and massacre: the taste of the ill-dead souls is sweet on their alien lips and they are ready to reward their followers for these dire sacrifices.

A character with this Edge, if he invokes his dark patron immediately after killing an enemy, automatically recovers one Power Point, five if the victim was Wild Card.

Invoking is considered a free action and can be done only once per round.

The Edge works only if the victim is an intelligent, non-Demonic creature.

MASTER OF SHAPES

Requirements: Novice, Lotusmastery d8+, Knowledge (Arcana) d8+, Smarts d8+

This character is very skilled in the dark art of Lotus Twisting (see page 113), and has no hesitation in applying it to his minions and/or animal friends. He can apply the effect of one Lotus Twist of choice per Rank of the Lotusmaster to an ally he controls (the ally can be a slave, a beast friend or a servant).

The Lotus Twist is applied without any Consequence and cannot be higher than the character's Rank. The Twists must respect the Rank progression: so a Seasoned character can bestow a Novice

and a Seasoned Twist, or two Novice Twists, but not two Seasoned Twists.

If the NPC dies, at the beginning of the next scenario the Lotusmaster can apply the Lotus Twists to another ally he controls.

In addition the character gains +2 to Lotusmastery rolls during Lotus Twists.

Example. Kurasta the Poisoner, a Seasoned Lotusmaster with the Master of Shapes Edge, owns a warrior-slave. Between adventures, he decides to bestow two Lotus Twists upon him; for the Novice Rank he raises the slave's Spirit from d4 to d6 and for the Seasoned Rank he makes him bigger, granting the slave the Size+1 Monstrous Ability.

During the adventure unluckily the slave dies, but Kurasta manages to buy a Fighting Bird, and can mess with that before the beginning of the next story...

NIGHTMARE ENTRAPPING

Requirements: Veteran, Dreaming d8+, Knowledge (Arcana) d6+, Spirit d8+

Followers of the Cult of the Dreamer often use Dream Catchers, strange amulets that have the ability of entrapping dreams, in particular nightmares, so that they don't haunt other people's sleep.

Whenever a character within 12" of the Dream Catcher experiences a nightmare (either a traditional nightmare or the Backlash effect of the Dreaming Arcane Background) or fails a Fear Check, the amulet triggers and the character can choose one of the following effects.

First, the owner of the Dream Catcher immediately recovers three Power Points.

Second, the Dream Catcher gains a Nightmare Charge. Three Nightmare Charges can be used to cast the *summon ally* Power, to evoke a Fear Specter, with two Power Points per Nightmare Charge (so basically 6 Power Points are spent, and additional Charges can be spent to prolong the effect). Any character can use this Power, using Spirit or Dreaming as the Arcane Skill.

A character can only use a single Dream Catcher, and, if more Dream Catchers are present in the area, the nightmare is captured only by one of them (the winner of an opposed Dreaming roll).

Note that even a Templomos can benefit from this Edge.

PROFESSIONAL EDGES

ASTROLOGER

Requirements: Novice, Knowledge (Arcana) d10+, Smarts d10+, Spirit d8+

This character has a deep knowledge of the skies and the influence of their distant lights on the destiny of the Dominions. If he is a mage he also knows how to tap these energies for his own purposes.

In game terms the Astrologer can make an additional Astrology attempt per session (see Setting Rules, page 132), plus an additional one when he attains Heroic Rank (three in total), but no character can benefit from more than a single attempt per session.

In addition, if he has the Sorcery Arcane Background, he can use the power of

stars to magnify his powers; at the cost of extending the casting time of a Power by 10 minutes per Power Point, the casting roll, if successful, is automatically considered a raise.

DREAM FOLLOWER

Requirements: Novice, Dreaming d8+, Knowledge (Arcana) d6+, Spirit d8+

The character is a high-ranking member of the Cult of the Dreamer, a respected member of the secretive sect worshipping the fever-induced dreams of the swamps. The character's training among the disciples gives him a good grasp of arcane matters, so he receives +1 to Knowledge (Arcana) rolls.

In addition, when the character picks this Edge, he must choose whether to be an Asan, a dedicated student of the Dream, or a Templomos, a warrior who uses his powers to defend the rest of the flock. The choice is permanent and gives totally different powers to the cultist.

Asan. The character's mind is strengthened by constant contact with the Dreamer. He receives +2 to all opposed rolls related to Dreaming or any other mind-affecting effects.

Templomos. A Templomos believes deeply that the Dreamer gives him strength to protect his people, and that while his spirit is strong, nothing can undermine his body. In game terms, if the Templomos's Spirit is higher than his Vigor, he can use his Spirit dice for Soak rolls, otherwise he receives +1 to Soak rolls.

DREAM TRAVELER

Requirements: Heroic, Dreaming d10+ *or* Spirit d12+, must have traveled in the Dream Kingdom

The hero has entered and wandered extensively in the Dream Kingdom (see page 119), so he knows it very well. He gains +2 to any Common Knowledge roll linked to the Dream Kingdom, and when he is inside that dark realm, he gains a Wild Die for the Dreaming skill (or if he already has one, it increases by one die step).

In addition, only a character with this Edge using the *summon ally* Power can summon a creature from the Dream Kingdom (which has a randomly selected Dream Creature Twist from the table on page 202).

A Dream Traveler has seen so much weirdness that he is very difficult to scare; if he fails a Fear check, he can reroll it for free, as if he had spent a Bennie.

LEECH MASTER

Requirements: Novice, Healing d6+, Survival d6+, must be Tricarnian

Leeches are very important in Tricarnian medicine, and the character is a real master of their use. If he is using a leech pot (see New Gear) he ignores the rule about not spending Bennies to reroll a 1 on the

Healing die. In addition, any character in a party with a Leech Master is considered under advanced medical care, and receives +1 to Healing rolls.

But this Edge shines if the character has access to Lotusmastery Powers. In this case he can decide to prepare a Lotus Leech. First he must choose a non-instant Power with a trapping of injection or touch, then he must roll on Lotusmastery (-2) and spend double the basic Power Points cost of the spell. The process requires one hour per Rank of the power.

Then the Lotus Leech is ready and can be placed on any target (if unwillingly, a Touch Attack is necessary to deliver it). Once in contact with the skin, the Lotus Leech slowly begins to infuse Lotus, sucking a mild quantity of blood. In game terms the Power lasts for the duration of the entire adventure *or* when the target is dealt a deuce as his first Action Card. In this case the leech suddenly dies and the character must make a Vigor roll to avoid suffering a non-soakable Wound from system shock.

The Lotusmaster doesn't recover the Power Points spent while the Leech is alive, but the active Power doesn't cause any penalty to his rolls. A Leech Master can only have one Lotus Leech per Rank active at any given time.

HERO'S JOURNAL:

EUNUCH OVERSEER CASTES

Eunuchs are a varied bunch: among them there are fat and lazy administrators or effeminate masters of ceremony, but there are also strong warriors. The most feared ones are those of the Overseer Caste, who work as army officers. They form a separate caste, trained according to ancient rules dating from the Keronian Empire, which make them choose a particular path, symbolized by the Overseer Helm each is given on the Day of the Tested Blood, when their master decides they are ready to take their place in the army. These helms are very particular, made to resemble mythological beasts and have the practical objective of making Overseers easily recognizable on the battlefield (which is both an advantage and a Hindrance).

Each path is dedicated to a particular fighting style, and is detailed below. Eunuch Overseers can be an interesting type of character to play, and, if a hero with this background meets the requirements of the style, he is granted the Overseer Helm (see page 126) for free. Note that these are only examples; the GM is free to create new Overseer Helms for his players.

BOAR

Edges: Block (if you have access to GOD, replace it with Shield Master).
Gear: Spiked Shield.

Role: Boars are the leaders of heavy infantry units, responsible for making them advance under the deadly rain of enemy arrows. Many of them are ruthless individuals, ready to slaughter their own men to avoid a rout.

GORGON

Edges: Command Presence. **Gear:** No specific gear.

Role: Gorgons are field commanders, acting as supporting leaders alongside the general. They rarely join the melee.

JACKAL

Edges: Woodsman. **Gear:** Bronze Short Sword.

Role: Jackals are usually devotees (or even priests) of Cylatrix. They act as slave hunters and are often used, after battles, to capture runaway slaves (of both sides).

MANTICORE

Edges: Sweep. **Gear:** Iron Maul.

Role: Manticore warriors act as leaders of shock troops, leading warriors from the first line. They are unusually respected for slave warriors

SNAKE

Edges: First Strike. **Gear:** Bronze Tipped Spear.

Role: Snakes are dangerous fighters, usually put in charge of spearmen or second-line defensive troops. They are devious, and, like the beast represented by their helm, deadly quick in attacking. Some of them employ poisons on their weapons.

VULTURE

Edges: Marksman. **Gear:** Composite Bow.

Role: Vultures hover over the battlefield, looking for a suitable prey to kill. They act as snipers, trying to shoot enemy officers.

Special: At GM's permission, for this caste only, the Overseer Helm bestows on them a different advantage: if they make a Called Shot on a Wild Card, the victim suffers -1 to Soak rolls.

WEIRD EDGES

DEMONIC PATRON

Requirements: Novice, Charisma 1+, Persuasion d4+, Spirit d6+, must be a Tricarnian noble *or* have Arcane Background (Sorcery)

Some people, due to their innate wickedness or simple by a jest of fate, catch the eye of powerful supernatural beings, which consider them their favorites. A character with a Demonic Patron can invoke him once per session for help and must make a Persuasion roll. With a success or better, the Patron answers, casting *any* one Power available to the Sorcery Arcane Background in support of the hero. The Power is cast at Legendary Rank with Sorcery d12+2 plus a Wild Die and is fueled by 3d6 Power Points.

Demons, even patrons, are treacherous, so if the hero rolls a 1 on the Persuasion die, regardless of the Wild Die, it means that the evil deity backing the hero is offended for some reason or decides to cause him further troubles for his amusement. The patron still casts a spell, but it isn't exactly what the character asked for and usually works against him.

A character with the Sorcery Arcane Background can use this Edge for two other things too: he can ask to receive a +4 to a single Sorcery roll, or to recover half his Power Points.

This Edge becomes more powerful at higher levels, and the patron can be invoked twice per session at Heroic Rank, but the second time the Persuasion roll is at -4.

GM'S TIPS:

ROLE-PLAYING DEMONIC PATRONS

While the rules for the Demonic Patron are simple and straightforward, the Edge is also good for some role-play: a player, rather than asking for a specific spell, could directly invoke his patron and simply ask for help. Also promising something in exchange to the patron is good, and should be rewarded with a substantial bonus to the Persuasion roll. But remember, the more generic the request, the greater the chance the demonic patron interprets it in a wicked way...





MAGIC

Tricarnia is the land of sorcerers and Lotusmasters *par excellence*, this chapter details several new options available for this type of hero, plus a variation on the Enlightenment Arcane Background, the Dreaming.

SORCERY

Within the walls of their secluded Citadels, Priest Princes intone ancient Keronian hymns in inhuman voices, while others prepare complex rituals to summon and bind creatures of distant realities, trading them souls and lives in exchange for lore and power...

NEW SORCERY TRAPPINGS

This section introduces several new sorcery trappings, typical of Tricarnia.

MUSICAL SORCERY

All Tricarnians love music. Some of them are very skilled musicians, and those of purest breed have a vocal (and hearing) range superior to normal humans, making them able to hear the famous “Eighth Note”, or, like the Lord of Scales, to enthrall beasts with the beauty of their voices.

In addition to this vocal extension, Tricarnian songs are old, very old, and some of them are in truth invocations and prayers made in the form of music, in particular those addressed to Aalisha, the Mistress of Songs and Sorrows.

The last important factor is the musical instruments Tricarnian singers use; from the Tricarnian Harp, to the Keronian Flute and the Sirenya Lute, all these items are particularly well-crafted, using a technique unknown in the rest of the Dominions, and many musicians swear that magic is involved in their construction.

So, it's no surprise that music is used in Tricarnian magic, and this is represented by the following rules.

Musical Trapping. Music is strong, and particular songs have increased effects against particular classes of individuals (for example: women, beasts, soldiers, demons and so on.) The narrower the class, the greater the bonus (usually it

ranges from +1 to +2 on the opposed roll or a corresponding penalty if the spell requires a trait roll to resist).

MUSICAL SORCERY TRAPPINGS IN USE

Here follow some examples of the Musical Trapping in use.

Puppet (Aalisha's Love Ballad). Aalisha, the legend says, once had a human lover, Aaleso, who betrayed her and was condemned to eternal suffering. This wordless tune was the ballad the Mistress of Songs sang to win the heart of her lover and is said it can win the heart of any person. It causes the victim to fall in love with the caster, who receives +1 to the



opposed roll if the target belongs to the opposite sex (or has an appropriate sexual orientation).

Stun (Hear the Eighth Note). The caster, exploiting his superior vocal range, or simply imbuing some magic in his instrument, can produce a very high-pitched note, not exactly the Eighth Note, but quite close to it, a very painful sound for humans, who must roll at -1 to resist this Power. In addition this power can be used to shatter crystal items (the Sorcery roll must beat the Toughness of the item).

CIRCLES OF POWER

Ancient Keronians always dabbled with demons, and the first thing you learn in this particular field of work is protecting yourself from the rage of the creature you summon. The best way is trapping it in a pentacle or other circle of power from which the beast cannot escape.

From this specialized use, circles of power, as they are generically called, expanded to other applications, as wizards discovered that a properly prepared magical pentacle can help a lot in spellcasting, magnifying their abilities. As often happens in sorcery, time is the key; the more time you have to prepare, the greater is the effect you achieve, unless something goes wrong, of course.

Circles of Power Trapping. The sorcerer must paint, carve or scratch in some manner a magical symbol on the ground. It usually has the size of a Small Burst Template, and preparing it properly is a long process, increasing the casting time of the Power to one round per Power Point of the spell.

The effects in the game are significant: if the mage stands in the circle while casting

the spell, he rolls an additional die when he makes the Sorcery roll, which is equal to his Knowledge (Arcana) die, called the Circle Die. Consider it an additional Wild Die. Alternatively, the spell can be designed for the target to be inside the circle, this giving the same bonus as above (included using an additional dice in opposed rolls), as long as the victim stays in the circle.

Breaking a circle, if the Power itself isn't designed in specifically to protect itself, can be done with a single action (like scratching the ground with one's feet).

CIRCLES OF POWER TRAPPINGS IN USE

Summon Ally (Evocation Pentacle). The wizard scratches a complex evocation symbol on the ground, and summons a creature inside. Designing the symbol and making the proper invocation requires a round per Power Point spent on the spell, but when the character casts the spell he receives the Circle Die.

Barrier (Warding Circle). The wizard draws a round shape on the ground, the closer to a perfect circle it is, the better the spell works. The caster, and anyone else inside the circle, are protected against external attacks; whoever steps on the circle suffers 2d4 damage from intense bodily pain and is thrown back by 1". Breaking this particular barrier (and disrupting the spell) is possible by hitting the shape on the ground, but it has a Toughness equal to the maximum value of the Circle Die.

HERO'S JOURNAL: PERMANENT CIRCLES

With the GM's permission and some time, a sorcerer can create a permanent circle in a location. These circles are usually carved or painted using precious components (silver, gold, the blood of exotic beasts, etc.) and are made to last. They work as per the spell trapping, giving the mage a Circle Die, in addition to any other trapping of the spell.

A permanent circle has a Toughness equal to half its Circle Die +2, representing how hard breaking it is.

The procedure to create these circles is as follows:

First, the warlock must decide what Circle Die he wants for his creation: this means selecting a die type less than or equal to his Knowledge (Arcana) skill.

Second, he must find the components and pay for them (they are a Rare Item costing 50 Moons x the maximum possible score of the Circle Die).

Third, the warlock creates the circle, spending one day per maximum value of the Circle Die, and makes a Knowledge (Arcana) per die step of the Circle Die: for each success (ignore raises) the circle gains a die step up to the maximum value.

Example. Blackcrow the witch decides it is time to craft a magical pentacle in her refuge, an abandoned tomb in the Cairnlands. She has Knowledge (Arcana) d8 and wants to create a pentacle with Circle Die d8. Then she finds chisels, powdered Ancestor bones and other components, spending $50 \times 8 = 400$ Moons from her adventuring savings.

At this point the woman patiently carves the pentacle, and after 8 days of continuous work she makes three (because d8 is equal to three dice steps) Knowledge (Arcana) rolls. She fails the first one, but the second and the third ones are successful! Now, whenever she casts a spell at home and uses her pentacle, Blackcrow can use a Circle Die d6!

OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES

The standard *Savage Worlds* magic rules are made for in-the-heat-of-the-battle casting. But a sorcerer with more time and resources isn't limited to combat magic and can evoke much more power... at greater risks, of course!

Here follow two options, which can be combined together, to help a warlock in his obscure dabbling.

OFFERINGS

There are various ceremonial materials, incense, myrrh, special Lotus and so on, that can help a mage in his magic. These

consumable items are collectively called Offerings. As a rule of thumb, up to four levels of Offerings can be spent per spell (see Gear for costs); they are consumed after use. A Level of Offerings costs 50 Moons per Rank of the Power. So a level of Offerings for a Seasoned Power costs 100 Moons, while four levels of Offerings for a Legendary Power costs 1000 Moons.

A sorcerer can use these Levels to enhance his chances of casting, choosing one of the benefits below.

Better Casting: For each level of Offerings used the arcane skill roll gains a modifier of +1, up to a maximum of +4.

Superior Casting: By using two levels of Offerings the caster can cast a Power one Rank higher than his own (so a Seasoned character can cast a Veteran Power), but he suffers -1 to the roll and must have access to the Power in some manner (maybe it is written in a tome or similar). He can use up to four levels of Offerings in this manner, so he can cast spells up to two Ranks higher, but suffers -2 to the arcane skill roll.

SACRIFICES

Sacrifices are similar to Offerings, but the difference is that while Offerings are inanimate objects, Sacrifices are living beings, that you throw, screaming and howling, onto the altar, ready to be butchered with your sacrificial dagger...

In game terms, performing a sacrifice allows you to obtain fast, additional Power Points. These Points are volatile, aren't added to your own, and must be consumed during the scene or they expire.

Rules-wise, to make a sacrifice you must deal a fatal blow to a helpless (or willing)

victim, speak your prayer aloud and make a Spirit (or Sorcery, whatever is higher) roll. If you are successful, you obtain a number of Power Points, for each sacrificed victim, as per the table below.

If you roll a 1 on the Sorcery die, regardless of the Wild Die, a roll on the Sorcery Critical Table is required.

Mass sacrifices are allowed; the evil forces enjoy slaughter, but you only need make a single roll, regardless of the number of sacrificial victims involved.

SACRIFICES TABLE

Sacrificial Victim	Power Points Given
Extra	5
Henchman or Right Hand	10
Wild Card	15
Worthy Edges/Hindrances: Attractive, Very Attractive (x2), Brawny, Noble, Luck,	+3/each
Greater Luck (x2), Damsel in Distress, Young, High Attribute (d10+)	+3/each
Non-intelligent (Animal Smarts)	x0.5

Notes: Apply multipliers last, rounding down fractions.

Example: Zanator, the evil tyrant of Quollaba, decides to sacrifice two white bulls to his evil deity, Ulasha. Each bull is worth: 5 (Extra), +9 (Strength and Vigor higher than d10), divided by two because they are only animals, netting a meager 7 Power Points each.

Then the eye of the tyrant shifts to Zamira, the beautiful queen of Quollaba he keeps imprisoned. The girl is worth: 15 (Wild Card) + 15 (Very Attractive, Noble, Damsel in Distress), for a total of 30 Power Points! An evil smile passes



DABBLERS IN DARKNESS

At GM's permission, if a character is using Offerings and Sacrifices, and has a book or another way to gain access to a Power, he can cast it without the Arcane Background Edge and/or the Sorcery skill (he rolls d4-2)

In addition you can combine Superior Casting from Offerings and Sacrifices, allowing a Novice character to cast a Legendary Power (like *summon ally* on a Legendary creature), but the Sorcery roll will be made at -4.

over Zanator's thin lips, while he orders his servants to prepare the girl for the nightly ceremony...

Summing up these elements, it is clear why attempting sorcery without the proper skill is usually a one-time activity...

Power Points gained through Sacrifices can be spent as normal or used for Superior Casting, as above: for each 20 Power Points spent in this manner the character can cast a Power one Rank higher than his own, for a maximum of two Ranks higher.

HERO'S JOURNAL: SOUL TRADING

Demons have no use for gems, money or other similar things. What they want is the souls of mortals. Sorcerers, over the centuries, learnt they can trade part of their souls to demons in exchange for favor. But this is a very dangerous game, as you'll soon discover.

Soul Shards. *Rules-wise, consider the soul of any non-animal character as being divided into "shards". The stronger the soul, the greater is the number of shards, and more palatable the being is to demons.*

A character has one Soul Shard per die step of Spirit. So, the soul of a hero with Spirit d8 is composed of three Shards.

Note that every creature, even demons themselves, has Soul Shards.

What Soul Shards Are. *The concept of the soul shard is an abstraction, they have no physical form, but they do have a representation of some kind: a shard can be a secret, a part of a name, even a very personal item or memory.*

A character can freely dispose of his Soul Shards, trading them with demons and so on.

Rules-wise, a creature owning a Soul Shard from another being gains +1 to all opposed rolls made against that creature.

A character can happily dispose of all his Soul Shards; until all of them are in the possession of different beings he suffers no other ill effect except the above.

But if for some reason all the soul shards end in the possession of a single being, it is very dangerous, because the soul now has a Master.

Soul Master. *A Soul Master has the following powers:*

+He is immune to any form of magic used by the former owner of the soul.

+He can use the puppet Power on the former owner of the soul for free, using Spirit as the arcane skill (and summing up the bonuses for owning the various Soul Shards).

Usually a demon finally owning the soul of a warlock tracks him down (he doesn't need to be summoned in this case) and forces the unfortunate mage to follow him to his dimension, where he'll suffer an eternity of torments.

Soul Shards in Play. *Soul Shards must not be a way for the GM to bully the players. Instead, they add a new layer of complexity to the life of any sorcerer, giving him the chance to gain new powers and perform amazing feats, at a cost. Soul Shards are also a great way to start an adventure or complicate an existing one. Once a Shard is given to a demon it remains in his possession, but nothing prevents the players from winning (or stealing) it back. Demons are said to store Soul Shards in particular places and shapes, and worthy adventurers, supported by the right skills, could find them. In addition, don't forget that sometimes demons trade between themselves: it may be that the soul given to one demon, after some time is in the possession of a totally different one, maybe one who holds a grudge against the warlock...*

HERO'S JOURNAL: YOUTH TRADING

Among the many things a Demon covets, youth is one of the most precious. A character can be asked to pay a demon in years of life.

For purposes of Youth Trading, a person can be in one of these age bands: Young (if he has the Hindrance with the same name), adult, or Elderly (as per the Hindrance with the same name).

When trading his youth, the hero passes to the next step: so a Young hero removes the Hindrance becoming adult, an adult

gains the Elderly Hindrance, but an already Elderly character must pay the Toll of Time (see below).

Note that aging in this manner causes all the negative effects of the Hindrance, but not the positive ones if any (for example a character becoming Elderly suffers the Pace reduction, but doesn't gain extra skill points).

A character unnaturally aged can try to gain back his youth (see below) but only rarely will a demon undo what another demon did...

HERO'S JOURNAL: CHEATING TIME

Being obsessed by youth and immortality, many Tricornians try to cheat time, resorting to magic. A character with the Elderly Hindrance trying to fight against the frailties of his age can be an interesting one to play. There are basically two ways to fight against age, making a Pact of Youth with a demon, for sorcerers, or crafting the fabulous Purple Lotus of Youth for Lotusmasters.

Tricornian sorcerers and Lotusmasters with the Elderly Hindrance and the prerequisites already know how to walk these paths, other characters can learn these methods during the game.

Game Effect. *A character managing to effectively Cheat Time benefits from the extra Skill Points granted by the Elderly Hindrance and suffers no other penalty, but every time he is dealt a Club card during the After the Adventure Phase, it means the enchantments allowing him to remain young must be renewed.*

Toll of Time. *If, for any reason the character's artificial youth ends, he immediately loses the benefits of*

Cheating Time, plus he must make a Vigor (-4) roll. In the case of failure he permanently loses one die step in Strength or Vigor (player's choice). If this drops one of the stats below d4 the hero dies, his body turning to dust. A character suffering the Toll of Time can retry Cheating Time, but only in the next After the Adventure phase. In the case of success he will be young again, but lost Attributes are lost forever.

PACT OF YOUTH

The character must summon a Gusara (see page 217), or another demon capable of extending lifespan, and ask to have his youth restored.

This must be done with the Bargaining with Demons rules found on page 109. The Gusara is a Heroic Demon and making a person young again is a Heroic Favor.

If the bargaining fails, the demon refuses to help and the character suffers from the Toll of Time as above.

PURPLE LOTUS OF YOUTH

Prerequisites: *character must have Knowledge (Arcana) d10+, Lotusmastery d8+ and know the boost/lower trait Power.*

The Lotusmaster must first find the proper components (basic cost 500 Moons) with a Streetwise (-2) roll and then prepare the concoction, with a Lotusmastery (-4) roll. For every 500 additional Moons spent, the penalty reduces by one point. The Lotusmaster will know if the potion worked only after drinking it. With a success or better it worked and the character can continue Cheating Time, with a failure he must pay the Toll of Time.

BARGAINING WITH DEMONS

Usually a sorcerer evokes an entity of some type to use it as soldier or for a specific task, like acting as a mount (Shadow Bat), finding a person or object (Demonic Mastiff) or granting him some protection (Spirit of the Betrayer).

In truth, this is the magic of petty sorcerers, if you pay heed to Tricarnians.

Summoning. A *real* sorcerer will summon a demon for much more important things: obtaining from him power and knowledge. Any character with the Sorcery Arcane Background and the *summon ally* Power can do this, if he can evoke a creature with the Demon Monstrous Ability or an intelligent undead.

This activity is time-consuming (at least a week of proper preparations) so it can usually be done only between scenarios (if nothing ground-shaking happened to the character during the After the Adventure phase) or during an adventure, but only if there is long downtime moment (for example the heroes stop to rest or are traveling by sea).

The sorcerer must then summon the creature, scoring at least two raises, remove from “meaning” to the end of the phrase. If the ritual is cast with success, he spends thrice the normal Power Points and can start bargaining; the actual ritual lasts 10 minutes per Power Point spent.

Asking Favors. The first thing to do is asking something of the demon. The request must be proportionate to the creature’s power; there is no sense in asking a Keronian Imp the secret of immortality, he won’t know it.

Below is a table of reasonable favors for creatures of certain power. In parenthesis you find the demon’s position in their hierarchy, as per *B&B #3 – Green World*.

DEMON FAVORS TABLE

Demon Rank	Favor (same name as Rank)
Novice (Lesser)	Piece of common mundane information, teaching a trapping for a Novice Power the caster already knows (if asking for instructions on summoning a creature, the new evocation can be a Rank higher).
Seasoned (Lesser)	Piece of rare mundane information, piece of common supernatural information, trapping for a Seasoned Power (as above).
Veteran (Minor)	Piece of rare supernatural information, supernatural teaching (free skill increase by a dice step in Sorcery, Knowledge (Arcana) or other similar skill, up to d10), teaching a new Power up to Seasoned Rank
Heroic (Major)	A very sensitive piece of information (like the name of another demon), supernatural teaching (as above, but up to d12), teaching a new Power up to Veteran Rank, restoring or maintaining lost youth.
Legendary (Lord)	Supernatural teaching (as above, but up to d12+1), teaching any Power, bestowing the Power Points Edge, granting a Monstrous Ability.
Special	Service (the demon becomes an Ally of the warlock for a defined period of time or until a special condition is met).

Agreeing the Price. Once the request is made, the Demon will name a price. Here is a list of suitable prices, depending on the entity granting the favor. Here follows a list of typical costs asked by a demon, which must be used as guideline by the GM. At this point the sorcerer and the demon start the real bargaining.

The most enjoyable way to resolve this is through pure role-play between the GM and the player, but if you want to do it mechanically, you can treat it as a Social Conflict using the highest score between Smarts and Persuasion of the two opponents. If the warlock nets 3 successes, the price accorded is the “right” one (so a Seasoned Rank cost for a Seasoned Rank favor), if the warlock nets 2 or fewer successes, the price is one step higher, if he achieves 4 or more successes, the price is reduced by one step.

DEMON FAVORS COST TABLE

Favor Rank	Cost Examples
Novice	<i>Drop of Blood.</i> The monster asks for some essence of the caster, who suffers one of the following effects: a Wound, a Fatigue level, loss of 5 Power Points. The effect lasts for the entire next session and cannot be healed or soaked in any way.
Seasoned	<i>Human Sacrifice.</i> At least 5 Power Points/Rank of the demon, generated through the Sacrifice (see above) of a human being. <i>A Chunk of Soul.</i> The demon asks for one Soul Shard (see sidebar).
Veteran	<i>Life.</i> The Demon asks for a level of youth (see sidebar). <i>Human Sacrifice.</i> As above, at least 10 Power Points. <i>Memories.</i> The demon asks for some memories of the character, who loses one die step in a Smarts-based skill of choice, loses an Edge, or acquires the Clueless Hindrance. Every time he gets an Advance he can try to recover/remove it with a Spirit (-4) roll, on a critical failure the skill/Edge is lost forever or the Hindrance is permanently acquired. <i>Part of Soul.</i> The demon asks for two Soul Shards.

Heroic	<i>Life.</i> The Demon asks for two levels of youth (see above). <i>Human Sacrifice.</i> As above, at least 25 Power Points. <i>Little Errand.</i> The demon asks for a task to be done by the caster, usually in advance of receiving the favor. The task is potentially dangerous and surely wicked and ripe with consequences. <i>Freedom!</i> The demon asks to be set free in the Dominions. In this case he cannot be summoned by the sorcerer until sent back to his dimension, but this is the least of your problems... <i>Large Part of Soul.</i> The demon asks for three Soul Shards.
Legendary	<i>Human Sacrifice.</i> As above, at least 50 Power Points. <i>The Most Important Thing.</i> The demon asks for the most important thing to the caster: it can be his life, but probably is something that will torment him: his lover or son, his kingdom, his honor... <i>Your Whole Soul!</i> The demon asks for four Soul Shards. If this makes him the Soul Master of the hero, he usually agrees to leave some time to the caster to finish what he is doing.
Special	<i>Service Price.</i> Bargaining for a continual service from a demon must be handled on a single case base. Usually the demon asks for the whole soul of the caster or to be set free after the conditions of the Pact are met.

Sealing the Pact. Once the price is set, is up to the caster whether to accept it or not. Free will is the key factor of any pact. Once the pact is accepted, the demon is bound to respect it.

Note that a wise caster will use both the Offerings and Sacrifice rules to his best advantage when trying to Bargain with Demons.

Here an example of Bargaining with Demons in practice.

Example: Blackcrow the Witch, looking for a way to free the soul of her dead husband, decides to question the spirit of Sinew, one of the three sisters killed during the Price of Peace scenario (see BOD page 103). The spirit of Sinew is an Ancestor Ghost, a Veteran creature, requiring 5 Power Points to summon. Since the cost is tripled to summon a creature for bargaining purposes, she'll require 15 Power Points. This means that she'll be short of energy if troubles arise.

So Blackcrow decides to do some preparation. She waits for a moonless night, goes to an isolated grove in the Cairnlands and there she cuts the throat of Rial, her marvelous-looking stallion, to appease the wicked spirit (Henchman beast with Strength d10 and the Attractive Edge: 8 Power Points granted by Sacrifice).

Then she lights two candles of black wax and starts chanting (300 Moons: 4 Level offerings for a Veteran Rank Power, the player decide to use all of them to gain +4 to the Sorcery roll).

At this point Blackcrow calls the name of Sinew thrice (Sorcery roll, after spending some Bennies the total is $8+4=12$, two raises!) and the ghost of Sinew appears.

Blackcrow goes straight to the point, asking the ghost for a way to free the soul of her dead husband. Sinew laughs, freezing the air all around, and names her price: Blackcrow's youth and a morsel of her soul. This is too much for Blackcrow, which offers instead her most precious memory.

This is a tempting thing for a ghost: Sinew accepts and suddenly Blackcrow forgets the very face of her husband. In time, maybe she'll remember him, but

until this happens, everyone will notice her empty stare (she loses the Attractive Edge).

Then Sinew gives what she promised (a piece of rare supernatural information): to free the soul of Blackcrow's husband, she must throw his skull from the Peak of the Citadel of the Winged Gods, on a cloudless day and in the presence of the King of the Citadel.

Then the ghost disappears, laughing again: Blackcrow isn't sure the price she paid was fair, but knows that Sinew was bound to tell the truth, so she must track down where this mysterious Citadel is and if it has a King...

LOTUSMASTERY

Tricarnians are probably the first race to discover the effects of the Lotus, and their capacities in this area reach unknown peaks, second only to those of the Alchemists of Gis. Their studies are focused on the dark area of twisting and mutating the human body and inflicting pain on others, but the knowledge gathered in their foul experiments increased their understanding of the human body as a side effect.

NEW LOTUSMASTERY TRAPPINGS

This section introduces a new Lotusmastery trapping, typical of Tricarnia, but also known in the rest of the Dominions.

COSMETICS

"Never kiss a Tricarnian lady, unless you are ready to die," the saying goes. Tricarnians are a very sophisticated people. Many of them, both men and women, use cosmetics of various types, for example perfumes, colors for lips, nails, eyelids and other very private parts. While many of them are simply for decoration, others are sophisticated and often dangerous Lotus concoctions, used for a variety of things.

Lotus concoctions with a cosmetic trapping are always delivered with a Touch. They must be applied in advance, this requiring at least one minute per Power Point of the Power. On the plus side, once applied they are ready to be used at any moment, and they last for a number of uses, called "charges". A Cosmetic based Power has one "charge" by default, plus one for every additional Power Point spent by the Lotusmaster. A Cosmetic remains potentially active, when applied, until it is removed in some manner. The activity time is very variable and must be decided on a single-case basis; for example nail polish can last for weeks, while a perfume will last only some hours.

Perfumes. Fragrances work in a different way. First, they are made in two parts: the concoction itself, and an antidote, which must be taken by the user and by any target he wants to protect from the effect of the perfume. Perfumes work in an area around the user (usually a SBT, but adding one Power Point it increases to MBT and with two additional Power Points it reaches LBT), affecting everybody smelling it. Note that actually perceiving the smell isn't important, it is enough to be in contact with it. Perfumes are very short-lived, they are in effect for ten minutes per Power Point spent on the power.

Poison (Nails of Death). This transparent nail polish is used on cured, very pointed nails, turning them into a deadly weapon. A mere scratch is enough to deliver the poison to the victim (through a Touch Attack). The polish, once applied, lasts for a week, or until is used. As a side effect of the polish, the nails become extremely hard (+1 unarmed damage while the polish is active).

Lower Trait - Smarts (Hordanas' Fragrance). This Lotus concoction is actually two different potions: the first one is an oil, which the user must apply to



himself to be protected from the effects of the perfume, the second is the real essence. Whoever comes near enough to the bearer of the perfume to smell it cannot think clearly, his mind obfuscated by the Lotus (usually everyone in a SBT around the user). Tradition states that this particular concoction was created by Hordanas, the Demon Queen, who used it to seduce the members of the other noble houses. It is quite volatile, its efficacy lasting for only ten minutes.

LOTUS TWISTING

The dream of every Lotusmaster worth of his name is using the power of the Lotus to create permanent mutations with his potions. While their ultimate goal is good (they want to improve on what the nature did), their means usually aren't, and they know that, before achieving a perfect success, many attempts must be made, at the cost of horribly damaging the subjects of their experiments. It is a great cost, but one they are willing to pay, for the love of science.

In game terms, a character with the Lotusmastery Arcane Background can try to permanently alter himself (or another person or animal of his choice) using his potions and essences. It is a long process, which requires access to a fully equipped Alchemical Laboratory throughout (see *GE*, page 93, don't consider the laboratory bonus for the purposes of Lotus Twisting).

Lotus Abuse. A character can submit his body to the strain of the Lotus Twisting however many times he wants, but it comes with a price: every additional time he endures a Lotus Twisting in the same Rank the Lotusmastery roll (see below) suffers an additional -2.

The process is divided into four steps.

Choosing the Twist. First, the Lotusmaster must decide what he is going to achieve, this will give a rough idea of the difficulty and the cost of the attempt. This table isn't complete, but can give the GM a rough idea of the difficulty of an effect wanted by a player. Lotusmasters can create Twists up to their Rank (so a Seasoned Lotusmaster can create up to a Seasoned Twist).

LOTUS TWISTING EFFECTS TABLE

Novice:	Raising an Attribute from d4 to d6, removing a Minor Hindrance, gaining a Monstrous Ability (Aquatic, Infravision, Low Light Vision).
Seasoned:	Raising an Attribute from d6 to d8, removing a Major Hindrance, granting a Novice Edge, re-growing a lost limb, growing a natural weapon (Str+d4), gaining a Monstrous Ability (Armor +1), Size (+1, maximum Size +1), Poison, Wall Walker, Weakness (any))
Veteran:	Raising an Attribute from d8 to d10, granting a Seasoned Edge, growing an extra limb, growing a natural weapon (Str+d6), gaining a Monstrous Ability (Armor +1), Burrowing, Fear, Immunity (any one), Size (+1, maximum Size +2)).
Heroic:	Raising an Attribute from d10 to d12, Granting a Power (5 Power Points +1/ Rank, arcane skill equal to Spirit or Smarts), gaining a Monstrous Ability (Armor +3), Flight, Paralysis, Size (+1, maximum Size +3), Stun)
Legendary:	Giving an animal human intelligence (removing the (A) from Smarts), gaining a Monstrous Ability (Hardy, Regeneration (Slow), Size (+1, maximum Size +4), Undead*).

(*) This Twisting can be used on a freshly dead corpse (GM's call on what "fresh" is), transforming it into a free-willed undead.

Assessing the Cost/Time. Second, the cost must be calculated. Lotus Twists

aren't for thin purses, due the amount of rare herbs and other precious components required: a Twist costs 300 Moons per Rank. Then the process starts: it requires three days per Rank of the Twist, during which neither the Lotusmaster, his assistants (if present) nor the patient cannot do anything else.

Forbidden Lotus Use! Third, the alchemist starts working, making a Lotusmastery (-2) Dramatic Task. The roll can be cooperative, but any failure rolled by the assistants gives the master -1 to the roll. At the end of the process check the table below, considering each raise as an extra success.

LOTUSTWISTING RESULTS TABLE

Successful Rolls	Effect
0	<i>Disaster!</i> The Twist fails and the patient suffers three Consequences!
1	<i>Tremendous Failure!</i> The Twist fails and the patient suffers two Consequences!
2	<i>Failure!</i> The Twist fails and the patient suffers one Consequence!
3	<i>Success!</i> The Twist is a success and the patient suffers one Consequence!
4	<i>Great Success!</i> The Twist is a success and the Lotusmaster checks twice for a Consequence, choosing one of them (usually the milder one).
5	<i>Genius of the Lotus!</i> The Twist is a success and the Lotusmaster checks three times for a Consequence, choosing one of them (usually the mildest one).

Consequences! The fourth phase is checking the consequences of the Twist; dabbling with nature's laws always exacts a toll. The patient, even in the most fortunate case, suffers one or more Consequences. Draw one or more cards and check the table below!

The Lotusmaster's player chooses the card, but the exact nature of the Consequence is decided by the GM.

LOTUSTWISTING CONSEQUENCES TABLE

Deuce - Aging/Getting Younger!	If the card drawn is black, the body of the patient suffers a great strain from the effect of the Lotus. He immediately gains the Elderly Hindrance. If he already has that, the patient dies. If it is red, the opposite is true, and the hero becomes young again, very young! He receives the Young Hindrance (reduce his Attribute points accordingly).
Three - Sensory Loss!	If the card drawn is red, the hearing of the character for some reason worsens, he gets the Hard of Hearing Hindrance (if he already has this he becomes totally Deaf). If the card drawn is black, he receives the One Eye Hindrance. If he already has this, the condition worsens to Blind.
Four - Abnormal Size!	The effect of the Lotus is so intense that the very shape of the victim's body changes! If the card drawn is red, it grows abnormally fat (he receives the Obese Hindrance), if it is black it twists and shrivels, becoming Small.
Five - Limb Twist!	Pick a limb depending on the card's suit: left leg (Spades), right leg (Hearts), left arm (Diamonds) or right arm (Clubs). For some reason the limb loses functionality, the patient receives the One Leg or One Arm Hindrance. If he already has the Hindrance he suffers no effect.
Six - Raging Madness!	The character cannot control himself anymore: he acquires both the Bloodthirsty Hindrance and Berserk Edge. If he already has both, his Smarts drop by one die step. Stay away from him, he is dangerous!

Seven – Habit!	The character wakes up from the Lotus Twist with a severe case of constant pain. He quickly learns that it won't stop, unless he takes something specific. He gains the Habit (Major) Hindrance, the nature of the fix is left to the Game Master.
Eight – Clumsy/Frail!	If the card drawn is red, the character suffers from minor tremors or other similar effects that hinder him in fine-manipulation tasks (for example Lockpicking), as per the All Thumbs Hindrance. If the card drawn is black, his health is now very frail and he suffers the Anemic Hindrance.
Nine – Personality Problems!	The character's body is unaffected by the Lotus, but his mind... well, it is a mess now. If the card is a Spade the character gains the Mean Hindrance, if it is a Heart he suffers from Bloodthirsty, with a Diamond he becomes Overconfident and finally with a Club he gets Arrogant. If the patient already has the Hindrance, he gains a Quirk instead. If he already has that... well, his mind is already damaged enough that a simple Lotus Twist won't change much!
Ten – Bad Looking!	The Twist alters the appearance of the patient in an unnatural way, giving him the Ugly Hindrance. If the patient already has this Hindrance, it gets worse, and the penalty to Charisma drops to -4. If the character is already at -4 he becomes so horrible that now he causes Fear in whoever sees him for the first time.
Jack – Queen - Wounds!	The character suffers one (if the card is black) or two (if the card is red) Wound(s) that cannot be soaked and can only be healed with natural healing. Note that if the character draws two such cards he can begin the next adventure Incapacitated...

King-Ace – Safe.	The Lotus Twist has no ill effect.
Joker – No Effect!	The Twisting has absolutely no lasting effect! Stop drawing other cards and ignore all the previous cards drawn.

Here an example of Lotus Twists in practice.

Example. Gilan Gask the Priest Archer lost an arm to a nasty trap in the Tomb of Lord Senakai. “An archer without an arm is useless,” he says to his friends “I lost Uletu’s favor. I’ll go into the savannah to let the lions kill me.”

At this point his comrade, Kurasta the Poisoner, intervenes. “Maybe there is a way, good priest, to regain your arm. But everything has a price.” The Lotusmaster stares intently at the archer. “Are you ready to pay it?”

In game terms Kurasta is offering Gilan Gask to use his Lotus powers to regrow the archer’s lost arm. Gilan’s player agrees and the Lotus Twist can be done. Regrowing a limb is a Seasoned task that Kurasta, a Veteran hero, can attempt.

The process takes six days of continuous work in the laboratory of Jaharo, the local Lotusmaster, and 1200 Moons of cost (600 for the Twist cost, plus 600 for renting the laboratory for six days). Luckily Gilan Gask retrieved a precious tiara from the Tomb of Lord Senakai and can pay the price.

Kurasta’s player makes five Lotusmastery (-2) rolls scoring four successes. It is a great success, meaning that Gilan Gask draws two Consequences cards and

chooses the mildest one. He gets a deuce of Clubs (Aging) and an Eight of Diamonds (Clumsy). The player goes for the Eight. When Kurasta extracts Gilan's stump from the cauldron of Lotus where it was for six days, a new arm is attached to it! It is strong and powerful as before, but, wait... the fingers are big and deformed! With time and training Gilan will use the bow again, but probably won't be able to pick locks or play a harp with it (he gains the All Thumbs Hindrance, limited to that arm).

HERO'S JOURNAL:

UNRAVELING THE SECRETS OF NATURE

For any Lotusmaster, Twisting is the highest point of his art, as is making a new song for a composer. In addition, conducting this sort of experiment increases his knowledge of the human body and of the Lotus. In game terms, every time a Lotusmaster attempts Lotustwisting and achieves at least one success, regardless of the final outcome, he must place a little mark on the character sheet near the Lotusmastery Skill. Whenever he reaches a number of marks equal to the die steps of his Lotusmastery Skill (so three marks for d8, four marks for d10 and so on), he can advance the Skill by one die step for free. When the character advances the Lotusmastery skill (in any manner) cancel all marks.

available to any characters who are part of the Cult of the Dream.

THE STORY OF THE DREAM

The origin of the Cult of the Dream is very recent, only five years ago.

It all started with a fugitive, sick slave: Laobeng.

This unfortunate Jademan was a passenger captured by pirates and sold in the flesh markets of Val Hordaka. He was a monk, sent to the north to proselytize, but a few months in the rice fields broke his body, as Lotus added to his food broke his spirit, drawing him away from the path of Enlightenment.

Reduced to a shadow of his former self, one day Laobeng, exploiting a distraction of the overseer, managed to escape. He had heard talk of the fugitive slaves living in the Brokenchain Mountains and hoped to reach them.

But his voyage ended far sooner. One night, in proximity of the Brokenchain range, he stopped to drink at a creek. The water was cold and refreshing and he filled his empty stomach.

Then, during the night, the Jademan felt sick. A strange fever caught him, while he lay, good as dead, among the herbs.

And then the dreams came.

Nobody knows exactly what Laobeng saw in his fever-induced visions, but when he woke up he was a different man. The Dreamer, a mysterious entity, had spoken to him, and made him his herald and prophet.

DREAMING

The tenets of the cult of the Dreamer are a mystery, for anyone not an initiate. The information contained in this part is

Still feverish, but animated by an unknown energy, Laobeng rose up, and started walking again, but this time his steps brought him back to Tricarnia, to tell the people of the Dreamer.

The first person Laobeng met was his former overseer, a vicious eunuch called Kordar. He savagely beat the runaway slave and condemned him to be used as human leech bait, to make an example for other slaves. But when his hands touched Laobeng's feverish skin, the Dream passed to it.

That very night Kordar was caught by the strange fever, and he was between life and death for a whole week. When he woke up, he was a different person: he reverently bowed in front of his former slave, Laobeng, and declared the Dreamer had spoken to him, and revealed Laobeng as his prophet.

In the meantime the fever passed from Kordar to more and more slaves, but its virulence slowed down: a few people died, while others recovered, all speaking of strange visions they had in their dreams. Some of them, like Kordar and Laobeng, embraced the visions of the Dream, while others fought against them.

Fearing a pestilence, the Priest Prince owning the farming camp where the fever appeared took the customary approach used in these cases: he closed the slaves in their wooden barracks, and set fire to all the camp, cleaning the malady's nest.

But Laobeng and Kordar survived: one of the slave-guards tasked to clean the camp was a Dreamer too, and he let them slip away, with a few other people touched by the Dream.

Laobeng and Kordar, taken for dead, slipped into the swamps, directed to the very place where the Jademan's visions started.

Then, in the solitude of the swamp, they submerged into the Dream, and lived many months in a state of almost constant sleep.

During this trance, they learnt many things.

First, they got a better grasp of the Dreamer (see sidebar).

Second, they understood that their strange fever, which never abandons their body totally, can be controlled, and allows them to use incredible abilities, chief among them that of making others experience the power of the Dream, sending them visions and, in certain cases, even taking control of their bodies and minds. For some people the fever and the visions would be particularly hard and difficult to endure, even causing death, but those people could be helped by a particular plant, called Lotus of the Dream. The same plant was also particularly useful to the Asans, who could use it to enhance their powers.

Third, they had a revelation: the Dreamer wants more people to know him, and his chosen followers had to spread his power and vision.

So the first circle of the cult of the Dream was created: Laobeng called them Asans, an ancient Lhobanite word meaning "teacher," and was declared by his men the High Asan or Dreamer's Voice. As his first act, the Dreamer's Voice sent his men, in disguise, into the slave camps, in the Citadels and all around Tricarnia, to spread the Dreamer's word and power.

The work of the Asans was facilitated by another factor: the Dream seemed to spread, even without active help from the cultists, in remote areas of Tricarnia.

Initially the Priest Princes considered it just another swamp fever, but they soon understood it was something totally different and potentially more dangerous, because infected people, whether slaves or Lords, started to slip away into the swamp looking for the Asans, the only ones that could explain to them what the Dream was.

The reaction of many Lords was straightforward and harsh: they sent soldiers to capture the runaway slaves, and put a bounty on the so called "Asans", but they soon discovered that they weren't just fever-infected madmen, but powerful sorcerers gifted with supernatural abilities.

But with all their powers, the Dreamers weren't a match for Tricarnia's full strength, so Laobeng decided to change tactics: he called back all the Asans and told them to change their approach, becoming more subtle and less blatant in their preaching. He also understood that the new followers needed a place to live and rest, so he organized them in camps spread around the country in secret places. All these people could not spend all their time sleeping, so they were put to work growing food for the community and tending the Lotus of the Dream, a necessary commodity for the welfare of the cult.

The cultists needed to be protected too, so the Dreamer's Voice decided that some of the Asans, the most martial ones, had to take care of this aspect of the sect. He called them Templomos, and Kordar the Eunuch, the former overseer of Laobeng, was the first of them.

From that day on, the Cult of the Dream has been slowly insinuating itself into every aspect of Tricarnian society: among the slaves, the nobility, even the Brokenchain freemen and the bandits of the Brotherhood of the Roads. Its politics also changed; although Asans have the innate ability of spreading the Dream, actually infecting people, they are forbidden to do this against the will of the subject, who must join willingly (see The Asans Doctrine Sidebar).

This didn't affect the number of the cultists too much; in fact cases of natural contagion are still frequent, even if nobody has ever managed to discover the cause.

The situation was more or less stable for some time, but recently disturbing information slipped out from the camps; the Dream's Voice has taken leave of his followers and disappeared to attend to some task he received from the Dreamer itself.

This left a power vacuum among the highest ranks of the organization, with several high ranking Asans trying to seize power, even if nobody has so far managed to get the Templomos on his side.

When this happens, the future of the Cult of the Dreamer will change forever...

HERO'S JOURNAL:

THE NATURE OF THE DREAMER

People of any social extraction, race, sex and background experienced the Dream and saw the Dreamer. Each of them reported a personal version of it. If you are playing a member of the Cult of the Dream, whether the character is a simple Follower, an Asan or a Templomos, deciding "what you saw" can help define your background. Here are some ideas:

- +An imposing castle or tower built of black marble.*
- +A great pillar of light.*
- +A huge shapeless being, full of overwhelming love.*
- +A dark shadow, which ordered you to surrender or be wiped out.*
- +A long-dead relative speaking to you*
- +A marvelous garden or another enchanted place*
- +A great sea of lavender-colored water*
- +An awe-inspiring beast*
- +A chorus of unearthly beautiful voices*
- +A flock of birds made of light or darkness*

HERO'S JOURNAL:

THE DREAM KINGDOM

If you listen to the words of the Asans, or even of some gifted follower, the place where the Dreamer dreams really exists. It is called the Dream Kingdom, and only the powerful souls of the Asans or other chosen ones can enter it. The true nature of the Dream Kingdom is one of the many mysteries of the Cult. Even the older Asans don't explain this secret to the younger ones, who must unravel the mystery by themselves.

The GM's Guide of this book contains plenty of information on the Dream Kingdom and the GM can, at his discretion, give some additional hints on this topic to an Asan or Templomos player.

HERO'S JOURNAL:

THE ASANS DOCTRINE

In the early days of the Dream, Asans and other infected people spread the malady without any rules, trying to "convert" as many people as they could, but with the passing of time they understood that is wrong, because what differentiates mankind from beasts is the ability to choose. So Laobeng conceived the following rules, called the Doctrine, which are the tenets of the cult. Note that not every Asan and Templomos sticks to it (characters who do can consider it a Code of Honor).

The tenets of the doctrine are:

- + Do not pass the Dream on to anyone who doesn't want it.*
- + If you find a Suffering One (a person freshly affected by the Dream) you must help him at best as you can.*
- + The Dreamer has many shapes and ways, and a different destiny for each person. Nobody, not even an Asan, can know them all.*

DREAMING

Arcane Skill: Dreaming (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 1

Available Powers: *Beast Friend, Boost/Lower Trait, Confusion, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Disguise, Divination, Draining Touch, Fear, Invisibility, Legerdemain, Puppet, Slow, Slumber, Summon Ally (Illusions Only), Stun, Succor, Telekinesis, Warrior's Gift.*

Dreaming is an arcane background philosophically very similar to Enlightenment, but with a very different base. The Follower of the Dream receives his power from an unknown mystical being called the Dreamer.

The first stage of the Cult is always being affected by the strange fever called the Dream, which puts a character in communication with the Dream. The fever in some cases is mortal, but if the victim ceases to fight and surrenders to the Dreamer's will they quickly recover. A few of the survivors enter a very close relationship with the Dreamer and gain special mental powers from their supernatural patron.

Dreamers communicate with their master during sleep, so it is common for them to pass long periods in meditation or a Lotus-induced stupor.

Dreamers' powers are basically mind control effects, so most of them don't affect inanimate objects.

Dreamtouch: The basic ability of any Follower of the Dreamer is the so-called Dreamtouch, the capacity to spread the Dream to a target. Rules-wise, the Follower must touch another person and initiate a Dramatic Task based on Dreaming, opposed by the Vigor of the target. If the Follower wins with at least three successes, the target is affected by the Dream. He suffers a level of Fatigue for three days, and then he recovers, but permanently gains the Dream Fever Hindrance. The Dreamtouch can be attempted only once per Rank of the Follower on a given target. If he fails the roll it means his personal Dream is too feeble to influence the target.

Because this is a potentially game-breaking ability, it can be used by a Player Character on another Player Character only if both players agree.

Backlash: A Follower of the Dream who rolls a 1 on the Dream die, regardless of the Wild Die, experiences terrible visions, called the Nightmare. He suffers -2 to all Trait rolls for the remainder of the scene.

HERO'S JOURNAL:**DREAMING THE TRUE DREAM**

If you heed the words of the Asans, what the Dreamer does to his followers is only one thing: he makes them see. This means basically three things.

First, a Follower sees himself, acquiring a particular self-consciousness no other person has.

Second, a Follower sees the true nature of the world; no disguise, charm or obfuscation can fool his sight.

Third, a Follower can make others see, giving them a glimpse of the Dreamer.

Here follow some trappings of the Dream in practice.

See Myself. *The character has a glimpse of his soul, after removing all misconceptions. For all the duration of the Power his Dreaming dice is raised by one die step (cannot stack with other similar trappings), but he cannot use any initiative-affecting Edges (like Quick) for the duration of the Power. The trapping works only for personal Powers.*

Make You See. *A Follower can affect the mind of a target making him see a glimpse of the Dreamer's world: the Dream Kingdom. In truth it isn't the caster directing the spell, but the Dreamer himself! In game terms the caster doesn't maintain the Power; he decides the duration in advance and pays the cost at the moment of casting, but the basic duration of the Power is extended by one round.*

Contagion. *This Power is basically a specialized effect of the fever causing the Dream. This means that it is delivered by touch, but it is very strong; if the Touch Attack hits the victim must make a Vigor (-4) roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.*

Illusion. *The Power exists only in the mind of the target, and only for him! The cost is reduced by one Power Point,*

but at the beginning of every round the victim can make a Spirit (-2) roll, opposed by the Dreaming skill of the caster, to disbelieve it. It is a slight variation of the Mesmerism trapping in JCT, page 80.

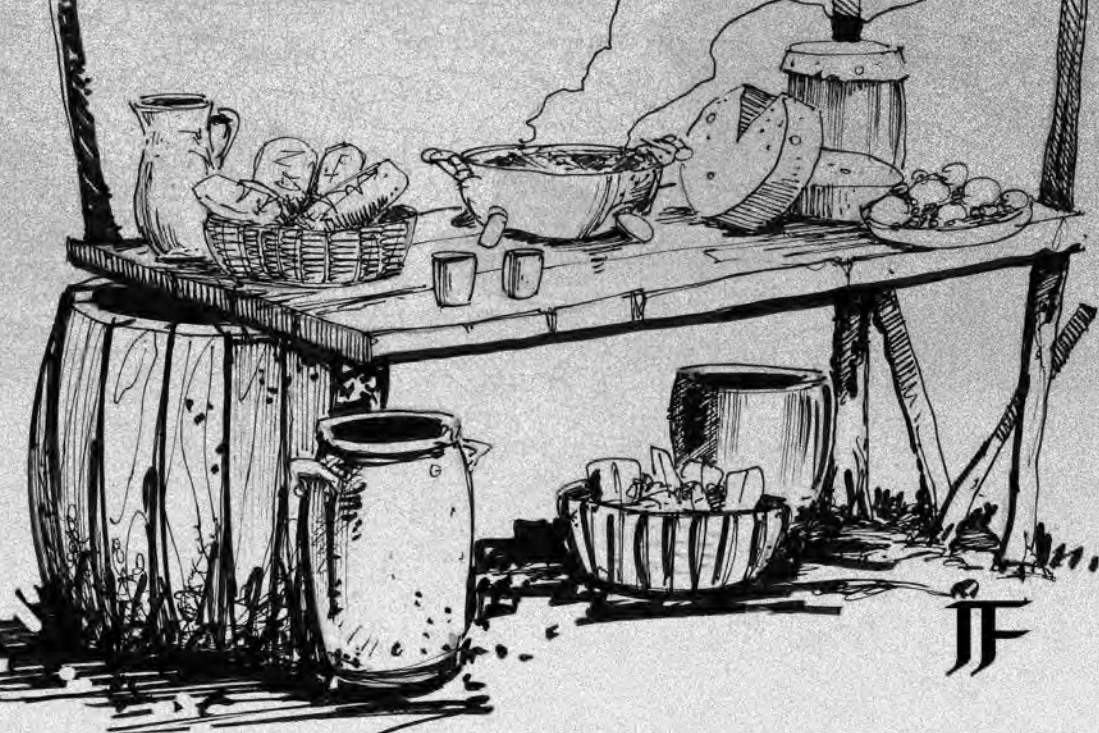
DREAMING TRAPPINGS IN USE

Telekinesis (Find in Myself). *Through deep concentration the Follower finds inside his soul the ability to make objects move through the air! For the duration of the Power the Dreaming skill of the caster is increased by one die step, but he cannot use any initiative-affecting Edges.*

Fear (See your True Self). *The Follower makes a great gift to the target: he makes him see for a brief moment the Dreamer and in this the target sees a reflection of himself, which isn't pleasant at all. In truth it isn't the Follower causing the fear, he only gives a little start to the thing. For this reason the Power isn't maintained, the caster pays the cost in advance at the moment of the casting, and the basic duration is extended by one round.*

Slow (Fever Touch). *The Follower passes an instantaneous fever to the target, who starts feeling his joints go stiff and sweating heavily. He must make a Vigor (-4) roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.*

Disguise ("These aren't the people you are looking for"). *The Follower, through clever use of mind powers, makes one or more targets believe that he has a totally different appearance. In game terms the cost of the power is reduced by one, but at the beginning of every round the victim can make a Spirit (-2) roll to see through the ruse. This roll replaces the normal Notice roll allowed by the Power.*



IF

NEW GEAR

This chapter includes several new items typical of Tricarnia. Usually they are available only in the land of the Sons of Keron, unless the GM decides otherwise.

MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

Type	Dmg	Wt	Cost	Notes
Blades				
Arsenic Dagger	Str+d4	1	300	Rare, see notes
Sacrificial Blade	Special	x1	x4	Rare, see notes
Tyrant Sword	Str+d8	10	1000	Rare, see notes
Pole Arms				
Rider Lance	Str+d10	12	300	AP 2, Reach 2, Usable only while riding a Large creature

RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Type	Rng	Dmg	Cost	Wt	Str	Notes
Lizard Bow	10/20/40	2d6	300/3	-	3d6	ROF 3, -1 Shooting rolls, Suppressing Fire, see notes

ARMOR TABLE

Type	Armor	Weight	Cost	Notes
Overseer Helm	+3	6	Special	See notes
Spiked Shield	0	+50%	+50%	See notes
Templomos Armor	Special	Special	+25%	Templomos only, See notes

MUNDANE ITEMS TABLE

Item	Cost	Weight	Note
Special Adventuring Gear			
Dream Catcher	500	-	Rare, see notes
Lotus of Dream	100	-	See notes
Leech Pot	200	-	See notes
Library of Lore	2000/200	40	See notes
Protection Charm	200/800	-	Rare, see notes
Spell Offerings	100/Batch	-	Rare, see notes
Torturer's Tools	200	100	See notes
Tricarnian Musical Instrument	300	1-6	See notes

ANIMALS AND TACK

Balkoth	2500	-	See notes, Rare
Balkoth Barding	1000	-	See notes
Balkoth Crystal	1000	-	See notes, Rare
Bat Whistle	100	-	See notes
Greater Yalaruka	7500	-	See notes, Rare, Ral Hordaka only
Flying Beast Saddle	500	12	
Trained Shadow Bat	5000	-	See notes, Rare
War Turtle	3500	-	See notes, Rare, Nal Lagar only

SLAVES TABLE

Slave Value	Cost	Note
Very Low	100	
Low	250	
Average	500	
High	1000	Rare
Very High	1500	Rare
Unique	3000+	Rare

VEHICLES TABLE

Vehicle	Ace/TS	Tough.	Crew	Cost	Notes
War Barge	1/2	10(2)	10+30	3K	See notes
Tricornian War Galley	2/10	20(4)	150+75	200K	Heavy Armor

MELEE WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

Arsenic Dagger. Tricornian bronze is often enriched with arsenic, to make it harder. This particular alloy is called Demon Metal. Despite popular belief, arsenic in this form is totally inert, and isn't poisonous. But there are particular incantations and rituals, which when cast on the blade of an Arsenic Dagger, awaken the venomous property of the metal, at least partially. In game terms any poison (included ones created with the *poison* Power) receives +2 to the opposed rolls if used on an Arsenic Dagger.

Rider Lance. This massive lance is used only on war beasts of huge dimensions (Shadow Bats, Yalaruka and similar). The handle must be placed in a particular hook on the harness to allow the rider to use it, employing all the force of his mount.

Sacrificial Blade. This particular weapon has received enchantments of various types upon it, making it a perfect tool for a sacrifice. If used for Sacrifices (see page 105), it grants an additional Power Point per sacrificed victim, and +1 to the sacrifice roll. Usually a sacrificial blade is a dagger, but other types of sacrificial weapons are known: swords, clubs, even

blood-smeared iron fists, the Hands of Baachaga, designed to smash the heads of the victims into a bloody pulp.

Tyrant Sword. This peculiar weapon is found only in Tricornia and is probably of Keronian origin. Made exclusively in ensorcelled bronze (see sidebar), it looks like a traditional Tricornian sword, but the blade is composed of a dozen or more tightly interlocked segments. In the hands of a common warrior, it is simply a good weapon, but if it is wielded by a sorcerer (a character with the Sorcery Arcane Background) or a Wild Card with Spirit d8+, it reveals its amazing powers.

By spending 3 Power Points (for a sorcerer) or a Bennie (for a non-sorcerer Wild Card), the Tyrant Sword's segments can be loosened, and the weapon becomes a sort of sword-whip, animated by an unnatural energy. While in this state the weapon gains Reach 5, ignores the Parry bonus of shields and grants +1 to Tricks. The effect lasts for 3 rounds.

This weapon is Rare even in Tricornia, and reserved to nobles and sorcerers. Any non-noble character wielding it receives -2 Charisma toward Tricornians, double the penalty if he isn't a Tricornian himself.

GM's TIP:

SLAVE CASTE WEAPONS

Slave castes in Tricarnia are often equipped with particular weapons, which have both a practical and ritual purpose, aiming to give a sense of identity to the slaves forced into the caste. Most of them are variations of a common weapon: bigger, weird-shaped, spiked, hooked and so on. To create a Slave Caste Weapon you can use the suggestions found in this sidebar.

Pick a Weapon Type. Usually swords, axes and clubs and pole arms are elected to be Slave Caste Weapons.

Quality and Cost. Caste Weapons, being designed for slaves, are cheap and not very well built. For purposes of breaking, consider them made of material one step worse (so a bronze weapon breaks as if a stone one), and they cost 50% less. Chosen slaves can be rewarded with better quality weapons.

Rule Effects. You can decide that a Slave Caste Weapon is only cosmetically different from the others of the same type, or, if you want more crunch, you can choose a Merit and Defect from the table below, either according to the weapon description, or at random by rolling two d8 (reroll if you get opposing modifiers, such as +1 Parry and -1 Parry).

SLAVE CASTE WEAPON TABLE

D8	MERIT	DEFECT
1	Agile: +1 to Agility Tricks in combat	Heavy: double weight, +50% cost.
2	Disarming: +2 to Disarm Called Shots	Weak: breaks with double 1 on damage roll.
3	Long: Reach: +1	Short: -1 Reach (*)
4	Armor Breaker: +2 AP	Bulky: requires 2 hands(**)
5	Dangerous: raise deals d8 additional damage	Flat Edge: raise deals d4 additional damage
6	Sharp: +1 Damage rolls	Dull: -1 Damage rolls
7	Parrying: +1 Parry	Unwieldy: -1 Parry
8	Manageable: +1 Fighting rolls	Clumsy: -1 to Fighting rolls

(*) Reroll for a weapon with no Reach

(**) Reroll for a two handed weapon

ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

Overseer Helm. This identifies a particular class of item, the helm of the Tricarnian Eunuch Overseer, made in various shapes. They are not sold, but issued to the eunuch during a special ceremony, the Day of the Tested Blood. A character wearing an Overseer Helm receives the Command Edge, which works only on Tricarnian slaves. If he already has the Edge, double the Command Radius instead. In addition the wearer gains +2 to any reaction, Persuasion or Intimidation roll against slaves of lesser standing (GM's call). Wearing such a helm without being a eunuch overseer is a capital offense.

Spiked Shield. This shield, which is also found in other cultures, presents a single long spike or blade in the center, or a number of smaller ones all around the

edge. This makes it a good weapon, both in offense and defense. When making a Shield bash, instead of doing Str+1 damage for a small shield and Str+2 for a medium shield, you do Str+d4 and Str+d6 damage. Only small and medium shields can be spiked.

Templomos Armor. Templomos, the warrior branch of the Cult of the Dreamer, wear specially blessed armor, engraved with the symbol of the Dreamer, a nine-pointed star. They believe that when they wear it they are protected by their god, so they don't feel its true weight.

In game terms, a character with the Dream Follower (Templomos) Edge wearing Templomos Armor only perceives a third of its real weight, so long as he has at least 1 Power Point. Any type of armor can be engraved and blessed to become Templomos Armor.



Crafting: If a Templomos loses his blessed armor and wants to create another suit, he can. First he must find suitable armor, then with an Armorer Kit and blessed materials (powders, incenses, Lotus and so on) of value equivalent to 25% of the armor's, he must make both a Dreaming (-2) and a Repair (-2) roll to successfully bless the new armor. In the case of failure of any of the rolls, he may retry later, but the blessed materials are lost. The crafting time is two days per point of Armor bonus of the armor. So Medium Armor (+2) can be made Templomos Armor in four days of work.

RANGED WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

Lizard Bow. This short bow, also called Hamarran Bow, because it was probably first conceived in Nal Hamar, is the typical weapon of the Lizard Eyes slave caste. The cord of the bow is divided in two, and joined in the middle by a piece of carved wood. This greatly diminishes the accuracy of the bow, but allows the user to shoot up to three arrows at the same time, all against the same target. The shoots don't incur any multi-action penalty, but suffer a -2 penalty to hit due to the bow's inaccuracy. The bow can also be used for single arrow shots, but they are made at -1. Lizard archers use these weapons in battle to saturate the area, so the weapon can also be used to cause suppressive fire, but using a Small Burst Template. These weapons are generally shunned by professional archers of other races, and are Rare outside Tricarnia.

MUNDANE ITEMS DESCRIPTION

Dream Catcher. These peculiar, ring-shaped amulets are given to the Asans, the priests of the Cult of the Dreamer. If the legends are true, through them an Asan can see the "true" reality of the world or entrap nightmares (see Nightmare Entrapping Edge on page 95). In game terms, a character with the Dream Follower (Asan) Edge can use this amulet to use the *detect arcana* Power (he doesn't have to know the Power, but must spend Power Points as normal). If he already knows the Power, the costs drop by one and the Asan receives +2 to the Dreaming roll.

Crafting: An Asan losing his Dream Catcher can make another one, by making a Dreaming (-4) roll and spending 5 Power Points. These Power Points are recovered very slowly at the rate of one after each night (or other eight hour period) of sleep.

Leech Pot. Leeches are commonly used in Tricarnian medicine. A character using leeches ignores up to two points of the patient's Wound penalties when making Healing rolls, but cannot spend Bennies to reroll if a 1 is rolled on the Healing die (this means the leeches sucked too much blood from the patient). Leeches are nurtured with a solution of blood, water and various curative Lotus.

Library of Lore. Books are an overly precious commodity in the Dominions, due to their rarity and the fact that very few people are able to access the knowledge hidden among their dusty pages. A library is a collection of tomes, scrolls, tablets, even skins or marble plates filled with lore. In game terms, having a

library available grants a +2 bonus to a specific Knowledge or Investigation roll. Really big libraries, such as the fabulous Great Library of Siranthia, aren't covered by this item. The first price refers to the cost to buy it (this doesn't include a proper storage area), while the second is the cost to rent a library and consult its books for three days (the minimum amount of time to get the bonus).

Lotus of Dream. This swamp weed produces lavender-colored flowers which are desiccated and used in various ways: infusions and smoking them are the commonest ones. Lotusmasters haven't yet found a real use for them in their potions, instead they are remove commonly consumed by people affected by the strange fever called the Dream or by the Cultists of the Dream themselves. In the first case a dose is enough to cancel the Fatigue of the Dream Hindrance for a session, while in the second it can enhance the powers of the Asans. The user must make a Vigor roll, and for each success and raise he recovers 2 Power Points, or alternatively he gains +1 to Power rolls for a day (this bonus cannot stack in case of overuse). Using more doses of this plant in the same day is dangerous, and any additional dose imposes -2 to the Vigor roll. If the result is 1 or less, the character is so dazed that he cannot use any Powers for a day.

Protection Charm. Tricarnians are a treacherous people: hostile magic and poisoning are quite common among them, so many Priest Princes wear special charms and amulets, usually made of onyx and ensorcelled bronze, with protective powers. Some of them are particularly powerful, because they were made in ancient Keron. Rules-wise they work in the following way. First, the type of charm must be chosen: protection from

poison (which covers natural venoms and all Lotus-based powers) or magic (which covers sorcery). Then the GM secretly rolls 1d4-1, this being the number of charges in the Charm. He doesn't reveal this to the owner, but keeps the information to himself.

Whenever the wearer of the charm is hit by a threat of the specified type he can use one of the charges, if any are left. By doing so he gains +2 to the opposed roll to resist the effect *or* to Armor. The decision can be taken after rolling the dice.

A normal charm becomes useless when all the charges are spent, a Keronian Charm instead is much more powerful, and its efficacy is restored at the beginning of each adventure (the GM rolls a d4-1 again).

Crafting: A sorcerer can craft a protection charm by spending half the cost and making a skill roll (-2) using the lower of Sorcery and Knowledge (Arcana). Only normal charms can be made, the technique to craft Keronian ones has been lost.

Spell Offerings. This entry covers all consumable materials used as Spell Offerings (see page 104). The character can buy them in batches.

When looking for Spell Offerings, the character can use Sorcery or Knowledge (Arcana) in place of Streetwise. He finds two batches of Spell Offerings per success and raise in the roll. Although they are generic, the player is encouraged to describe them in a personalized way (see sidebar).

Torturer's Tools. Torturing, in Tricarnia, is an art, and a good torturer is a prized professional. A person with the following instruments (and an

appropriate background) receives +2 to any Questioning rolls (see Setting Rules)

Tricarnian Musical Instrument. The Sons of Keron are very skilled in music and their instruments are often a work of art, or, some say, a work of magic. The most famous ones are the Tricarnian Harp, a portable harp made of polished wood and silver strings; the Keronian Flute, a small but powerful wind instrument, usually made of human bone; and the Syrenya Lute, a mandolin-like instrument with a sound so sweet that, legend says, it can persuade the shyest maiden to surrender her modesty...

HERO'S JOURNAL:

SPELL OFFERINGS IDEAS

Here follow some ideas for Spell Offerings. They can also be a good treasure for any magic-dabbling hero.

- +Unusual Human Parts (i.e. hair of a maiden suicide, blood of a twice-killed gladiator)
- +Incense/Lotus (Savannah Weed Lotus, Incense of the Red Desert, Myrrh of Lhoban)
- +Oils/Waxes (oil of the great fish of the north, candles of black wax)
- +Desiccated/Powdered Components (powdered buffalo horn, pollen of ancient flowers, desiccated cavern fungi)
- +Wine or Beverage (ancient Keronian Wine, Spirit of the Cairns)

ANIMALS AND TACK

Balkoth. A Balkoth, also called War Beast, is a sort of giant dog-lion hybrid, with a long horn on its muzzle. Quite ferocious, they must be tamed when young or controlled through a Balkoth Crystal (see below). These beasts are quite rare today.

Balkoth Barding. Special armor made of reinforced layers of leather and bronze. It grants the Balkoth Armor (+2) but slows it down a bit, reducing Pace by two. It also functions as a saddle for the rider.

Balkoth Crystal. A hand-sized crystal, found only in the Red Desert or in the Brokenchain Mountains, it can be used to entrap the soul of a Balkoth and command it through sorcery. The beast obeys whoever has the crystal on himself. As there is no way to tell if the crystal has already been used, when a player buys or finds one, the GM must secretly pick a card from the Action Deck: if it is a King or higher, the Crystal was already used and is worthless.

Bat Whistle. These particular whistles are only made in silver and can reach a really high pitch, which can be heard only by true Keronians and bats of any type. They can be used to call a trained bat (or Yalaruka) within three miles. If it is necessary to determinate how much time the beast takes to arrive, the GM secretly rolls 2d4. This represents the number of rounds after which the beast arrives. Both dice can ace.

Flying Beast Saddle. A complex harness used by Beast Riders to fly on their beasts in relative safety. It includes a space for a

passenger, saddles and a special hook to hold a lance.

Greater Yalaruka. Yalaruka are a sub-race of Shadow Bats. They are smaller than their cousins but much more ferocious and aggressive. They are only found in Ral Hordaka.

Trained Shadow Bat. A Shadow Bat of the Brokenchain Mountains, tamed and trained for battle. It is very precious and only available to nobles.

War Turtle. War Turtles are impressive beasts raised in the pits of Nal Lagar. They are nasty and dangerous and used for warfare. Their number is dwindling.

VEHICLES

War Barge. Tricarnia is, for the most part, made up of swamps. A barge, which has a flat hull made for shallow waters, is a good way to cross them, provided you know the route and have plenty of slaves to propel the vessel. Tricarnian lords wanting to move their troops use these large barges, with enough space to carry men, equipment and assorted gear. Some of them are armed with catapults and ballistae (see *Fantasy Companion* page 18), making them a sort of mobile artillery.

Tricarnian War Galley. One of the most powerful ships of the Dominions, Tricarnian War Galleys exist in various sizes and shapes, but they share some similarities: usually they are triremes (or rarely quadriremes) manned by a number of slave oarsmen, and carrying half that number of soldiers. They are fitted with rams, catapults and ballistae and, despite being quite slow, they are impressive in battle, second only to Amazon Hawk

Ships. This profile refers to an average-sized ship.

SLAVES

Slave Value. Slaves are a common commodity in Tricarnia. The prices above represent the market value of a single slave. As you can see, slaves are quite cheap; usually a warrior slave of low caste is worth less than the weapons he is using. Slaves in Tricarnia are usually sold in auctions held in the flesh markets. Slaves of Average or lower value are often sold in groups (so with a lower single price), while the most precious ones are sold individually. Note that Gladiator Slaves have a very different range of prices. If you have *GOD*, use the price rules of that supplement, otherwise you can consider them to be at least of High value.

Here follows some examples of slaves divided per value:

Very Low. Leech fisherman, convict-miner, boy or girl.

Low. Farmer.

Average. Artisan, plain-looking girl, low caste slave-warrior.

High. Skilled artisan, scribe, good-looking girl, high caste slave warrior.

Very High. Sage, skilled healer, very attractive girl, trained eunuch bodyguard.

Unique. Concubine of noble blood, fallen sorcerer deprived of his powers, powerful gladiator.

HERO'S JOURNAL: ENSORCELLED BRONZE

Tricornian blacksmiths can produce a particular type of bronze, to which is added Demon Metal (arsenic) to make it more rigid. In addition they cast particular Keronian invocations during the smelting process, which are thought to imbue it with magical powers. Nobody knows if these rituals have a real effect or not, but for this reason the metal is called Ensorcelled Bronze.

In game terms, consider Ensorcelled Bronze as being harder than bronze and weaker than iron.

In addition, in the hand of a sorcerer or Wild Card, these items have power: the user can spend one Power Point (or a Bennie if he doesn't have the Sorcery Arcane Background) and make a Spirit roll. In the case of success the opponent's weapon may break, as if he had rolled 1 on the Fighting die (see GE page 101).

A character can use this power as many times he wants, but every time he uses it in the same session the cost is increased by one (Bennies or Power Points).

Naturally these objects are easier to use for a true wizard...



SETTING RULES

This chapter introduces several setting rules typical of Tricornia, but which can be used in the rest of the Dominions too.

If the modified roll is 1 or less, a really bad omen is cast and the subject of the divination, plus a randomly selected friend, loses a Bennie.

ASTROLOGY

Ancient Keronians were very wise in the arts of foreseeing the future by reading the stars, and the Tricornians have maintained this tradition.

Once per session, a character can try to observe the stars to divine the future of a person (which can be the user himself). It requires a Knowledge (Arcana) (-2) or Smarts (-4) roll. In the case of success the person gains, at his choice, a Bennie (two with a raise) or a hint on a particular topic from the GM. Note that as this is an omen, the GM is free to be as cryptic as he wants (but he should be more clear if the character obtained a raise).

An Astrology attempt requires 10 minutes of time.

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

Magic and arcane lore are jealously held in the Dominions, and often achieving certain knowledge is a long and problematic task. To simulate this, the Professional and Master Legendary Edges, when taken for an arcane skill (Dreaming, Enlightenment, Lotusmastery, Obscurement or Sorcery) or for Knowledge (Arcana, History, Religion) must met one of these additional requirements:

1. **Master of Forbidden Lore.** The character must find another character with the desired Edge and convince him to be taken on as a disciple. Usually these individuals are age-old sorcerers, Demon Lords or similar.
2. **Tome of Forbidden Lore.** Find (and study) a Tome of Forbidden Lore, one of the mythical books of power of the Dominions (detailed on page 156).

Effect in Play. A noble of higher Standing, when dealing with another noble, obtains a bonus to Charisma equal to the difference in Standing, in a situation where social importance matters (for example the rules apply while signing a military treaty, but not when a prince is trying to seduce a noblewoman). The bonus for Standing doesn't apply to commoners: they don't grasp the exquisite difference between a Baron and a Count or between the Priest Prince of Nal Askerion and the heir of Hordakan house.

NOBLE RANKS

Nobles vary in importance and power. Evaluating if the Priest Prince of Ral Hordaka is more important than the Eunuchs of Nal Nomantor can be tricky because several factors are included in the calculation: bloodline, wealth, connections, personal charisma and so on.

Because this can be very important in political campaigns, you can estimate the importance of a noble using the following rules.

STANDING

Standing is a new derived Stat, used only by characters with a position of relevance, which is calculated in this manner: 0 + 2 per Standing Edge the character has.

The only exception is Fallen Noble which increases Standing only by one.

Unique Titles. There are dozens of counts and princes in the Dominions, but only one High Prince, Emperor, Autarch and so on. A unique title usually counts as one to three Standing Edges (GM's decision).

Petty Nobles. These nobles have a very low importance, and their title is mostly honorific. Having no Edges, their Standing is zero. In certain cases the GM can rule a Petty Noble gains +1 Charisma toward slaves and inferiors and -1 toward real nobles (the ones with the Edges).

STANDING EXAMPLES TABLE

Description	Standing
Emperor of Faberterra	16
High Prince of Tricarnia, Autarch of Kyros	12
King of Jalizar	10
Priest Prince of Ral Hordaka, Duke of Felantium	8
Heir of Nal Askerion	6
Family Member of Nal Lagara	4
Exiled noble of a fallen house	1
Prince of the Fallen Tower (honorific title)	0



QUESTIONING AND TORTURING

Sometimes the heroes will have to quickly extract some information from uncooperative people, while at other times they will be in the hands of some sadistic individual wanting to do the same to them.

The following rules are abstract, and should only be used when dramatically appropriate. For example, when one of the adventurers is captured by a sadistic tyrant who tortures him to reveal the location of the secret base of the rebels; the hero must

resist till his comrades heroically rescue him...

The goals of torture are basically twofold: breaking the body or spirit of the victim (which means basically lowering his Vigor or Spirit) or extracting information. Often the first is instrumental to the second. The Torturer must declare what he is trying to do before starting the process.

Questioning, and torturing in general, is handled with the following rules. It is a Social Conflict pitting the best Trait of the Torturer (choose Intimidation or Smarts) versus the best Trait of the Victim (choose Vigor or Spirit). The Social Conflict lasts for five rounds, after

which subtract the successes and raises of the Victim from those of the Torturer and check the table below.

A Torturer can employ helpers, making the roll cooperative, but each helper can trigger the “Maybe I Pushed Too Hard” rule below.

Each torturing cycle, to be successful, requires two hours of time and after each attempt the victim must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.

TORTURING TABLE EFFECTS

Successes	Effect
-3 or less	<i>Victim Wins.</i> Increase by a total of two die steps the Spirit and/or Vigor of the Victim (only to resist torture) or the Victim convinces the Torturer of a major piece of false information.
-2 to -1	<i>Victim Wins Marginally.</i> Increase by one die step the Spirit or Vigor of the Victim (only to resist torture) or the Victim convinces the Torturer of a minor piece of false information.
0	<i>No effect.</i>
1 to 2	<i>Torturer Wins Marginally.</i> Victim suffers a reduction of one die step in Spirit or Vigor or he reveals a minor piece of true information to the Torturer.
3 or more	<i>Torturer Wins.</i> Victim suffers a reduction by a total of two die steps in Spirit and/or Vigor or he reveals a major piece of true information to the Torturer.

“Maybe I Pushed Too Hard”: The difficult thing, in torture, is making the victim suffer without killing him. In game terms, whenever the Torturer rolls a 1 on

the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, he causes a Wound to the Victim that cannot be soaked.

Recovering from Torture: Wounds caused by torture are recovered as normal, while Fatigue and Attribute reductions are recovered by making a Vigor roll after a day of rest (each success and raise removes a level of Fatigue or recovers an attribute die step).

SEDUCTION

Beautiful ladies whispering words in the ears of their lovers can move and shake kingdoms more than legions of iron-clad soldiers. Seduction, in sword and sorcery, is more than simple lovemaking or distracting a courtier with a glimpse of bare flesh: it is a weapon as powerful as a sharp sword.

If you want and your group likes this type of social interaction, you can handle seduction entirely through role-play. Otherwise, if you prefer a rules-based approach, this paragraph introduces two different ways to handle seduction: quick seduction and extended seduction (which also includes the role-play factor).

Quick Seduction. To see if a character manages to seduce another one, for example a pretty girl seducing a guard, you can make an opposed roll of the seductress’s Persuasion against the victim’s Spirit. The seductress sums up her Charisma plus any modifier from the table below (which is common both to quick and extended seduction). For each success and raise for the seductress, the initial reaction of the victim improves by one step, while it worsens by one step if the winner is the victim. If the reaction of the

victim reaches Helpful, he is considered seduced and in love with the seductress and behaves accordingly.

Quick seduction tends to be fickle. It lasts, at the GM's call, at least a scene, but never more than a single scenario.

Extended Seduction. Permanently winning the love of a man is a longer task, which requires charm and ardor, but also guile and cunning. Note that the concept of "seduction" is a broad one, and isn't always connected with sex, but with the need and craving for something: a gluttonous person can be seduced with food, a greedy one with money and a glory hound with dangerous quests which will appease his ego.

Finding and showing the object of desire to the victim is pure role-playing, but the whole seduction process is handled as a Social Conflict, pitting the seductress's Persuasion versus the victim's Spirit, as above.

Both sides add their Charisma to the roll, plus the modifiers listed below.

SEDUCTION MODIFIERS TABLE

Factor	Modifier
Sex-based seduction: Temptress, Damsel in Distress	+2/Edge
Money-based seduction: Rich, Filthy Rich, Noble	+2/Edge
Lavish gift (GM's call what "lavish" means to the victim)	+2
Bad or good role-play	-4 to +4

Extended seduction lasts three "rounds," usually each one day long. They need not be consecutive: fiction is full of lovers who

meet for a day and then, twenty years later, continue their love story.

After the three rounds pass, count the number of successes and raises for both sides, subtract the victim's total from the seductress's total, and check the table below.

Note that this type of seduction is very involving, so it could happen that the cold-hearted seductress falls in love with her victim! Extended Seduction is permanent.

EXTENDED SEDUCTION EFFECTS

Margin of Victory	Effect
-6 or more	<i>The Power of Love!</i> The seductress is seduced by her victim, unable to control her own heart. Her reactions improve by two steps, and if they become Helpful or more the victim gains the Connections Edge toward the seductress!
-4 to -5	<i>I Cannot Love You But...</i> The seductress, despite her dedication, feels something, well... unwanted for the victim. Her reaction improves by one step toward him.
-3 to -1	<i>Seduction Failed.</i> The victim isn't truly interested in the seduction attempt, which is awkwardly done. The victim's reaction worsens by one step.
Tie	<i>No Chemistry.</i> The two parties don't "click", the seduction attempt fails.
1 to 2	<i>Sympathy.</i> The reactions of the victim improve by one step. Seduction can be tried again after a reasonable period of time with +2 to the seductress' rolls.

3 to 4	<i>Success!</i> The reactions of the victim improve by two steps, if they become Helpful or more the seductress gains the Connections Edge toward the victim.
5 or more	<i>I am your Slave!</i> As above, but the victim is totally enthralled by his mistress. The character becomes the Sidekick of the seductress.

Breaking Seduction. A person in love isn't charmed or controlled. He is simply in love. So if you mistreat, betray or even worse, damage him, your grip on him may disappear. And remember, a betrayed lover can be the worst of enemies.







GAME MASTER'S GUIDE



GAME MASTERING TRICARNIA

This chapter explains how to use Tricarnia in a *Beasts & Barbarians* campaign, providing you, the GM with several ideas on how to enter (and transmit to your players) the right mood for the place and suggesting various campaign frameworks you can use to create a memorable campaign in the land of the Sons of Keron.

HOW TO USE TRICARNIA

As always happens with sourcebooks, the first choice a GM must make is how to use the new corpus of information, background and rules provided so that it integrates smoothly into his game.

There are various levels of use for this book.

Rules Only. If you are already running a game, and your party is far away in other regions of the Dominions, you can, as the first step, introduce the new Edges, Hindrances, Setting and Magic rules, making them available to the group. Our suggestion is making the introduction slow and progressive, and only when there is a real reason for it. For example, your group is handling a complex truce between two noble families? It is the right moment to introduce Standing, otherwise for now leave it out.

A Trip to Tricarnia. Using the material provided in this book, you can decide to create one or more adventures set in the

land of the Sons of Keron. In this case the players will probably visit some of the iconic places described in this book (but there is a lot deliberately left non-descript, for you to fill in the blanks) and meet several important characters. The best Campaign Framework to use for these adventures is Foreign Mercenaries (see below). The advantage of this approach, from a gaming group perspective, is that only the GM need know the setting, and the players, being outsiders, will discover it during the game. If a new player joins the game (or a character dies and there is need for a replacement) he can create a new Tricarnian hero, making a strong link with the land. Expect that sooner or later your players will leave Tricarnia, but periodically they can return, willingly or driven by need or some quest.

A Tricarnian Campaign. The best way to fully enjoy this book is, obviously, running an entire campaign in the land of the Priest Princes. This doesn't mean that the heroes won't leave it: probably they'll do that, occasionally, but the focus of the action and the main theme of the game will revolve around Tricarnia. Nor does it mean that all the players must be Tricarnians (or, even narrower, Tricarnian nobles); foreigners can have several reasons to stay in this cursed land: a thirst for fortune, obedience or simply because they are slaves and cannot leave it. Several Campaign Frameworks are good for this type of game, for example *Rise of a House* or *Brokenchain Liberators*. Despite offering very different perspectives, both of them can make a memorable gaming experience.

THE TRICARNIAN MOOD

Tricarnia is a little different from the rest of the Dominions with regard to environment and population. Here are some points to focus on to transmit the right feel for the land.

Sons of Keron. Tricarnia is a land of very ancient traditions and with a history longer than anywhere else in the Dominions. Keron was destroyed more than two millennia ago, but for the Tricarnians it is still a reality, both culturally and geographically.

Throughout the land, you'll find ruins, buildings and geographical features from the old empire. The architecture of the new buildings still evokes the style of the old Keron. On the cultural side, this is even stronger: the language, the customs, even the food is the same as in the ancient past, where possible.



Elegance and Sophistication. Tricarnian lords are usually overeducated and very sophisticated. This aspect of their culture is present in everything: from funerary customs to dance, from music to language, even in cooking and furniture you'll find a grandeur and subtle complexity absent in any other culture; an envoy of the Emperor of Faberterra at a Tricarnian banquet will feel as clumsy as a barbarian in the Temple of Etu. Tricarnians don't expect barbarians (for them everyone not originating from Keron falls in this category) to understand the complexity of their customs, but they are easily offended and even in their anger, they show great finesse...

Pride and Decadence. Keron was the ruler of the world, millennia ago. The Priest Princes are stiff-necked and behave as if all the Dominions were simply their personal reserve of slaves, but the truth is very different. Keron doesn't exist anymore and Tricarnia is falling into decline; abandoned palaces fall down every day, swamps reconquer rice fields and in the shadows of the bamboos strange, evil things, once servants of the Princes, are preparing to take their revenge for millennia of submission.

Dreaming and Remembrance. Tricarnians live for memories. Their lifespan is longer than that of any man, but, for the greatest part of this time, nothing important happens, apart from indulging in their own pleasures. So, the only thing they can do is remember and brood over the past. Many Tricarnians enjoy memories and dreams so much that they pass a great deal of time in meditation, trance or Lotus-induced sleep. This is probably a rejection of the real world, or, for the ones drinking the Waters of Eternity and falling into age-long dreams, the wait for a better one.

Remnants of the War. The Caldeian Wars ended some time ago, but the country is

still not reconstructed; vast areas of land are abandoned, and strange, ugly things lurk in them, finally free after centuries. In forbidden, secret palaces age old-sorcerers continue to brood on enmities older than time. Will all of this end one day?

Alien Minds and Lifestyle. The Sons of Keron aren't truly human. They look human, and down the centuries they have mated with human beings, but continue to be substantially alien; they think and behave in a manner mankind doesn't really understand. Even their cruelty, which other races find so repulsive, is perfectly acceptable in their scale of values, as are bargaining and constant relationships with demons and supernatural forces.

Value of Human Life. Tricarnians suffer a particular form of racial solipsism: for them, only Tricarnians are really people. The rest of mankind, slaves in particular, are nothing more than tools or pets. A Tricarnian can still love a slave, but as a man would love a favored dog or a have a favorite tool. Even among their peers, a Tricarnian's first love is himself, or, if he is broad-minded, his family. Very few Tricarnians are able to think about the welfare of their nation and race (among them the Prince of Scales) and this in the end is the real cause of Tricarnia's decadence.

Unseen People. Slaves are everywhere in Tricarnia. If a job is done, it is because a slave did it. The majority of these people live like hardworking ants, unseen by their masters and as unnoticed as pieces of furniture. Lords don't really see slaves, until they need them or the slave messes up something, in which case they show their disappointment in the harshest way. Slaves watch each other, and only the highest echelons of the hierarchy are really seen by the masters.

Rebellion Bubbling. Life goes on as it always has within the protected walls of the Citadels, where Priest Princes enjoy their pastimes and plot one against the other. But outside, in the fields, among the swamps, on the roads and in the mountains the world is changing: slaves escape and go into the mountains, bandits and rebels are everywhere and strange new cults are sprouting like infections on an open wound.

CAMPAIGN THEMES

The Dominions are designed to let you play very different types of stories, but certain areas are particularly suitable for developing specific themes and types of scenarios. In the following chapter are described several campaign frameworks especially suited to the land of the Sons of Keron.

TRICARNIAN THEMES

Here follows a list of words and expressions that help you enter the proper Tricornian mood.

- +Dream eternal dreams
- +Harems of slave girls
- +Harp sounds and castrati chorus
- +Lazy and dangerous as a cat
- +Legions of soldiers led by monster-riding Princes
- +Leeches and things lurking in the swamps
- +Pacts in the light of burning braziers
- +Pain is an art and whips are our paints and brushes
- +Sacrificial daggers and ancient rituals
- +Silk and smooth skins
- +Sorcerous ancient pacts
- +Strong eunuch warriors and sly eunuch courtiers
- +Supernaturally beautiful women
- +Sweat stinking slaves and perfumed masters
- +The human body, what a marvelous toy to play with!
- +Time cannot defeat us, with sorcery on our side
- +What nature made, man and Lotus can improve
- +We are dwarves on giants' backs

FOREIGN MERCENARIES

The heroes are foreigners, called to Tricornia for some very specialized task. They can be the personal bodyguards of a Priest Prince, rogues hired to infiltrate some organization, or simply a colorful touch in a noble's entourage. This type of campaign is quite simple to run and very flexible; mercenaries can be set to very different tasks - military missions, investigations, assassinations of rival nobles, or even expeditions into ancient ruins to retrieve something important. Foreign mercenaries aren't supposed to stay permanently in Tricornia, so this campaign framework is good if you plan to keep the heroes among the Sons of Keron only for a brief period.

It is a game about integration and the discovery of a new culture from a privileged point of view.

The risk of this theme is making the adventures too loose and different, lacking focus. The best thing to do is plan a main plotline beforehand and make almost all the scenarios connected to it; for example, a Priest Prince, after surviving a murder attempt, decides to hire strangers to protect him because he doesn't trust his own servants anymore. The main plotline of the campaign is both protecting the

Lord but also progressively discovering the identity of the unknown enemy and eventually defeating it. Ideally each adventure should allow finding one or more hints, so that in the end the players can put together the pieces and face the main villain in the epic conclusion of the story arc.

Barbarians in Civilization. Regardless of their skills and abilities, the characters are foreigners in Tricarnia, and they aren't expected to know all the social conventions, cultural peculiarities and the finesses of the Sons of Keron. This will probably get them in trouble, and embarrass their master. Remember, Tricarnians are very respectful of etiquette and a violation of the code, even an unwanted one, can bring dramatic consequences.

Expendable Pawns, Unreliable Masters. Characters can be highly paid, valuable specialists, but for their masters they are little more than slaves with a particular set of permissions. Tricarnian Lords are used to freely disposing of their slaves, and have no remorse in throwing away their lives if this amuses them or is instrumental in achieving some goal.

Loyalty Matters. The employer can be a real bastard and the heroes may be for hire, so could they be convinced to turn their coats? After all the party owns valuable skills and there is always someone ready to pay more than their current employer. How strong is the heroes' loyalty?

CHARACTER TYPES

This campaign theme is good to play with almost any archetype found in *GE* (apart Noble), *GOD* or *JCT*. Among the character types described in this book we suggest Bodyguard, Diplomat, Freeman,

Officer, Red-Touched, Silent Hand and Specialist.

THEME TWEAKS:

ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE

An interesting tweak of the Foreign Mercenary theme is making the heroes part of the Silent Hands (see page 165), bringing them directly into the service of the Prince of Princes! This element can be introduced with at least two levels of complexity; in the simplest approach the party, incognito, works for Ivakor as infiltrators, spies and so on. With a more complex approach, the party are Foreign Mercenaries working for some lord, but in truth all (or some) of them are in the service of the crown, and are here to further the interests of the Prince of Princes.

Although it is particularly suited for the Foreign Mercenaries theme, with some extra work this element can be included in any other theme presented in this chapter.

RISE OF A HOUSE

In this particular type of campaign, the heroes aren't a troublesome lot of assorted adventurers thrown together by fate: they are a family, the members of one of the noble houses of Tricarnia, who are forced to survive in a dangerous era of political turmoil.

The commonest way to play this type of game is making an entire House directed by the player characters, each of them with a particular role in the family: one of them will be the Priest Prince, another

one his younger brother (maybe general of the army), then the wife (or sister) of the Prince, then you can add assorted relatives or trusted servants of the family (for example, the personal bodyguard of the lord, a trusted counselor and so on).

This theme has a bigger scope than a normal *Beasts & Barbarians* game, making the players the movers and shakers of a region of the Dominions. If you want to keep the game more under control (and keep it focused) you can take two paths: you can make the importance of the players' House very small, or you can decide that the Priest Prince is an NPC and the rest of the party his sons, daughters and servants.

This framework allows you an enormous variety of play: from diplomatic missions to intrigue, problem solving (maybe finding a solution for a famine or stopping a slave rebellion) to more typical, stand-alone tales of sword and sorcery when the characters are away for some family-related mission.

Unlike other campaign themes, this one depends a lot on the decisions the party takes; adventures don't usually find the members of a house, but happen in reaction to what they do. To fully enjoy this type of game you should use the *Clash of Kings* rules found on page 233.

One of the biggest problems of this type of campaign is that it is potentially without an end: a family, if successful, continues for centuries. When you plan such a campaign, try deciding in advance when the game will stop: after an amount of time (for example ten years), after a certain event (the death of the Priest Prince) or after achieving a goal (destroying a rival house and getting her lands).

Family Matters. Family is the best thing a person can have, if it is a good family. But not all families are good, and Tricarnian noble ones tend to be among the worst ones. Brothers and sisters compete for their father's approval, old enmities between relatives continue to fester under the soft curtain of social convenience till they burst out in violence. Remember, even if you are in the same family, it isn't certain you are playing on the same team.

Politics and Warfare. This type of game often involves politics and diplomacy, but when they fail, well it is a matter of swords, and we are not talking of small bands of adventurers, but of mighty armies clashing! A Rise of a House campaign is a perfect opportunity to play large mass battles and find glory on the battlefield. If your campaign includes a number of military actions we suggest using the additional mass battles rules found in *TB*, and consider the idea of structuring the game as a Conquest Point Campaign (see *TB*, page 70).

Dramatic Events. One of the most important GM's suggestions given in *GE* is to change the pace of the game to keep the campaign alive; well, a Rise of a House campaign is perfect for this, because it can include really dramatic events: what about a campaign when the heroes are family members of an important house (and play a political game for a while) then after a dramatic betrayal their house is wiped out and they are forced to flee to save their lives? At this point, as fallen nobles, they can wander in the Dominions as simple adventurers until, after gaining enough wealth and power, they can return to Tricarnia to reclaim their lands. Or it can be just the opposite: a Tricarnian adventurer of noble origin, after a life of wandering on the road, can be called back home because his father is dead and he must take on the

responsibilities of his House, maybe with the help of his fellow companions. The possibilities are endless...

CHARACTER TYPES

Obviously any Noble character fits well in this type of campaign, as does any other archetype directly connected to a noble House or which can be found in its service; Bodyguards, Officers, Slaves, Specialists, even Sorcerers and other magic dabblers can find their place in a Tricarnian noble family.

BROKENCHAIN LIBERATORS

This campaign framework gives a totally different perspective on Tricarnia. The heroes aren't nobles or foreigners; they are slaves, the worst position a man can have among the Sons of Keron. Maybe they are pampered and precious slaves, but the

game works better if they are low-ranking, mistreated servants.

The game revolves around a specific theme: getting free of their masters.

This can be achieved in different ways, but this framework expects the heroes cannot succeed alone; they must contact the Priests of Tosar or another similar organization, make a plan, escape and start a trip that will lead them to safety in the Brokenchain Mountains or a similar safe haven.

At this point the campaign can end (or move on to another theme), but there is also the option of changing perspective. Once free and well-integrated into the freemen, the heroes can be asked to return among the slaves, maybe in disguise, to complete some important mission; to free a key individual, discover a secret, or, why not, lead a mass rebellion!

GM's TIP:

BWARE OF THE MAN ON THE PEDESTAL

If you are playing a Rise of a House campaign, and one of the players is the designated Priest Prince, the GM must walk a narrow line between giving him too many privileges and making him too protected, and so out of the game.

This is a problem rooted in realism. As a lord, the Priest Prince will have unlimited funds (in reasonable measure) so no gear is beyond his reach, but on the other hand, he won't be allowed to be in obvious danger. For example, if the party is planning an undercover incursion into an enemy fortress, it is very unlikely the head of the House will go with them; he is too precious and important, so he will remain in a safe place.

This can be realistic, but it isn't fun for the player who must stay idle while the rest of the group plays the rest of the adventure.

There are several ways to avoid this type of problem.

First, you can try designing scenarios where all the players, the lord of the House included, can participate.

Second, you can use this problem to add to role-play instead of detracting from the game: if the lord of the house wants to join his brothers in a dangerous mission he'll have to face the disapproval of his generals and the complaints of his most caring servants.

Third, you can allow the Priest Prince's player to have a secondary character, for example the personal bodyguard of the Prince, who can be used during this type of scenario.

This type of campaign has the advantage of being very focused, with the players constantly working for their goal: getting free. On the other hand this leaves little space for sandboxing and free exploration, the characters will probably constantly be on tenterhooks, very careful to avoid being discovered. The GM who wants give more freedom to his party can decide to loosen the flow of the campaign at certain moments, as when the party is among the free slaves, so that they can pursue their own agenda.

This type of campaign offers a great twist too: the possibility for the heroes to enter and explore the Dream Kingdom, the mysterious place where the Dreamer is a prisoner (see page 176).

From Zero to Hero. This theme allows creating an epic game, with a steeply ascending scope: at first, the heroes' main problems will be very limited and basic;

surviving another day under a sadistic overseer or finding a particular contact allowing them to escape. Later, when they are powerful members of the Liberators, they have to run armies of rebellious slaves, ambush Priest Princes and negotiate for economic support from foreign countries.

Friends and Enemies. When you are a slave you have no real friends apart from yourself. This is even truer if you are a rebellious slave, looking for liberty. People in the same condition can behave as friends and can apparently help you, but you don't really know if they are traitors, ready to sell you out to the master. Remember: certain slaves prefer obtaining favors from their owners over fighting and risking their lives to be really free. On the other hand there is an entire class of people, other fugitives, bandits and outlaws, who could turn out to be better friends than your own brother.

THEME TWEAK:

BROKENCHAIN INFILTRATORS

A serious tweak you can add to a Brokenchain Liberators theme is that the heroes aren't really what they seem to be: they must be thrown among the slaves and suffer with them, but in truth it is all a ruse. They are spies and agents of the Priest Princes (or another powerful individual) with the goal of infiltrating the freemen and the Cult of Tosar to destroy it from inside.

If you want to add more drama and tension to the game (but be careful because it can be potentially very disruptive for the campaign) only part of the group can be spies, while the others are genuine freedom fighters.

This tweak adds a whole layer of moral decisions to the game: the heroes are spies, but after meeting, befriending and fighting side by side with rebels are they cold-hearted enough to betray them? Or will they turn against their own masters?

To add tweak to tweak, a final suggestion: in a land of sorcery like Tricarnia it could be that a character, while totally unaware of it, is under the effect of a mind-affecting spell which forces him to behave in a certain manner under certain circumstances, making him a perfect unwilling (and unaware) spy or assassin...

Travel. Being runaway slaves deeply changes the nature of travel. You are probably pursued, so you cannot use roads. You must travel by night. You probably don't know the land you are crossing and have no friend or safe place to rest. Every person you meet might be a slave-hunter on your trail or simply a fellow attracted by the bounty on your head. And remember, the bloodhounds aren't so far from your trail...

CHARACTER TYPES

Any non-Noble character can fall into slavery (and in certain cases a very unfortunate Noble can be put in chains) so this type of campaign is open to every character archetype your players can conceive.

THE AWAKENING OF THE DREAMER

This theme revolves about one of the most recent mysteries of Tricarnia: the Cult of the Dreamer. This element can shape the campaign in two basic ways: first, the heroes can be part (willingly or not, see below) of the cult or, on the other hand, they may have a reason to find and eventually destroy it. These two different approaches aren't mutually exclusive: depending on what the GM decides about the true nature of the

Dreamer (see *Secrets of Tricarnia*, page 176 and the *Dream Kingdom* page 197), the heroes can begin the campaign as firmly determined to root out the Cult, but end as its strongest paladins, or, more probably, the opposite can happen; the party begins as followers of the Cult, and ends by destroying the Dreamer.

Another important factor that will substantially shape the players' approach toward the Cult is if and how they get involved in the Dream. Are they infected at the beginning of the game? Or will they be during the campaign? And once they are infected, how are they living with it? Is it a dangerous and mysterious illness they must be rid of, or a blessing showing them another side of reality?



Typically a campaign involving the Dreamer will have two different ways to develop: finding a way to stop the Cult (and this may happen in many ways, from locating the main base of the followers to destroying the entity called the Dreamer), or aiding the cult in the incredible task of awakening the Dreaming, which means making a god enter the Dominions!

Both have a common goal: discovering the true nature of the Dreamer, which

can require a number of missions and adventures.

This type of game allows the GM to involve the characters in a number of very different missions: from social or stealth-based stories where the party must infiltrate the Priest Princes to advance the agenda of the Cult (or to locate and root out cultists if they are working on the other side), to military scenarios to protect the Cult from enemies (or attacks on the Cult's base if they are against it) to quests assigned by the Asans to discover more about the Dreamer (or quests given by Priest Princes for the same reason). Finally, remember that the Cult, since the disappearance of the Dreamer's Voice, is fractured under the command of different Asans, so there is scope for a lot of political strife too.

Saviors or Monsters? The Cult presents a number of façades externally, to slaves and common people. Are they saviors and helpers, like the Priests of Tosar? Or instead madmen, even worse than the Priest Princes, who want to transform mankind into a bunch of constantly hallucinating slaves?

Dream or Reality. A Follower of the Dream has a shifting concept of what "reality" is, as his perceptions are always filtered by the dreams and hallucinations he is dreaming. Or maybe these illusions are more real than the real world? The Asans call their state of vision the Dream Kingdom (see page 176) and there is something inherently dark in it.

The Truth is Out There, and it is a Disturbing One. Discovering the nature of the Dreamer (see page 176) will be, in the end, the goal of this type of campaign, and once discovered, the truth can be so scary as to cause refusal and rejection even

by the most devoted Followers of the Cult. Or, on the other side, the real essence of the Dreamer could be so overwhelming positive that even the most rational, cold-hearted hater could throw away his misconceptions and embrace it.

CHARACTER TYPES

Anybody can be infected with the Dream: slave or noble, foreigner or local. In particular true believers, Asans and Templomos, are especially suitable for this theme.

MIXING IT ALL TOGETHER

Themes are made to help you, the GM, to design your game. They are broad categorizations of some of the strong ideas underpinning Tricarnia, but as always, you can mix and tweak them as you wish, to create a more complex and varied campaign. That said, to maintain focus, we suggest you to mix at most two themes. For example, what about a Brokenchain Liberators and an Awakening of the Dreamer mix? The heroes can be escaped slaves, who must ally with the Followers of the Dream to reach safety, who using them as a way to create new converts among the freemen. So, what will the characters' position be in such a situation?

Similarly a Foreign Mercenaries and Rise of a House can easily mix in a campaign where some of the heroes are nobles of a Tricarnian House, while others are highly specialized mercenaries at the service of the same house. What will be the reactions of the two parts of the group when real problems appear?

As you can see, the possibilities given by mixing are endless...

MAGIC

MANAGING STRONG MAGIC

In this book you find several new magical rules, from Bargaining with Demons to Lotus Twisting. These rules are quite powerful and potentially give magical characters an extra boost.

Here follow some considerations on the matter.

Magic Means Trouble. The design idea behind these rules is that magic is strong and powerful, but causes lots of problems. The GM should use these new magical options to tempt players to achieve power in an apparently simple and easy way.

In truth there is nothing simple and easy about Bargaining with Demons: these entities are deeply malevolent, and their ultimate goal is winning the souls of the incautious sorcerers asking for their help. The GM must be smart and cruel when playing Demons: first, he must play dumb, asking for apparently harmless compensation, then, when the warlock starts giving away Soul Shards, the game becomes suddenly tough and the mage must be very cautious to avoid damnation.

A similar approach must be used with Lotus Twisting; remember, a Lotumaster increases his skill while practicing Lotus Twists, thus encouraging the player to use it, but, on the other hand, this practice always comes with a side effect, sometimes nastier than the bonus given by the Twisting.

The new magical options must be used by the GM as plot elements to create personalized scenarios and story arcs, based on the hunger for power of the

sorcerous characters, not as a way to penalize the players.

Monetary Control. Keeping these new magical options under control is fairly easy; all of them require a goodly amount of money and, if you are sticking to the standard Savings rules, heroes cannot use them very frequently, probably only once every two to three scenarios, and then by borrowing money from other party members. Our suggestion is to ignore the Savings Rules during certain parts of the campaign, allowing the players a moment of two of wild expenditure, changing the pace of the game and allowing magical dabblers to get in trouble.

Another option is letting the players find, as treasures, special materials dedicated to magical tasks; for example a stash of special Lotus for Twisting, sacrificial offerings and special candelabra for Bargaining with Demons or a book of sorcery to summon a very powerful (and devious) entity.

MAGICAL ITEMS

Tricarnia is one of the areas of the Dominions with the highest concentration of magic, wondrous items included. The bad thing is that many of them aren't "wondrous" at all, but hide a dark secret. Here follow a list of several typical Tricarnian items.

Roll a d12 and check the list below.

1. **Keronian Armor.** This ancient set of armor was made for a Priest Prince of the past, during the apogee of the Keronian Empire. Today such armor is very rare, and highly sought by the Noble Houses, both for their powers and the celebrity they give to the

owner. In game terms they are suits of Ensorcelled Bronze Heavy Armor (+3) with several gems (usually three) encased in them. Apart from the armor weighing only half the normal weight, the gems bestow the *boost trait (Strength)* Power with 20 Power Points and arcane skill d10. In addition, if worn by a Prince of Tricornia (any Tricornian hero with the Noble Edge) they grant +2 Charisma and double the Command Radius of the character (this effect stacks with other similar ones). In truth, though, these items subtly steal the life energy of the user; after using it, he must make a Vigor (-2) roll or be Fatigued for double the amount of time he wore the armor (so, if he wore it for a day, the Fatigue lasts two days).

2. **Demon Blades.** There are stories of a distant past, when the Keronian priests were able to entrap the souls of demons in weapons made of a special black metal, fallen from the sky. The spirits, chained for endless centuries in these cages of metal, develop an insatiable hunger for souls, and when fed, transfer to their user a part of the stolen energy, in a symbiotic relationship. In game terms these weapons deal +2 damage. In addition, any time they cause a Wound to an enemy, the wielder must make a Spirit roll, which doesn't count as an action. In the case of success he gains one of the following benefits of his choice: he heals a Wound, or has his Strength *or* Vigor *or* Fighting raised by one die step as per the *boost trait* Power. Apart from the healing, which is permanent, the other effects last for one hour. The demon in the blade continues to aid the wielder till he is hungry, then he turns dormant again.

For this reason, each day the power of the demon blade can be used as many times as the user's Spirit/2 + 2. So a character with Spirit d8 can use it $4 + 2 = 6$ times in a day. The spirit in a demon blade is deeply malignant; anytime the wielder of the blade rolls 1 on the Fighting die, regardless of the Wild Die, the weapon viciously hits a friend, if present, dealing +4 damage and causing -4 to Soak rolls. Histories say that only five of these cruel weapons were created; one was surely a two-handed sword and another one a dagger, but the exact nature of the others is lost in the mists of time.

3. **Talvasha's Tear.** This peculiar crystal is shaped like a black teardrop, and is strangely cold to the touch. In truth this gem is the heart of the ancient demon Talvasha (it is considered a Soul Shard) and is highly sought by demons and sorcerers alike as a highly valuable currency (Talvasha or any other demon will give a Heroic Favor for it). In addition this stone has two very important uses; first, it is a reserve of magical energy that any mage can tap (it contains 10 Power Points that regenerate as usual), second, as Talvasha is one of the servants of Jestiriel, it is said that the Tear is the key to open a special vault in the laboratory of Nal Nomantor.
4. **Blood of Dakan.** Centuries ago the Priest Prince of Ral Hordaka asked Jestiriel to create for him a slave breed to be used to protect his own family. The old Keronian sorcerer took ten years to answer this request and was rewarded handsomely for his work, which resulted in a new caste of slaves, the Blood of Dakan. These men and women apparently

are normal-looking persons, the only distinctive feature being a slight ash-colored complexion (use normal Slave stats). At will, using a whole round, they can shape change in their true form, which is that of a very strong, Henchman Twisted Servant (see GE page 155, raise Strength, Vigor and Fighting by one die step each). These creatures are also very malleable to Lotus, so they usually come with one Lotus Twist and every roll to receive a new one is made at +2. The Twists only affect their Twisted Servant shape. A Blood of Dakan is free-willed, but there is a way to bind it completely: the master and the servant must mix in a silver cup their own blood with some special Lotus, and then they must drink half each. From this moment on the Blood of Dakan becomes totally Loyal to the master, and gains the Fanatic setting rule in his regard. This ritual can be done multiple times, with each new ritual cancelling the previous one, but not more than once per season. The Lotus used in the ceremony is a Rare Item costing 300 Moons. A Blood of Dakan is a Unique slave, worth at least 3000 Moons.

5. **Black-Nail Finger.** This long index finger isn't of human origin: it has three joints, a grayish complexion and ends in a black, pointed nail. When not used it is preserved in a jar full of embalming fluid. Any person mad enough can decide to use it, which means replacing one of his fingers with this one. This is a grisly procedure, which requires first severing one of the index fingers of the would-be host (no roll required: he suffers an automatic, non-Soakable Wound), then sewing the Black-Nail Finger in place of the old one (with a Healing

roll: in case of failure the character permanently gains the All Thumbs Hindrance for fine manipulation purposes). If the crude surgery works, the following night the Finger suddenly turns alive and becomes a part of the hosts' body which he can use as his own. The nail on the finger is retractable, like those of cats, and can be used to deal Str damage. In addition it contains a venom, which is considered an Injection Very Fast *poison*, cast with arcane skill d10 and with 5 Power Points + 2/Rank of the host, which are recovered as normal. If the host dies, the Black-Nail Finger detaches from the body and, if put in embalming fluid or applied to another host in the next three days, retains its powers.

6. **Mummified Scarab.** These small black insects are simply dead, perfectly preserved scarabs. Someone engraved on their carapace an Ancient Keronian symbol meaning "obedience". Any character reading it aloud (a Knowledge (Arcana) (-2) or Sorcery roll is required) animates this little beast that falls under the control of the reader. The creature is animated by an intelligent spirit (Smarts d6) and understands any command in Ancient Keronian. This little creature is harmless (Toughness: 1, Size: -3, -4 to hit), but it can easily pass unnoticed (Stealth d12). It is used mainly for assassination and spying purposes: the creature can ingest a dose of a Lotus concoction and can vomit it, perfectly preserved, wherever it wants. In addition if the controller is a sorcerer he can cast a spell upon the creature (at double cost) which is activated when a particular condition is met (for example: in presence of the king,

when the assassin shoots the arrow). Until the spell is released, the mage doesn't recover the Power Points. The down side of these creatures is that the spirit dwelling in it is totally dedicated: he has no conception of time and space and once an order is issued it cannot be cancelled in any manner.

7. **The *Xarthakan*.** In 1947 AF, during the reign of the Marauder Queens of Ascaia, a fleet of Amazon pirates treacherously attacked the coastal citadel of Val Xartha, which no longer exists. The pirates caught the moored fleet by surprise: all the ships of Val Xartha, except one ship, the powerful war galley *Xarthakan*, which rammed into the capital ship of the Amazons and sank with it, causing the death of Valyana, one of the Marauder Queens. The Tricornian retribution was very harsh and for centuries the coasts of the Priest Princes' land were hostile to the Amazons. In later years there appeared in Tricornia a small ebony statue, representing Hordan, which was said to be the figurehead of the *Xarthakan*. A person owning it, standing on the seaside of Tricornia in a foggy night, can call the *Xarthakan* back, if he smears the figurine with some drops of a woman's blood. The *Xarthakan* is a Tricornian war galley, with two hundred slave-oarsmen (use the Slave profile on page 230) and one hundred soldiers (use the standard Soldiers profile from *GE* page 187), adding the Undead Monstrous Ability to both. They are all undead, and obey the will of the statuette owner. If you are using TB, consider the *Xarthakan* as having BV 400, the Frightening and Hate (Amazons) Band Edges. The captain, Prince Xarthul, has Spirit, Boating

and Knowledge (Battle) d8. The ship will sail anywhere in the Dread Sea, but, whenever it comes in sight of an Amazon ship it attacks it, regardless of the orders of the statuette owner. No crewman of the *Xarthakan* can touch solid ground, and if the captain is killed the ship shatters in 2d6 minutes. The *Xarthakan*, once summoned, stays in the Dominions for thirteen days and nights, and then sinks in the sea's depths, and cannot be summoned again before three months pass.

8. **The Shepherd Staff.** This common-looking shepherd's staff is made of a wood that cannot be found anywhere in the Dominions: it looks like a cross between birch and oak, but it isn't either of the two. In truth, this item isn't of this world: it is a Dream Object (see page 200) grown in the Dream Kingdom and brought into this reality by some unknown traveler. In the Dominions this staff has no particular power, apart from being almost unbreakable (consider it as hard as steel), but in the Dream Kingdom it is revealed to be a powerful tool: first it is considered a magical weapon dealing +2 damage to any dream creature, second it grants the user the capability of casting the *light* Power, with arcane skill equal to Spirit and 20 Power Points. In addition to the normal effect of the Power, dream creatures caught in the light, must make a Vigor roll each round of exposure or suffer 2d4 damage. If the user has the Dreaming skill, it also grants +2 to any roll to locate a dream Door or Gate.
9. **Ebon Flute.** A long Tricornian flute of exquisite making, this object is carved from a single piece of ebony.

Stories say it was made from a plant grown upon the grave of a suicide, Princess Tyselis, who was widowed on the day of her wedding (see page 94). The music of this instrument is magical, and the user can make it audible to a specific subject, and only him. In game terms, any Power with a musical instrument trapping cast with this spell has a Range of Smarts x4, and affects targets in a SBT (which can become MBT by spending an extra Power Point or a LBT by spending two extra Power Points). This item is born of tragedy, and places a constant sorrow and melancholy on its user, who is affected by the Bad Luck Hindrance.

10. **Keronian Astrolabe.** A curious device, made of several bronze and stone rings interlocked to make a sort of sphere, this ancient tool was used by Keronian astrologers for their arcane calculations. Unless someone has received instruction on how use it, it requires a Smarts (-4) roll to figure out how it works, but from that moment on it grants +2 to any Boating or Smarts roll to navigation during nighttime, to any use of the *divination* Power and on any Astrology attempt (see page 132).
11. **White Lotus of Destruction.** If the legends are true, the recipe for this Lotus was created by Haravor of Tal Yarasha, a Lotusmaster second only to Jestiriel in power and knowledge. With all his lore, Haravor didn't manage to cure his beloved daughter, Avara, of a terrible illness which killed her in a few days. But if he could not save her, he could perfectly preserve her body. This gray-white powder, if smeared on any substance, from flesh to stone, transforms it into a white,

pure marble. Unluckily it has a side effect: the marble is extremely frail and turns to dust at a mere touch. Haravor didn't manage to preserve his daughter's body, and annihilated by grief, drank a lethal dose of Waters of Eternity (see sidebar), but his invention somehow survived. Ruleswise, a dose of White Lotus of Destruction deals 4d8 damage, bypassing every non-magical Armor, and is considered a Heavy Weapon. It affects only organic-based targets (living beings, wood, bone and so on). A creature or object "killed" by the White Lotus is transformed into a very brittle statue (Toughness: 2). Usually this concoction is conserved in sealed metal capsules. A dose is enough to cover a SBT area, two doses a MBT and three doses a LBT. The secret of creating this Lotus has been lost, so a dose of it is very pricey, at least 1500 Moons.

12. **Caldaios's Heart.** This tear-shaped amulet, made in Keron thousands of years ago, is probably one of the most powerful artifacts of the Dominions. Apparently a sort of crystallized tear of some unknown substance, similar to black amber, a person looking inside it sees strange visions in its black depths. This item is incredibly useful to a sorcerer. First, it grants a supernatural knack in wizardry, granting a Wild Die on Sorcery rolls (or improving it by one die step if the character already has it). Second, it magnifies the capacities of the wizard, giving him powers proportional to his experience and dedication to this powerful artifact. In game terms, anytime a character with the Arcane Background (Sorcery) gets an Advance, he can decide to imbue one of his Power Edges (which can be one

he already knows or a freshly bought one) into the Heart. If he does so, he automatically gets an additional Power Edge for which he meets the requirements, which is also stored in the amulet. In this manner the hero can take the Power Points Edge and the New Power Edge two times per Rank. This can be tempting, but if the sorcerer, for any reason, loses the

amulet, he also loses both the imbued and the bonus Edges! The last known owner of the Heart is Caldaios the Cruel, who was robbed of it the very night of the attack on Tel Askora in 2057 AF. From that day, the powerful sorcerer has been looking for it, and would do anything to retrieve this stolen relic where a great part of his power lies!

GM'S TIP: WATER OF ETERNITY

This ancient potion isn't Lotus based, because when it was created, during the Keronian era, Lotus didn't exist, so it isn't reproducible today. Apparently it looks like plain, fresh water, conserved in silver vials. The only peculiar quality is that, whatever the temperature, it is surprisingly fresh.

In truth, the Water of Eternity hosts a very powerful magic: the imbiber falls into a sleep, a sort of suspended animation where he doesn't age and doesn't need anything apart from air to breathe. This state can last days, years, even centuries and millennia.

The exact duration of the sleep is difficult to calculate and depends on a lot of factors, from dosage to weight, sex and mental attitude of the user. No rules are necessary to handle Water of Eternity, because its utility for player characters is quite limited, and it is an excellent plot device. Here follow some ideas on how to insert the Water of Eternity in an adventure.

Water Origin. *The real nature of the water is lost: Sages, the few ones outside Tricarnia whob know of it, think it is a special alchemical concoction, whose recipe is lost. But in dusty Tricarnian books are recorded legends which say this water was simple water, sprouting from the Source of Eternity, a magical place of which nobody knows much. Periodically, a desperate Priest Prince starts a search for the Source, but so far nobody has found it, or if he did, he guarded the secret very jealously.*

Water Dreams. *People who drank the Water and woke up tell that during their sleep they dreamt a lot: sometimes the nature of their dreams was peaceful and other times really nightmarish. In certain cases they were so realistic that the sleeper had the impression of living a real life. These visions are probably more than simple dreams: there are cases of Sleepers found in their beds, with an expression of terror on their faces; despite being technically alive, these people won't wake up anymore and their heart will still beat at the end of time. In truth, these poor souls were caught and entrapped by the Dream Kingdom, and cannot escape from it anymore.*

Waking Up. *Once a person drinks the Water, he falls asleep and wakes up only when the effect ceases. Probably there is a way to wake up a sleeper before that time, but the only information about it is a fragment of an old ballad saying that "it takes the Flower of the Past, the Mirror of the Present and the Stone of the Future to wake up a Sleeper". The real meaning of this phrase is unknown.*

TOMES OF FORBIDDEN LORE

Magic and secret lore, in the Dominions, is jealously hidden in ancient books, some of them being both a receptacle of power and a trap into which untrained minds could fall. Some of these books aren't really books at all, and are a great treasure for players to find, or even better, they can be used as plot hooks and ways to keep the heroes involved in a scenario.

In this chapter you'll find some of them, complete with appearance, background, rules and a plot hook you can use to devise an adventure.

As a rule of thumb, owning and studying one of these grimoires allows taking the Professional and Master Legendary Edges or arcane skills as per the Forbidden Knowledge Setting Rule (see page 156).

As always, this isn't a complete list, and the GM is encouraged to devise his own tomes of forbidden knowledge.

THE BLACK BOOK OF KERON

Appearance: A tome two feet by two feet, made of black, cracked leather of unknown origin (it is the hide of a demon). The pages, made of virgin skin, are covered by spidery writing in Ancient Keronian, which varies



through the book, a clear sign that it wasn't written by the same hand. Several copies of this tome exist, jealously guarded, but they are all counterfeited to some extent; the original, kept in the Temple of Darkness in Keron City, was lost twenty five centuries ago, and if sources are right, was probably destroyed during the Fall of Keron.

Language: Ancient Keronian.

Background: This tome is legendary among sorcerers. Written by generations of Keronian High Priests, it is a summary of their knowledge on arcane matters; in particular it contains the descriptions and the true names of dozens and dozens of demons, of every order and degree, which were enslaved by this ancient race. Stories say that a single copy of this book, a partial one, survived the Fall, was embarked on Salkor's ship and for many years it was a prized treasure of the Mariner. During the Year of Darkness the book, stored in caverns, was damaged by humidity, and when Salkor noticed this, he immediately ordered several copies to be made, but several sections were no longer readable. Knowing the power of such a book, Salkor himself supervised the copying process, and after the work was done, he sacrificed on the altar of Hordan all the scribes, so that they could not report what they had copied. Centuries later, these copies came into the possession of Hordanas, the Demon Queen, who for some unknown reason modified all of them, apart from one, changing names and generally damaging the spells stored in it, making these books a potential trap for any unscrupulous reader. Only she was able to tell the unmodified book from the other ones. Years later, on the day of her death, the library of the Priest Prince's Palace was mysteriously ransacked and all the copies of the Black Book of Keron, including the undamaged one, mysteriously disappeared.

Years later copies of this tome appeared in far-away lands, such as Kyros, Faberterra and the Red Desert: the Prince of Scales sent his envoys to track down these books, but all the copies recovered were the false ones defiled by Hordanas. The true one is still lost today, and every sorcerer worthy of the name would trade his soul for it...

Rules: This book contains the *summon ally* Power with dedicated trappings to any Demon the GM wants. Learning the *summon ally* spell from this book requires a Sorcery (-4) roll and the roll can only be made once per Rank. If the character already knows the spell, he can learn one summoning after each adventure, by making a Sorcery (-2) roll. For almost every demon detailed in the book, the tome reveals its True Name (see *B&B #3 – Green World*), giving +2 to any Sorcery roll to summon it, +2 to opposed rolls made against it and the Arcane Resistance Edge versus its powers. But, unless the copy of the book is the original one, there is a chance that the book contains errors and omissions: the first time a Demon is summoned using the incantations found in this book, the sorcerer must draw a card from the Action Deck: if a Club is picked he is considered to have rolled a Backlash on the Sorcery roll, and the caster must roll with +2 on the Sorcery Critical Failures Table (*GE* page 81). If the warlock survives, he must cancel the acquired trapping because it is obviously a fake.

The Words of a Dying Man: Some year ago, a man was found, in the Red Desert, on the road to Hiliias. He was feverish and dying of thirst and sun, but before passing out he whispered a phrase in the ears of the surprised caravan man helping him: "The Black Book... Quollaba... the secret room of Zanator." The caravan man quickly signed himself against bad luck.

Everybody in the Red Desert knows the sinister fame of Quollaba, Flower of the Desert, the City of Crystals run by the cold-hearted tyrant Zanator (see *B&B* #1 – *Death of a Tyrant*).

THE BOOK OF DOORS AND KEYS

Appearance: Probably the word “book” is misleading when speaking of this exotic artifact. It consists of seven interlocked disks of stone, which can rotate clockwise and counter-clockwise. Each disk is covered in arcane symbols in Ancient Keronian and moving them into various positions creates phrases, riddles, poetry and even alchemical formulae. This book is unique and the single existing copy, looted by the Iron Phalanxes from the High Tower of Tel Vikara during the Second Faberterranean War, was sequestered by the Smith Priests and sent to Faberterra, but for some reason the object, and the four Smith Priests guarding it, never arrived at their destination.

Language: Ancient Keronian.

Background: There are two stories about the origin of this object: according to the first, it was made by Kalon the Crazy, a Tricarnian slave-artisan, both a genius and a madman, who spent twenty years writing it and, after finishing it, committed suicide by planting his own scalpel in an eye. According to the second, this artifact doesn't have a mundane origin and was given by Demon Lord Tirain, Lord of Cages, to his followers.

Probably there must be some truth in the second story, because this tome is very unusual and, after years of study, gives the owner a knowledge of a particular form of sorcery which allows him “to enter

whatever place and to open and close whatever door”, through the discovery of special “passages” common men cannot see. But, as always happens with demons, their gifts are double-edged: some of the passages described in this book work as described, allowing a man to enter secluded places, but others are instead devious traps, leading to dangerous dimensions, the Cages of Tirain, where the arch demon plays, entrapping unwilling victims in exit-less prisons.

Rules: This tome is very difficult to understand, because first the user must unlock the right combinations of symbols, then read them and finally understand the real meaning under the figurative one. In game terms, when gaining a new Advance, the reader can make a Smarts (-4) roll. If he scores at least a success, he learns one of the following Powers, in order: *boost trait* (lockpicking), *burrow* (walking in a door and exiting from another one) and *teleport* (scratching a door on a wall, entering it and exiting from another door). The second power has doubled range, while the third one has a range expressed in miles, but both of them have a couple of serious drawbacks: the first is that the caster must have the book with him or suffer -4 to the Sorcery roll, and the second is that anytime the sorcerer casts this spell the GM secretly draws a card from the Action Deck; if it is a Club face card, the door used by the character doesn't lead to the desired place, but to one of the Cages of Tirain (a sort of pocket dimension, governed by its own rules, such as the Green World of *B&B* #3 – *Green World*). This event is even more common if the spell cast is *teleport*: in this case the door leads to a Cage with any Club card. If for any reason the character draws a Joker, the door leads to the Dream Kingdom (see page 197) instead.

The Safecracker: In the last few months, a series of inexplicable thefts have happened in Jalizar. The most secure safes and vaults of Merchant Princes, accurately closed and locked in the evening, by morning are found empty of any precious item, despite being still closed and perfectly locked! The only strange thing found inside is a very accurate painting of a door, made on one of the walls! The Thieves' Guild was questioned on the matter, but the Guildmaster himself assured them it wasn't the work of his men, it seems that no Whitemouse is involved and even the famous Magpie appears uninvolved. Lord Talum, the last one to have been targeted by the mysterious safecracker, summoned Vallanzo, a shady Sewer Sorcerer, to divine the identity of the culprit, but when the man saw the doors sketched on the walls he went pale, bowed and firmly refused to accept the task.

THE LOST SCROLLS OF THE VARDAYOS

Appearance: Also called Yura's Doom, this book is composed of a set of scrolls, kept in a leather case, brown from the passing of centuries. It was written by Vardayos, who was fabled to be the Second Alchemist of Gis. The book, which is a journal of his experiments, was stolen by Yura, a dishonest apprentice, who fled to the Iron Mountains to escape the vengeance of his master.

Language: Alchemist's Code.

Background: Stories say Yura never managed to learn the secrets concealed in the tome: the power contained in it was too great, and annihilated him. The book was recovered by the Second Alchemist's agents, but, while returning to Gis, they were assaulted by a band of wandering

highwaymen, who killed them and went to Jalizar to spend their ill-gotten gains. There One-Eyed Valjo, the bandits' chief, traded these useless scrolls for a bottle of cheap wine and a night with two tavern girls. The innkeeper, who wasn't a fool, gave the book as payment to the Assassins' Guild, which simplified the acquisition of his inheritance by removing the inconvenience of his brother. The book ended in the hands of the Guildmaster, who immediately understood its value and retired to his private quarters to study it. The morning after, his personal servant found him dead in his bed. His successor was wiser: the Scrolls were locked in the coffers of the Guild and in the time were forgotten. Then, in 1501 AF, at the end of the dreaded Reign of Shade (see *JCT* page 19) the Assassins' Guild ceased to exist and all his members murdered by the avenging crowd. The strongbox of the Guildmaster mysteriously disappeared that very night, and the day after the strange scrolls, with several other items, were sold to a Syranthian merchant on the docks of the City of Thieves. There ends the trail of the Scrolls.

Rules: This book contains secret recipes to craft mysterious Lotus concoctions. In particular it contains the following Powers: *barrier* (alchemical fire), *boost/lower trait* (Sorcery, Enlightenment, Obscurement), *dispel* (White Lotus of Vardayos), *invisibility* (Powder of the Bog Spirits). In addition the scrolls contain the Secret of Vardayos, a particular recipe which can make the effect of any Lotus concoction almost permanent! In game terms the character acquires the Binding Ritual Edge (see *GE* page 69) but can use it with Lotusmastery instead of with Sorcery (simply substitute in the description any occurrence of "Sorcery" with "Lotusmastery"). Learning the secret of the Scrolls isn't easy at all: every time

the character gets an Advance he can make a Smarts (-4) roll to learn one of the Powers (the roll is only at -2 if he is trying to simply learn a new trapping for a Power he already knows). Only when he has learnt at least three Powers he can try to learn the Secret of Vardayos: in this case he must make Lotusmastery and Knowledge (Arcana) rolls, at -4. If both rolls are successful, he learns the ritual.

But before studying the tome, a would-be student should worry about his safety: the Scrolls of Vardayos are a treacherous item, which can kill the incautious user. The scrolls, in fact, are imbued with a terrible poison, Vardayos' Red Kiss, which kills a man, subtly, in few hours. Over the centuries the effects of the venom diminished, and now it doesn't kill, but maims the victim, causing a slow rotting of his body and derangement of his mind. In game terms, any character touching the book with bare hands must make a Vigor (-4) roll each time he does it. In the case of failure, after 1d6 hours he acquires the Red-Touched Hindrance. The Hindrance works as usual, but includes a Fifth Stage, on reaching it the poor victim becomes a Red Bringer (see page 223). The venom on the scrolls can be detected with the *detect arcana* Power and using a pair of thick gloves is enough to read the book safely.

The Island of the Creeping Ones:

Last winter a terrible storm swept the Drowned King Sea, causing the *Fortune*, a Jalizaran ship, to crash on an uncharted island in the middle of it. There was a sole survivor: Taareso the Lucky, helmsman of the vessel. Dragged by the waves to the shore, he was saved by the locals, a strange, huddled people, who treated him well and cured his wounds

When Taareso recovered, he started exploring the island. He learnt that the

villagers were the survivors of another shipwreck, which happened centuries ago, and they lived secluded on this small island. Despite being polite, these people were reticent and always wore long robes, gloves and hoods, and never allowed him to see their faces. One night Taareso, who could not sleep, saw the villagers sneak away from the village, in silence. Curious, he stealthily followed them, and saw his hosts gather in a cavern at the base of the cliffs. Silently, he followed them and then he saw a scene that still gives him nightmares today. On a pedestal, there was a set of scrolls, and the villagers disrobed to kiss and bow in front of it. So Taareso saw them for the first time: his saviors were horrible and deformed, their very flesh tainted by the worst malady known in the Dominions: the Red Plague! Taareso could not hold back a shout of horror and the villagers noticed him.

"He discovered our secret! He must kiss the Holy Book or die!" they screamed, and tried to grab the sailor. But Taareso was strong and fast and he fled, while the villagers followed behind him on their deformed legs. He reached the village, stole a fishing boat and headed out to sea, preferring to try his luck on the open sea rather than join the plagued ones.

Eventually Taareso managed to return home, and today he can be found at the Headless Chicken Tavern in Jalizar, telling his story to customers to entice them to buy him a cup of wine. When he is particularly drunk he even says he can draw a map with the location of the island, but probably he lies: after all, he is only a hopeless drunkard.

THE STEEL BOOK OF HULIAN

Appearance: This ancient tome is the fruit of the highest craftsmanship the Smith Priests of Hulian ever achieved. Very big, three feet by three feet, this book is made of thin, hammered layers of the most precious metal in the Dominions: steel. On each page the priests of the Smith of Words engraved prayers and exorcisms, the most secret and powerful of their cult, capable of defeating any demon. The pages of this book are deep red, because it is impossible to touch them without cutting yourself, and the red is the blood of countless generations of Smith Priests who have studied these holy pages.

Language: Imperial.

Background: This book contains all the secret prayers of the Cult of Hulian, plus much other lore, linked both to demon fighting, and to smithing and advanced metallurgy. In addition it contains the prophecies that Fabron, the discoverer of iron, made during his life. According to the legend, in these prophecies is contained all the future history of the Dominions, from the foundation of the Iron Empire to the far day when Hulian and Hordan will battle between themselves, ending this world and starting a new one.

The book was traditionally kept in Faberterra City, in the High Temple of Hulian, but, during the troubled years of the Salkarian Reformation, when the cult of Hulian was outlawed and the Smith Priests hunted down, it was moved away literally hours before the agents of Empress Salkaria stormed into the High Temple. Then, over the following centuries a sort of cat-and-mouse game took place with Tricarnian agents constantly looking for the book and the few surviving Smith

Priests moving it frequently around the Dominions, to avoid the capture of their holiest relic.

Finally in 1967 AF, the Guardians of the Book, as the restricted group of priests dedicated to the preservation of the tome was called, had to take a very difficult decision: tracked down in Hiliias by the Silent Hands (the personal spies and assassins of the High Prince of Tricarnia), they decided to disassemble the book, splitting the pages between them and go away separately, so that at least part of the tome could be saved.

The ruse worked – only two of the Guardians were captured, and the others managed to escape safely and to secure the precious tome. Centuries passed, and the former Guardians were forgotten. Only a few years ago the priests of the Monastery of the Hammer, in Northeim, started to look for the various parts of the tome, trying to reassemble it. But it is a hard task, and a dangerous one too, because, even today, the forces of evil want to put their sinister hands on the book of their hated enemy...

Rules: The Steel Book is a powerful item, and contains great knowledge. In particular it bestows the following abilities.

First, Demon Lore: a character who has studied it can make a Knowledge (Arcana) roll whenever he finds a Demon; for each success and raise he discovers one of the Monstrous Abilities of the creature, starting with its Weakness, if it has one.

Second, the student of the book learns how to craft a Mark of the Smith (see *GE* page 119), by spending a Bennie and making a Knowledge (Religion) (-4) roll.

Third, the student learns how to craft a Mark of Tosar (see *GOD*, page 82), with a Knowledge (Religion) (-4) roll.

Fourth, the character learns a powerful exorcism, capable of turning away demons. In game terms he receives the *banish* Power using Spirit as arcane Skill and with Power Points equal to half his Spirit dice +1/Rank. So a Seasoned hero with Spirit d8 has $4 + 2 = 6$ Power Points dedicated to this Power.

A character with the Priest Edge, who is a follower of Hulian or Tosar, receives +2 to the rolls on every one of the above capacities.

The problem with acquiring the lore of the book is that the pieces of the tome are scattered, and the character must first collect the various pieces (see sidebar) and then study them.

The Grated Tower of Felantium: There is bleak-looking tower, in the thieves' quarter of Felantium, whose windows are protected by sturdy iron grates, and the only access, a sturdy iron-bolted door, is protected by a strange-looking statue. Travelers and locals alike say it is the temple of a foreign god, the Master of the Seven Rags, a deity from far-away Ekul. During night time, worshippers of the cult, who wear hooded cloaks to avoid being recognized, sneak into the temple to perform their strange rites and to read the scroll of the god, a single sheet made of a blood-red metal. According to the ministry of the cult, the Scroll of the Seven Rags, as is called, contains words of wisdom and prophecies of great importance. Many important persons occasionally frequent the temple, among them even the current Count of Felantium, who would not like this fact to become public knowledge.

THE PARTS OF THE STEEL BOOK

Studying the Book. *The Steel Book is divided into a great many parts. If a character is stubborn (or lucky) enough to find one of them (for example Demon Lore 1 or 2), he can study them, acquiring the capacities described in the main text.*

Studying the book's parts requires making both Smarts (-2) and Spirit (-2) rolls, with an additional -2 if the fragment is only a piece of a greater part (see below).

To check what part of the book is found, roll a d6 and check the table below (obviously ignore results already rolled).

If a character somehow manages to reassemble the whole book, he should immediately be awarded an Advance.

STEEL BOOK FRAGMENTS TABLE

1	<i>On Gods and Demons (Demon Lore part 1 of 2)</i>
2	<i>The Mystery of the Steel Lion (Demon Lore Part 2 of 2)</i>
3	<i>The Song of the Hammer (Mark of the Smith).</i>
4	<i>The Path to Martyrdom (Mark of Tosar).</i>
5	<i>The Secret of Word and Fire (Banish part 1 of 2)</i>
6	<i>The Secret of Night and Day (Banish part 2 of 2)</i>

STEEL BOOK PAGES AND AMULETS

Apart from the major parts, several single pages of the Steel Book are scattered in the Dominions. Followers and the faithful ones preserved them or cut them in pieces to craft amulets and charms of various types. As a rule of thumb, each single page or amulet grants one of the following Edges: Arcane Resistance, Luck, Greater Luck, Holy Warrior. In addition a page causes Fear to Demons, the first time they see it, and an amulet is considered a magical weapon (it is an Improvised Weapon dealing Str+d4), so it can wound and kill the greater part of demons.

VANISHRAGORA OR THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Appearance: This thin golden necklace, twelve feet long, belonged to the legendary Vanishra, the Enlightened King, the last king that ruled over Lhoban, millennia ago, the creator of the Enlightenment philosophy and first Enlightened One. This necklace is in truth a very ancient quipu, containing old forgotten lore on the doctrine of the Lhoban monks.

Language: Lhoban Secrets.

Background: Stories say that Vanishra, who was King of Lhoban, abdicated and retired to the mountains, refusing all contact with people. But the dignitaries of his court, seeking for counsel, found him and piled at his feet jewels and gold, to appease their past lord. Vanishra had no use for these trinkets, and they lay, ignored, at his feet for many years. Then, in the twilight of his life, when he felt death and reincarnation approaching, he needed a way to pass his wisdom to his successor. Being almost blind, he could not write, but his fingers were nimble, and he used the old jewels to create the first quipu, which passed to his successor. For centuries, the Enlightened Ones of Lhoban wore this jewellery, which gradually became impregnated with the very souls of its owners. For some unknown reason, around 1600 AF, the Vanishragora was no longer worn, and was kept protected in a secluded monastery in the northern Lhoban Mountains. It lay there, untouched, for centuries. Stories say that so great was its power, that even touching it was dangerous, because the echoes of the powerful souls which had touched it could shatter the mind of a man. Probably this part of the legend is false, because years later, during the Valk invasions, a band of mounted marauders from the horde which destroyed Collana assaulted the monastery where the Vanishragora was held, murdered all the monks and stole it.

Rules: The Vanishragora is both a book and a powerful magical item, because the souls of the Enlightened Ones who wore it have somewhat permeated it. In the hands of an untrained but gifted person (Spirit d8+) it grants him the Danger Sense Edge, if the character already has the Edge or is an Enlightened One, he gains +2 to the roll. A monk studying the wisdom contained in it is allowed a Spirit (-2) roll every time he gets an Advance. In the case of success he learns one of the Powers stored in the Vanishragora: *boost trait* (Knowledge (History), Spirit, Persuasion), *divination*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *telekinesis*.

But the Vanishragora isn't an easy burden to keep, so strong were the souls that touched it. Whenever the user rolls a 1 on the Spirit die (or a double one if he is a Wild Card), it means that in some manner his soul was infected by one of the souls haunting the item; put a little dot on the user's character sheet. When the hero has five or more dots he is possessed by a ghost (see *SWD* page 137) with Spirit d12+2, which can be sent away only with the *banish* Power.

On the Neck of a Warlord: Recently, a new Valk warlord is terrorizing the Imperial Route, in southern Zandor, on Ekram's border. He is Jugat, called the Terror of Varikas, for the atrocities he inflicted on that fortified town on the Zandorian border. Jugat is smart and strong, plus, he seems to have a sort of supernatural knack for escaping danger: the Merchant Houses of Jalizar have sent at least three Assassins to kill him, but they were always identified and sent back to the City of Thieves, cut into pieces. Jugat wears a strange golden necklace, many feet long, coiled multiple times. He can often be seen mindlessly caressing it, eyes lost in a sort of dream, and when his hands leave it, he issues an order nobody expects, but which always turns out to be the right one.



SECRETS OF TRICARNIA

PRINCES AND POISONS

The design philosophy of *Beasts & Barbarians* is to put you, the GM, in charge of things. This is made by proposing several questions and hooks to stimulate your imagination, but giving no clear and certain answers: some of the mysteries of the Dominions can be unraveled by reading between the lines, but others are left to your inventiveness to fill the blanks and so create your own unique gaming experience.

As happened in *JCT*, this book moves a little from this path. Introducing several mysteries and ideas, it is necessary, at least for some of them, to give you precise answers to allow you build stories around them. As always, they are only suggestions you can change and re-write to better fit your vision of the Dominions.

That said, get back in the saddle, and go unravel the Secrets of Tricarnia!

THE HIGH PRINCE

The very fulcrum of the current political situation in Tricarnia is the High Prince, Ivakor, and his attitude. **Lord Ivakor** is showing open disinterest in politics, and sadly it isn't only a show: the Prince is in a deep depression after the death of his wife, Vardella, and cares for nothing. This status has lasted for some time and the great families (mainly the Hordakans and the Askerions) can smell the blood of weak prey.

Ivakor, a sorcerer of skill himself, unknown to anybody, is passing his nights studying

in the library of the Palace, to find a ritual or the name of a demon which can help him to bring his wife back to life. He is aided in this task by **Yara**, the servant of his lost wife, who is enamored of him and secretly a spy of the Askerions. Nobody knows if Yara has anything to do with the death of Vardella, but she might.

The person actually ruling Tricarnia now is the old **Eunuch Gaaro the Splendid**, First of the Golden Servants (the eunuchs of the City of Princes). Affecting the appearance of a hedonistic, effeminate dandy, Gaaro, a former Jalizaran slave, hides a steel mind under his artificially-golden skin. Nobody knows if the Eunuch's fidelity is real or born from the Lotus of Fidelity he drinks every day of his life, but till today he has managed to keep a fragile peace in the land, a peace that is becoming more delicate to maintain day by day.

Gaaro's real role is known by the other families, and in fact he has recently escaped two assassination attempts. He did this quite easily, because he is the head of the Silent Hands (see below), but the fact that somebody dared to attack him means that the situation is getting out of control.

Gaaro has to find allies wherever he can, and recently he found a new one in the figure of **Volkan, the Caldeian Ambassador** in Tricarnia. Volkan is a retired general of the Caldeian army, nephew of an influential priest of Caldeia City, and married to an imperial noblewoman of Tricarnian origin. At court they call him Stoneface, because nothing seems to shake his composure, even the wildest tortures or the most depraved pleasures. Volkan, till now, has silently aided Gaaro, loaning the eunuch some of his men. Gaaro is wondering whether

to recruit him into the Silent Hands, but hasn't yet decided; he knows that Volkan is probably a puppet of Caldaïos, and isn't eager to involve the Cruel in the destiny of Tricarnia again, but, as the saying goes: politics makes strange bedfellows.

THE SILENT HANDS

Both a network of spies and occasionally of assassins, the Silent Hands are organized as a web, where every member knows only one, or, at most, two other members of the organization and recognize each other with code phrases (see sidebar).

Note that not every Silent Hand knows he is one: many of them are recruited by third parties, without revealing the real employer. This absolute secrecy protects the whole network, but in the past, it has caused some cases of friendly fire, where two branches of the organization, unbeknownst one to the other, reciprocally killed each other's agents.

Apart from a number of "sleeping" members and occasional agents, there is a very restricted number of skilled people acting more or less constantly with the Hands. They are the most trusted members of the organization and deal only with the chief of the organization, the **Hand Bringer**. The name of the role comes from the Ring of the Hand, a very ancient Keronian heirloom engraved with a silver crest showing an open hand, which the Hand Bringer wears during meetings (where attendees are usually masked).

Having this object grants the wearer the absolute loyalty of the Silent Hands.

Often, in past centuries, the Hand Bringer was the High Prince himself, but

on various occasions the role was filled by others.

Presently the Hand Bringer is Gaaro the Splendid, who commands the organization in place of the High Prince.

The Silent Hands are very well placed in the kingdom (so the GM can devise one or more for his own plots) but there are three of them in key positions.

Vaarto Vaan is a Jalizaran independent merchant who frequently travels from the City of Thieves to the Land of the Sons of Keron. A notorious drunkard and never-do-well, Vaarto has interests scattered more or less all over Tricarnia, he constantly moves with his small trains of carts to peddle his wares to the different Citadels and knows how to bribe bandits and rebels alike to avoid being robbed. In truth Vaarto is Gaaro's brother, the two of them were separated in youth and only recently met again. Vaarto is a crucial member of the Silent Hands, acting as a messenger for agents in far-away locations. Gaaro maintains a façade of hate and disdain toward the merchant, keeping hidden their bond and strong friendship. Usually, during his visits to the City of Princes, Vaarto is thrown in jail by the guards for being loudly drunk in the streets, and in the cells he secretly meets his brother. Once he was even apparently whipped to make the ruse more realistic.

Jurkas is the third son of Lord Hordakan. He won't ever ascend to his father's seat,

and he has always affected loyalty. Jurkas has a weakness: exotic women. Six months ago he bought a gorgeous Kyrosian bed slave. After passing a very hot night with her, he discovered he had been drugged with a powerful Lotus concoction, of which he must take a dose every day or die. The man behind the trap is obviously Gaaro himself, and the woman was sold by Vaarto. Jurkas is a trapped man now: Vaarto hasn't made him do anything yet, but Jurkas must give him accurate reports of the secret councils of his father. Jurkas complied, and now knows he is doubly doomed, because his father will feed a traitor, even his own son, to the Yalaruka.

Blasi is a slave Razor Healer (see page 88) in Nal Askerion. Gifted with great medical skills and a cunning mind, she is not only the personal healer of Askevor, the older of the Askerion brothers, but also his counselor and occasional lover. Blasi is another very important pawn recruited by Vaarto. The woman sold her fidelity in exchange for a promise Vaarto made to find her daughter, who was taken away from the mother at birth, ten years ago. In truth Blasi isn't what she claims to be. The real Blasi was killed several years ago and replaced by a Talaxakah, a shapeshifting demon at the orders of the reborn cult of Baachaga (see below). "Blasi" was recruited after being substituted, and her task now is infiltrating the Silent Hands.

HERO'S JOURNAL: SILENT HANDS

SILENT HANDS CODE PHRASES

Here follow some code phrases used by Silent Hands. You can use them (and create new ones) to add more flavor to your game. Usually a trained Silent Hand can communicate an easy concept (GM's call) to another one using only code phrases, if both parties make a Smarts roll. A witness can understand something is being communicated with a Notice (-4) roll.

"May the hand of Hordan protect you." You must answer with: "And your father and your mother, but not your cousin."

Meaning: *This is the standard recognition signal between Silent Hands.*

"I have something stuck in my finger."

Meaning: *There is danger here, run away!*

"How did you find the rice fields outside the city?" You must answer with: "Full of leeches, as always."

Meaning: *I must talk with you in a safe place.*

SPECIAL GEAR

Although they have a number of different background and roles, there are some "trademarks" for the members of this organization, including some very specific items they use.

Black Suits. *Usually Silent Hands don't wear distinctive garments, but during stealth missions sometimes they use this padded armor, complete with hood, totally black. It is considered leather Light Armor (+1) which grants +2 to Stealth rolls in darkness.*

Death Gems. *These small crystals can be kept in a pouch or even embedded in a jewel. In truth, each is a crystallized Lotus concoction which must be ingested. It is imbued with a Very Fast poison cast with d12 and a Wild Die. It is used as a suicide capsule by captured agents and as poison for enemies.*

Hand of Justice. *This sharp, slightly curved, dagger is considered an Arsenic Dagger which deals +1 damage.*

Silent Hand. *These weapons give the name to the sect that traditionally uses them. They are triangular throwing blades, with sharp edges. If you know the right method, they can also pierce armor. Consider them throwing daggers (Str+d4, Range: 4/8/16, +1 Throwing rolls, -1 Fighting rolls, AP 1 per raise you score on the Throwing roll).*

THE WAR OF THE MOON AND THE NIGHT

As mentioned above, Prince Ivakor's weakness has stirred the lust for power of the two major houses of Tricarnia: the **Askerions** and the **Hordakans**, who think that it is time for a new dynasty on the Ivory Throne.

These two powerful houses aren't in open conflict for now, but they are gathering around them a host of allies, some trustworthy and others less so, which, if war happens, will drive all Tricarnia into chaos. The alliances are shifting and mutable for now, because every faction, from the smallest noble to the greatest Lord, is trying to get the best from his liege.

Let's see the situation in detail.

The **Askerions** are ruled by two Princes, **Askevor** and **Valekor**, who are very close. Fierce warriors, with probably the biggest army in Tricarnia, they are seeking an alliance with **Val Toorasa**, which could grant them weapons and metal. The alliance must be sanctioned with a marriage between Askevor's daughter, **Valenya**, and **Sovar of Val Toraasa**, but it seems there are some problems between them.

The **Hordakans** are in the tyrannical grip of Lord Hordakor, who controls almost all the **Rice Lords** of the Xalarya, the granary of Tricarnia. Although this isn't openly declared, the **Eunuchs of Nal Nomantor** also side with the Hordakans. This is probably for a commercial reason: the Hordakans, who raid overseas, are becoming the biggest source of slaves for the House of Pain, and are also the main buyers of trained warrior-slaves.

These are the two sides and their trusted allies.

Then, there are a number of factions who have yet to choose a side.

The most important one is **Lagaria of Nal Lagar**. The cunning Priest Princess is playing a dangerous game with both the Askerions and the Hordakans. Over the centuries the biggest neighbors have bitten off scraps of Nal Lagar's land, weakening it, so the Lagarians are trying to get whatever they can from both would-be allies.

Lagaria is officially looking for a husband, and both the Hordakans and the Askerions are offering high-blood princes to create an alliance, but so far the suitors of both Houses seem to be



unfortunate, and with the strange habit of dying, from natural causes of course, in Nal Lagar's Citadel.

In recent times the balance is slowly moving in favor of the Hordakans, because Lagaria has another problem, the **Hill Lords**, who raid her caravans headed for the Borderlands. Lord Hordakor himself is talking to the **Vikario**, the leader of the Hill Lords, to stop these incursions, and if he manages to do so, this could win **Nal Lagar** to the Port of Darkness's side.

But this won't be as simple as it appears: the Hill Lords are a proud and stalwart people, and the Vikario is the most stalwart of all, because recently his coffers were filled with Askerions' gifts, and **Ravalko** (see below), his most trusted Companion, always remembers that his son was killed, years ago, by a Hordakan spear.

Ravalko is the most trusted Companion of the Vikario, the ruler of the Hill Lords. This handsome man is of mixed blood: his father was a Hill Lord and his mother a handmaiden of Lady Askerion. Ravalko has a soft spot for gambling, and lost a lot of money and almost all the family lands that way, but the Askerions' "cousins" paid off his debts, in exchange for a friendly voice in the Vikario's ear. Till now Ravalko hasn't done anything disloyal toward his master, but if it becomes necessary to choose between his old friend and liege, and his rich and very powerful cousins, even he doesn't know what he will do.

Finally there is another unknown element in the equation: **Drakovor**, the pirate lord of **Ral Vastara**, is becoming a nuisance of increasing importance. In particular his ships are assaulting the Hordakans' slaver and merchant ships, which is a blow both to Ral Hordaka's economy and to

the reputation for invincibility of their fleet. Drakovor has a secret pact with the Askerions, who are giving him manpower and money to harass their enemies. According to the pact, when the Askerions are on the Ivory Throne, Drakovor will be recognized as a full Lord and will be made Admiral of Tricarnia. Actually, neither side intends to respect the pact: Drakovor is much more ambitious, and wants the seat of High Prince for himself, and the Askerions, on the other hand, consider him too dangerous and uncontrollable. But for now both sides need each other.

But Drakovor is weaker than he appears, because the Pirate Lord isn't what he thinks himself to be.

Vuthra Ghar, also known as the Black Shadow of the Dragon, is a tall, close-mouthed man, who never strays far from Drakovor. He bears the marks of chains on the wrists and neck, so he was probably a slave in the past. Vuthra is powerful sorcerer, and is the real origin of Drakovor's power: it was Vuthra's magic which enslaved Karos, the Tyrant Lazarta of the lord. Nobody, even Drakovor himself, knows this; the Pirate Lord truly believes himself the heir of Tovakor, but he isn't: the Lazarta obeys his orders only because Vuthra compels it. Vuthra is actually working with the Silent Hands, even if he has no real master apart from himself. Nobody knows how old Vuthra Ghar is, and what his real agenda is.

This is the actual situation in Tricarnia now, and it is a very fluid one, where alliances could change day by day.

THE WAR OF MOON AND NIGHT IN PLAY

The peculiar political situation of Tricarnia presents you, the Game Master, with a lot of interesting options, whether you are playing a small-scope campaign of mercenary adventurers, or you are playing a Rise of a House campaign.

Keeping the Peace. In a potentially explosive situation, the efforts of the player characters are to keep the peace. This is the goal of Vaaro the Splendid, and of what remains of the central government, so the heroes could count on the support of the Silent Hands in their task. Note that “support” can be interpreted in a number of ways; traditionally, the Hand Bearer uses ignorant pawns, keeping them in the dark about their real role in the great scheme of things. If the goal of your campaign is keeping the peace, the players could even find themselves on opposite sides in different adventures: in one they’ll fight against the Hordakans to weaken their grip on the seas, while in the next they’ll plot with Ral Hordaka against the Askerions to prevent the City of War from getting total control of central Tricarnia. These adventures can also include a meta-plot where the heroes gradually learn who they are really working for.

Total War. In time of war, the thing a warrior does is, well, fighting. In this option, the players will choose a liege (or even work for themselves in a Rise of a House campaign), and fight on his side. Expect a number of betrayals, investigations and diplomatic activities in this type of game, but sooner or later the party will take up arms and carve themselves a name in the history of the Dominions. Or a cold grave, of course.

Exploiting Weaknesses. In times of turmoil, a cunning man with a sharp blade and few principles can become rich. The heroes can exploit the general chaos of this period in a number of ways: for example gathering intelligence for a side or the other, attacking caravans as a freebooter or even joining a faction to betray it and pass information to the other side. It is an excellent type of game for roguish or very selfish characters, so long as they don’t step on the toes of someone really out of their league.

SORCERERS AND EUNUCHS

THE HEART OF CALDAIOS

Tricarnia is a land of dark sorcerers. The Princes themselves, for the most part, are mages themselves, and other shady warlocks perform their unholy rituals in the crumbling ruins dotting the country.

But these are only simple practitioners, in comparison to the real ancient mages of Keron. Luckily, almost all of them are long dead, but some still survive; among them, the most famous are Caldaios and Jestiriel, and men tremble when facing their terrible will.

Their long, black shadows still loom over Tricarnia, even if the two mages haven’t been seen for centuries.

The source of their hate is so ancient that it is lost in the mists of time: brothers, if the stories are true, they were born in ancient Keron and were among the Green Fire Seekers, the nobles that gathered

around Salkor the Navigator after the Fall of the Dread Star.

Then their enmity had centuries to grow and flourish: Caldaios always looked with contempt at his older, and physically twisted, brother, who hated and secretly feared him. During the Askerion rebellion, Caldaios betrayed both his brothers to side with the High Prince and this was an offense Jestiriel never forgot.

Nobody knows how Jestiriel discovered the weak point of his brother: **Caldaios's Heart**, the amulet in which the Cruel stored the greater part of his magical powers (see page 154).

Then, patient as a spider in the web, Jestiriel conceived his plan for revenge: first he bribed **Iaktor, the Servant of Caldaios**, and convinced him to betray his master, with the promise of becoming Jestiriel's first disciple. Iaktor's task was simple: one night, when Caldaios was sleeping in the deep slumber of the Black Lotus, he had to steal the amulet from his master's neck, open the gates of Tel Askora, where Caldaios lived, and run to Jestiriel, who in the meantime had conjured an army of demons surrounding the palace, concealed under a veil of sorcery.

But the plan worked only partially: **Iaktor** managed to steal the Heart from his master, opened the gates of Tel Askora and fled, but for some unknown reason he didn't arrive at Jestiriel's camp. Nobody knows what happened to him: maybe he always coveted Caldaios' amulet himself, or there was a third, unknown actor in the plan.

Whatever the reason, months later Jestiriel's agents found Iaktor, dead, in a back alley of Faberterra City, the amulet

missing and an expression of terror on his face.

But let's return to the night of the betrayal: when Iaktor opened the gate, it creaked, and Caldaios' sleep was disturbed. He was completely awake when Jestiriel's attack came, but without his amulet, he understood he was doomed. He raised token defenses, changed his shape, a lost art of the past he had mastered, and slipped past his enemies.

He was alive, but his powers were only a shadow of what they had once been.

Caldaios soon understood he had been betrayed, but weak as he was his only chance was escape, fleeing with Jestiriel's assassins at his back. He fled from the land of the Sons of Keron and created a kingdom in the south, which still bears his name, Caldeia. From that day almost five centuries have passed, and Caldaios is never seen in public anymore: some think he has been dead for a long time, others that he is seriously ill, but some even whisper that the Cruel came back to Tricornia again, in disguise, to find his amulet and, when he does, to take a terrible revenge on his brother.

Ironically, a similar fate befell Jestiriel: secluded for many centuries in Nal Nomantor, he never leaves the House of Pain, and year after year, his public appearances diminish. In this case too, rumors spread wildly: for some he is dead, and his Eunuchs are maintaining a complex deception to fake his presence and rule in his name, for others he is seriously ill, the depravation of his soul finally taking revenge on his body, while for others he is simply too scared of his brother's vengeance: even if five centuries have passed, Jestiriel knows that the Cruel has a very long memory.

Actually Jestiriel, unknown to anybody, is fighting against a very special opponent (see below).

The truth is that both wizards are still alive, though neither leaves their fortresses, respectively Nal Nomantor and Caldeia City; but this doesn't mean their war is ended.

THE HOUNDS OF CALDAIOS

Caldeia may be far away, but it always enjoyed a peaceful relationship with the home country and is an important economic partner, the source of a constant flow of slaves and Khav, the cheap Lotus so common among the lower echelons of the society.

On the surface, Caldeia keeps a position of absolute neutrality in the internal politics of Tricarnia: they sell their wares in the same way both in the City of Princes and in Val Hordaka, and, rather peculiarly, Caldeian slave-sellers are often seen in the flesh markets of Nal Nomantor, buying and selling their wares.

Occasionally among the slaves sold and bought there are spies, but they are usually rooted out by Jestiriel's eunuchs or by Caldaios' priests. In the past, the two wizards have also tried to infiltrate assassins, with little success, and now for centuries they haven't made a serious assassination attempt.

In reality, Caldaios is slowly infiltrating his men into Tricarnia, starting with ambassador Volkan, who is becoming very important for Gaaro the Splendid to maintain a resemblance of peace.

Caldaios isn't interested in Tricarnia by itself, and the throne means nothing to him. What he is looking for is the Heart, and he is convinced the artifact never went far away. In particular he sent north a group of individuals, chosen sorcerers he personally altered with Lotus and dark magic, to track down the Heart. The Hounds constantly beat the land, looking for clues about the amulet: they know that the prize, for he who finds the Heart and brings it back to their master, will be enormous.

The Hounds have been active for more than thirty years now, they didn't only overturn every stone of Tricarnia, but they have also roamed widely in the Dominions as a whole. Nevertheless, they found nothing.

JESTIRIEL'S EUNUCHS

Nal Nomantor, home of Jestiriel, is one of the scariest places of the Dominions. It is a squat and massive city, built directly over the River of Pain, a place of torture, both physical and mental, and slavery. Jestiriel for many years has retired to his laboratory, in the depths of the city, and only the High Eunuchs can enter periodically to visit him.

The reason for Jestiriel's seclusion is simple: he is deeply sick. But it isn't an illness of the body, it is a malady of spirit. Simply, the Master of Pain fell asleep. A long, disturbed slumber from which he occasionally wakes up, for brief periods, babbles some words and then dozes again.

Initially the High Eunuch thought their master used the Water of Eternity or some exotic Lotus concoction, but the truth is very different: during his

arcane investigations into the location of Caldaio's Heart, Jestiriel's mind visited various dimensions to question supernatural beings. During one of these mind trips he encountered a force he didn't expect: the Dreamer. Unwillingly, he was dragged into his prison, the Dream Kingdom, where he was forced to assume the shape of the Boar King (see page 204). Jestiriel's spirit is constantly fighting to break free, but nobody knows if he will be able to do so and how his mind will fare if he succeeds.

This situation left Nal Nomantor to herself, and the High Eunuchs of the three orders are the real rulers of the House of Pain. It isn't an easy situation, because each faction, despite showing a façade of unity with the others on the exterior, in truth is more or less openly fighting against the others.

Vastro is the head of the **Green Eunuchs**, the ones in charge of the Lotus produced in the city. Vastro is a dwarf, deformed man and a skilled Lotusmaster himself. Soon after Jestiriel's illness, Nabat, High Eunuch of the Blacks, accused him of poisoning their master. The situation grew very tense and only the mediation of Uras, Head of the Reds, prevented open warfare in the city. In truth Vastro is the one least interested in the power struggle between his peers, and he is researching a powerful concoction he calls the Flower of Many Colors, to free their master from his condition.

Unbeknownst to Vastro, his most skilled assistant and lover, the slave-woman **Vatiria**, is a spy in the service of Uras, tasked with reporting everything Vastro is doing and ready to sabotage the potion.

Nabat is the master of the Black Eunuchs. A tall, pale man of cadaverous aspect, he is always surrounded by a subtle scent of blood, sweat and fear that no perfume can conceal. A blatant sadist, Nabat truly enjoys his work, which consists of twisting the minds and bodies of the slaves. When he walks in the pits, his own servants move away from his shadow because nobody knows where his dark attention will stop. Nabat fears only one person, Jestiriel himself, because in the past, before Nabat obtained the rank of High Eunuch, the Master of Pain



twisted and mutated him. Nabat, like all his peers, secretly despises his master, but his hate is stronger: exploiting the fact that Jestiriel is incapacitated, he is secretly working on a dark project, one he started after stealing a precious Keronian book from the personal library of the master. It regards one of the few fields of study the Master of Pain forbade to his disciples: bringing back the dead from the grave. He hopes to raise an army of undead under his orders and to conquer first the city and then all Tricarnia. Nabat's experiments are very costly and till now not very successful, but he found a sly manner to finance himself: some of his most trusted men found a secret passage into the Crystal Domed Greenhouse, where the most precious plants are kept. Nightly they steal some of the new blossoms and smuggle them outside the city, for an outrageous price. Nabat is playing a very dangerous game, because if discovered, this will cause his immediate death, but he is slyly planting evidence that the culprit is one of the assistants of Vastro himself. What Nabat doesn't know is that his main customer, **Iarasos Soras**, a wealthy Syranthian merchant, is in truth only a puppet of his own scribe, **Boldar**, who is a powerful Caldeian agent, looking for a way to finally enter the secret vaults of Nal Nomantor.

Uras is the ruler of the Red Eunuchs. Not a Lotusmaster, not a sorcerer, despite his lacking in the arcane field, Uras, is gifted with an adamantine mind, even if it is suffocated in a large mass of fat. Uras is an abnormal eunuch. His castration wasn't complete, his genitals are still in place, but he cannot sire a son. Jestiriel ordered this because Uras is the head of the slave market, the keeper of the coffins of the city and the Master of Pain needed someone greedy in this

post. So Uras, differently from his peers, loves surrounding himself with lovers of both sexes. Uras is, at the moment, the one with the upper hand in the internal struggle for power going on in Nal Nomantor. He has spies both among the Greens and the Blacks, and he is trying to slowly turn one against the other, presenting himself as mediator between them. Uras is a realistic person, and he is content with the status quo: he secretly hopes, like his peers, that Jestiriel won't wake up ever again, but if someone must kill the age-old sorcerer, he doesn't want to be the one. Recently Uras is worried by some important problems: apart from the smuggling of slaves and Lotus from Nal Nomantor (which doesn't bother him too much because it has always happened), his mind is busy with the War of the Night and the Moon. Uras doesn't really mind who wins the war, even if he is betting on the Hordakans; for now, he wants to get the best from both factions and to be in the carriage of the winner at the end.

Foreign politics is the reason Uras is underestimating another, potentially more serious, problem; in the pits, day after day, an increasing number of slaves are getting ill, suffering from the Dream Fever. They aren't a serious percentage, for now, and the greater part of them recover, but after the malady they seem different, more distant, and less prone to obey their masters, as if the fear of the whips and the hot irons might not be enough to make them obey the orders of the overseers. It is only a little seed, but if not taken care of, this could explode into a serious slave rebellion sooner or later.

GM'S TIP:

USING CALDAIOS AND JESTIRIEL

This book, as written, supposes that the two old Keronian sorcerers are somewhat out of the game: Jestiriel is sleeping and Caldaios is far away (also he hasn't appeared in public for a long time) and the heroes will have to deal with their hirelings.

But nothing prevents you, the GM, from having Caldaios appear in person. After all nobody, except his brother, knows his appearance anymore and, if in disguise, he could be any of the characters present in this chapter (for example Vuthra Ghar, page 169 or Boldar, page 174) and making him throw away the mask should be a very climatic event, in particular if his Heart is present on the scene.

In the same way, Jestiriel could wake up from his long slumber (but this could also be only temporary), in particular if he feels the presence of his younger brother and nemesis.

A very good twist would be making the two of them meet each other and finally end the dispute, hopefully destroying each other.

Stats. *Note that neither of them are given stats: they are probably among the most powerful sorcerers and Lotusmasters in the world. Even if both of them are weakened, one from his missing amulet, and the other by his illness, they are stronger than any player character. If a combat arises, you can use the profile of the Sorcerer of GE, page 183, for them, customizing it as you see fit. Remember that, being millenary beings they have probably devised a way to escape death, and they have had time to learn both the Lotusmastery and Sorcery Arcane Backgrounds (they can*

pick Powers from both lists and have double standard Power Points).

Note that that Caldaios and Jestiriel are among the most important characters in the Dominions, and killing them will change forever the political aspects of Tricarnia, Caldeia and, in the long term, of the whole world.

PLOT IDEA:

THE FALL OF NAL NOMANTOR

Nal Nomantor is an iconic place of Tricarnia and a real "temple of evil". Destroying it is probably the goal of the Priests of Tosar, the Brokenchain Liberators and any other good-aligned faction of Tricarnia and could be the goal of a campaign or of a story arc. In this case the GM should first try to make the heroes become personally involved with the city (for example making them or some friendly NPC suffer in the pits), so that they all have the motivation to want this dreaded place destroyed.

At some point the heroes should find a way to achieve this. There are a number of them: Nal Nomantor can be taken by a frontal assault by an army (although it is quite powerful), a party of subtle and devious minds can instead exploit the various eunuch factions to fight among them and, finally it can be made to collapse physically: the old city is built over the river, using a system of enormous wooden pillars. Undermining a good number of them in some way (for example using some White Lotus of Destruction) at the same moment, would probably cause a cataclysmic event in the House of Pain.

Finally, if you are planning a confrontation between Jestiriel and Caldaios, the terrible magical battle could cause the destruction of the city...

SORCERERS AND EUNUCHS IN PLAY

There are a number of ways to include the ages-long enmity of Jestiriel and Caldaios in the game. Remember that their hate is very old, but today their war is subtle and concealed. Here follow some ideas you can use in your games.

Agents of the Mages. Sorcerers, especially Caldaios, don't like to expose themselves directly. They could, through some intermediary, hire the characters to further their agenda. Sabotage, information gathering and recovery of important items are only few of the tasks the characters can do for them. Don't forget that Tel Askora, the old palace of Caldaios, is still largely unexplored, and probably contains enormous treasures, but they are protected by terrible guardians.

Caught in the Middle. Another good way to have the party involved in the war of the mages is placing them in the middle of the conflict. This can happen in many ways, but probably the best one is having one of the heroes find Caldaios' Heart (see page 154). The artifact is very potent, but its strength grows over time, so giving it to a player character won't make him overly strong in the short term (and can even weaken him in the long term); and this will cause both sides to swoop over the heroes like hawks. The situation can even get more complicated if the party doesn't know (as is probable) the real value of Caldaios' Heart.

Escape from the House of Pain. Nal Nomantor is an ugly city, as told before. It is organized in levels and it is very deep. The surface is a quite interesting place, from the chaos and vitality of the slave market to the silence and calm of the heavily guarded greenhouses.

But under the city there are levels and levels of pits, a true labyrinth of prisons and torture chambers where the Blacks perform their cruel arts. Going deeper, you find abandoned levels, where the castoff monsters of the breeding pits have found a dark shelter, and below them, finally, there is the River of Pain, polluted by Lotus, which leads outside, into the Painfens. Escaping from Nal Nomantor can be a whole adventure in itself, with a lot of repercussions: if the heroes find a way out, it means they also know a way in, and there are many people interested in this knowledge, from Caldaios' agents, to the Brokenchain Liberators and even the Cult of the Dream...

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE DREAMER

Millennia ago, the Keronian Priests made an error: they summoned a demon god so foul and evil that he cannot be bound or controlled in any manner. His name was **Khalir** and he was the **Master of Dreams and Nightmares**. His mere presence could influence the mind, especially in sleep, and he bathed in madness and fear. Recognizing the error they made, the ancestors of the Tricarnians tried to banish him, but they didn't manage to do so; their minds were simply too feeble to resist the will of Khalir, and the most skilled sorcerers among them were driven mad. So they resorted to the only viable option they had: they used an evil to defeat a greater evil. The High Priest of Keron summoned **Tirain**, Master of Cages, and he bargained with the tricky

Lord of Doors for a way to get rid of Khalir. Great was the dismay of the High Priest when he discovered that Khalir could not be banished by Tirain, because, having been summoned by a mortal's call, only a mortal can send him back to the abyssal void to which belongs. Vutal Vaan, the priest who led the summoning rite was among the first to fall to Khalir's power and Tirain revealed that nobody in the world, in this place and era, had the strength to defeat Khalir.

But there was another way: Khalir could be entrapped and made powerless, if someone had the skill and slyness to do so. But who could do such an amazing feat? Only Tirain himself, of course. Nobody knows what the price the Master of Cages asked was, but before the end of the night, the pact was sealed.

The morning after, in the Citadel of Nal Vashra in the northern outskirts of the Empire, Khalir was savoring the souls of the city dwellers he had maddened during the night, when a peculiar creature appeared. It was an ibis gray as steel. Khalir stared at the beast, trying to use the power of his eyes, which drove men and beasts alike to madness, but, to his great dismay, the animal stared back without a flinch, with a placid look in its yellow pupils. Amazed, Khalir noted that the beast had a third eye in its forehead and, even stranger, three legs. The demon god approached the strange beast, but the bird suddenly flew away, stopping a few yards farther on.

Puzzled and irritated for the first time in many, many centuries, Khalir followed it, and then a chase, a full day long, started, with the ibis flying northward, till it reached the base of the Tricar Mountains with the demon hot on its heels.

There was a river running there, sprouting out from a cavern, and the animal fled inside, with Khalir not far away from it. The mighty demon felt a surge of cruel happiness now, because he knew the animal was trapped, and entered the grotto himself. Finally Khalir found the ibis: the beast was in a large cavern, partially flooded with water, standing still under a waterfall. Khalir smiled evilly, approached stealthily and pounced on it, but when his mighty claws touched the body of the ibis it melted away as if made of liquid silver, mixing with the water of the waterfall. Khalir, puzzled, saw himself in the reflection of the waterfall, a reflection more vivid than any other he had ever seen. Stunned, he moved his gaze away, and then he heard a soft voice: "Beloved brother, you are exactly where I wanted you, now enjoy your cage."

Khalir turned away, surprised, and, in that moment he was dozens, hundreds of reflections of himself watching him from the surface of the water, like fragments of a broken mirror. The very power of his own eyes was turned against him and the mighty demon fell into a nightmare-infested slumber.

That very night a massive earthquake hit the mountains, and the grotto leading to the mysterious underground lake was destroyed, sealing the demon away forever.

Or, at least, so the High Priests of Keron thought.

Millennia passed, and Khalir continued dreaming his nightmare-infested sleep. In truth, Tirain's trap was much more complex than a simple cage of mirrors: he built a complex labyrinth of imagination, in a dimension parallel to that of the Dominions, and confined Khalir's mind inside. The deviousness of the trap consists

in the fact that it is Khalir's own powers feeding it and in the millennia it grew up, creating a sort of closed realm where Khalir's will, entrapped, ruled.

The Followers of the Dream, today, call it the Dream Kingdom.

The demon should have been sealed away forever, but two and a half millennia ago the Dread Star fell, changing the world forever. The impact was so strong that the grotto where Khalir's body rested was damaged: a crack was created, and the water of Khalir's lake slowly found

GM'S TIP:

HIDEOUTS OF THE CULT

The Cult of the Dreamer has several camps and bases, usually concealed in wild or lightly-populated areas. The main strongholds are concentrated around the Prophets' river area, but others can be found all around Tricarnia. Here follow some of the most important ones.

Old Camp. So called because it was the first hideout the Cult used, when they were only a dozen runaway slaves, Old Camp occupies the ruins of an ancient abandoned Citadel, Var Garta. The Citadel, over the centuries, partially sank into the mud, so many of the buildings are flooded and the cultists built shacks and palafittes. Nevertheless, the Citadel's walls are still up, making the camp easily defendable. Old Camp is surrounded by a vast plantation of Lotus of Dream, but the area is very dangerous due to the presence of a great number of Swamp Sharks.

The Floating Island. A vast Yathis, a floating island of the Xalaryka, this place hosts a series of cleverly concealed huts and shacks built right in the trees and connected by rope bridges. The island constantly floats, so its location changes,

but in some way Yavatur the Asan, the chief of the Island, can propel it in the direction he wants using his magic. In the same manner, Asans and Templomos who have already visited this place can always find it. The Floating Island is actually part of the Dream Kingdom, because one of the plants composing it was infected by the Dream some years ago, and now acts as a sort of "dream magnifier" (for the same reasons Dreamers on the Islands gain the Fast Recovery Edge).

Black Demon Gorge. This narrow valley is in the middle of the rocky hills south of the ruins of Tel Askora. It is a cursed place, because at night the Black Demon dwelling inside howls its rage against mortals. In reality there is no demon in the gorge, it is only the sound of the wind passing through the rocks and magnified by the peculiar acoustics of the place. The gorge's side is dotted with caverns, which are used as refuges by the Cult of the Dreamer. In particular they host a growing community of runaway slaves freshly converted to the Dreamer, led by the rugged Templomos Valayos. Occasionally the Gorge is also used as a temporary hideout by the Brotherhood of the Roads, which in exchange for shelter gives the cult a share of the loot.



another way outside. First a small rivulet, then, with the passing of years, it grew, becoming what today is known as the Prophets' River.

The waters of the river are crystalline and apparently pure and healthy, but they are infected, in a minor way, by Khalir's body. Luckily, during the long run toward the sea, the parasites infesting the water weaken, and, for many centuries, it caused no harm.

Then, some years ago, an escaped slave called Laobeng, headed to the villages of free slaves beyond the Brokenchain Mountains, stopped to drink at the source of the river, where the taint of Khalir's body was strong, and he was infected by the touch of the demon.

The nature of the infection is a subtle one: apart from the fever, which sooner or later passes, it creates a strange connection with the mind of Khalir, who, despite being entrapped, can extend part of his senses and his powers to the infected.

So this is the real origin of the Dreamer. He isn't a god or a manifestation of a person's inner soul: he is a demon trapped in his own nightmares, from which he is desperately trying to wake up.

THE DREAMER'S AGENDA

The Dreamer is chained in his own prison of nightmares, but, when he felt the presence of Laobeng, he detected a subtle changing in the strength of his cage, of the supernatural prison keeping him. A real masterwork piece, it was constructed by Tirain to exactly counterbalance the strength of Khalir, but it is strong and delicate at the same time: Khalir knows

that if he could obtain extra energy he could break it, and finally wake up.

When this happens the whole world will pay for his entrapment, and there is no place where his brother Tirain could hide to avoid his rage.

Only the minds of sleeping persons can grant him such much energy. So he slowly infused a fraction of his power into Laobeng's mind, granting him supernatural capabilities.

It was a seed he carefully planted, and it bore fruit: month after month, more people were infected by Laobeng's touch, gaining a connection to Khalir. Careful as a wolf which must not scare the sheep, Khalir cleverly conceals his own identity; he plays a complex game of seduction and lulling with his followers, and he even admits some of them inside his trap, into the Dream Kingdom. Every time they enter, by sleep, in the Dream Kingdom, the resistance of Tirain's cage weakens.

But so far he hasn't yet gathered enough force, he needs much more.

LAOBENG'S DISAPPEARANCE

Laobeng may be the head of the Cult of the Dreamer, but he was a Lhobanite monk after all. Months ago he started feeling something weird about the Dreamer, perhaps he had a glimpse of the real nature of the being he, and many others, are following.

So the Dreamer called him, with a particularly strong vision, to visit him, physically. Laobeng accepted: he wanted to get rid of his doubts. He left power over the Cult to the other Asans and

went northward. After some adventures, he ventured into the caverns under the Brokenchain Mountains and there he found that a strange race of twisted humanoids, similar to bipedal moles, served the Dreamer too. These creatures, once nothing more than animals, were touched and changed by Khalir, who had made them his steadfast servants. Sadly for the demon, these creatures, which call themselves **Gora**, cannot dream, so they are useless in the Dream Kingdom. But they have other abilities: first, they dug an opening to the lake where the Dreamer's body is, and then carved out a massive underground temple, placing the Dreamer on an altar, under a waterfall, which then drives water to the Prophets' River.

Second, they are the ones who occasionally sneak away from the caverns, swim down the river at night and kidnap unsuspecting people, who are then dragged to the underground temple of the Dreamer and sacrificed to their unholy god.

These beasts welcomed Laobeng, who, although scared, allowed them to guide him to his god.

When Laobeng finally saw the creature he was serving, his monk's training surfaced: he recognized the creature as an enormous, powerful, demon, but it was too late: Khalir briefly opened his eyes, while sleeping, and Laobeng's soul was trapped in the Dream Kingdom, passing through the most dangerous Dream Gate of Tricarnia: the Dreamer's stare (see page 176).

Laobeng, twisted into the shape of the Snake of Dreams, cannot leave his prison, and lives in an eternal nightmare, forced to obey its powerful master.

Note that Laobeng isn't alone in the Dream Kingdom: as mentioned above

Jestiriel is also there, in the shape of the Boar King, but each of the two is unaware of the other's identity.

MEANWHILE, THE ASANS...

The Dreamer had to get rid of a potential danger, Laobeng. This left the cult headless, even if the followers don't know that yet.

But this isn't a bad thing, from his point of view. The heads of the cult, both Asans and Templomos, are making their moves to take the place of Laobeng, just in case the Dream's Voice doesn't come back.

Kordar, the head of the Templomos, is quite worried by the prolonged absence of his master. He has a bad feeling, but he knows he cannot leave the Cult now, otherwise it could shatter. In addition, his lieutenant, a former Syranthian gladiator called **Gyphros the Tall**, could convince the other Templomos to side with Asan **Valekor** (see below).

In fact the biggest turmoil is among the Asans.

Currently there are three factions: the first, guided by Valekor, a former Tricarnian noble, wants to declare Laobeng dead and to choose Valekor as the new Voice. Everybody knows that Valekor's ideas are very aggressive: he wants to abolish the Asan's Doctrine and spread the Dream wildly.

On the opposite side there is **Hadiya**, a Kyrosian woman, a former bed slave who insists on preserving the Doctrine. She doesn't clearly propose herself as a substitute for Laobeng, but everyone is sure that she'll not refuse this honor, if the occasion arises. The greater part of her followers is composed of women and she is

the known lover of **Velm**, the Northlander Templomos in charge of the Lotus fields.

In the middle there is the enigmatic figure of the **Wise One**. A very old man, of unknown age, the Wise One was given the title of Asan by Laobeng himself. The Wise One almost never speaks, he is constantly under the effect of the Lotus of Dreams, but he is extremely gifted in the magical field, the few times he is awake. He is surrounded by a flock of followers, the most crazed ones, but he doesn't seem interested in seizing power, or in the disappearance of Laobeng. In truth, he seems to have no other interest apart from the Dream. Both Valekor and Hadiya have made moves to gain his support, but so far he hasn't sided with either of them.

Another important figure in the political life of the Cult is **Whitehead**. A former Companion of a Mud Lord, Whitehead is a rowdy Templomos who knew the Dream in late age. Whitehead is undisciplined like all of his people, but very faithful to Kordar. Kordar sent him on a mission to find what happened to Laobeng, but neither of the two men came back. In fact, Whitehead found a Dream Gate and now is lost somewhere in the Dream Kingdom. Probably he'll reappear, sooner or later, because this guy has more lives than a cat, but nobody knows when and where.

In the meantime the common cultists are getting nervous: without strong leadership they are dividing. Some is stealing the Lotus of Dream to smuggle it, others are fighting over women and in general the situation is becoming very tense. **Torian**, the **Priest of Tosar** who acts as ambassador of the Brokenchain villages is quite worried too, and is beginning to think that the Cult of the Dream is going to explode soon.

GM'S TIP: THE DEATH OF A GOD

Making the heroes defeat the Dreamer can be an epic end for your game, but it can also be a new beginning, especially if the player characters were members of the Cult.

When this happens you must consider the effects on two levels.

Role-Playing Level. *Losing a relative or a beloved one is a terrible mental experience, but losing a god is even worse. Everyone responds in a different way; some could refuse religion in any form, others could find refuge in drugs, alcohol or other easy means of escape, while still others could find a new religion. Whichever of the above reactions a character chooses, the player should be allowed to change one or more of his Disadvantages, to reflect this dramatic change in his life.*

Rules Level. *The powers of a Dream Follower come from their god, so what happens on his death? You can basically answer this question in two ways. First, you can decide the Follower loses all his Powers, in this case we suggest you count how many Advances he loses (basically the ones the player spent for his Arcane Background plus any other Power Edges). At the end of every adventure, the player should be allowed to re-spend one of the lost levelling options, to reflect trying to rebuild his life.*

On the other hand, you can just decide that the powers of a Dream Follower are now so intertwined with his soul that they continue to exist even after the demise of the Dreamer (this could also be a sign that Khalir wasn't really destroyed, but only banished). A decision that you, the GM, must also take is related to the future: should the character be allowed to take new Powers or is his magical path blocked? To avoid friction with the group it is usually best to discuss this element with the players, trying not to penalize them.

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES IN PLAY

Here follows a number of ideas to make the players interact with the Cult of the Dream.

Discovering the Secret. The heroes could, sooner or later, discover the secret of the dreamer, especially if they go, for whatever reason, on the tracks of Laobeng or venture into the dark caverns under the Brokenchain Mountains. But when they do discover it, what will they do? Is there any way to kill the Dreamer? Maybe a Smith Priest, with the Steel Book of Hulian, could find a way, or the characters could also receive unexpected help from Tirain, who fears the rage of his vindictive brother. The destruction or banishing of the Dreamer can cause interesting effects on the campaign (see sidebar).

Political Struggle. The heroes can get involved in the internal fights among the Asans to seize power. They could decide to side with Hadiya or Valekor, or even found a new faction themselves. They can also be given a more difficult task: maintaining the peace, maybe with the help of Kordar or with the support of the only allies the Cult of the Dream has: the Brokenchain Liberators.

Entering the Dream Kingdom. Another important theme which can be touched on in a Dreams and Nightmares game is entering the Dream Kingdom, either physically or mentally. It is a very peculiar place which has its own rules, and can be more dangerous than actual reality. The Dream Kingdom is described on page 197.

SLAVES AND REBELS

THE SECRET WAY

Slaves are an enormous, if ignored, part of Tricarnian society. Little more than walking tools at the orders of their masters, the only way they have to get freedom is escaping.

The first escapes date to millennia ago, but now their number has skyrocketed.

Today, for every ten slaves brought in the Tricarnian flesh markets, at least one tries to escape. Of ten fugitives, probably three are not recaptured or die in their run toward freedom.

Freedom, for a Tricarnian slave, basically means going north. Once they reach the Brokenchain Mountains, if they are lucky enough they are found by the **Brokenchain Watch** (see below), which sends them to a mountain village where they are healed and their collar is finally broken. At this point some of them stop in the mountains, while others try to reach the coastal villages of the Slave Coast, where life is easier, due to the possibility of farming and fishing, but there it is also possible to be captured again by one of the mysterious raids happening in recent times.

But how does a slave manage to escape his master, cross a good part of Tricarnia alone and food-less and reach the mountains? The answer is simple: he cannot.

There is an underground organization, called the Secret Way, which organizes escapes, and a number of supporters, which grant help, shelter and food to the fugitives. They are often persons above suspicion: from slaves of other Citadels who hide

their comrades in empty barracks, bandits and highwaymen like the Brotherhood of the Roads, or even members of the Cult of the Dream, which often cooperates with the Brokenchain Liberators, as the members of the Secret Way are called.

The heads of the organization are, obviously, the Priests of Tosar, who risk their lives joining the slaves and aiding them in their escape. The Tricarnian lords have tried for centuries to root out this group, but the web is impalpable and is getting stronger day by day because the other slaves, even those who don't consider escaping themselves, keep quiet about the Liberators. After all, you never know when you'll need a quick way out of your master's Citadel, do you?

the words of the Priests of Tosar have great weight.

All villages send representatives to the Freemen Council (see below).

The free villages are probably among the most libertarian places to live in the Dominions, if you cope well with scarce food, frequent cold and the necessity to move away quickly if a punitive army of slave retrievers enters the mountains.

In truth, the Priest Princes enter the Brokenchain Mountains more cautiously today: the Brokenchain Watch are now well-organized, well-trained, and receive support, both in food and in weapons and tools. There are basically three sources of

THE LINKS OF THE CHAIN

Let's look more closely at the organization of the free villages. There are at least a dozen of them in the Brokenchain Mountains, not counting the clans which found an entrance into the underground caverns and dwell inside the grottoes. Clans are organized as a partial democracy: basically men and women are equal, and decisions are taken by casting votes, but in truth the able-bodied fighting-men, who compose the Brokenchain Watch, the army and rangers of the villages, which always maintains an idea of law, have the most power, and



GM's TIP: SEA RAIDERS

The mysterious raids which are depopulating the villages of the Slaves Coast are left to the GM, but if you are stuck, you can find here some ideas on their possible origin.

Ral Vastara Raiders. *Shara the Black Mistress, a renegade Amazon captain, joined Drakovor's forces some months ago. She has to prove her skill to her lord, and decided to do it by bringing him lot of slaves, directly from their houses. Her women, all skilled Amazon warriors, leave no tracks.*

Caled Attacks. *The altars of the Caled gods, in the forests on the other side of the sea, are thirsty for blood. Large war parties of Caled raiders, protected by a shroud of sorcerous fog, cross the sea on war canoes and kidnap people. They are led by a great Druid they call Spirit Walker, whatever that means.*

Beasts of the Seas and Mountains. *The creatures under the Brokenchain Mountains, the Gora (see page 223), are stirring: the newcomers, the stinking slaves, are spreading like pus in a festering wound. They must be taken, and brought in front of Those Who Sleep who will feed on their souls...*

these resources: first, the Brotherhood of the Roads gived them shares of their loot, in exchange for a secure shelter in the mountains. Second, the Cult of the Dream, apart from trying to find new followers among the freemen, gives them rice and other resources, and often Templomos offer extra backup to the freemen when they have to fight the slavers.

But the third and greatest source of resources of the free villages is the Priests of Tosar themselves. They have access to a constant flux of gold and weapons. In truth, their work in Tricarnia is covertly supported by the Smith Priests of Hulian: the Monastery of the Hammer, in the Northlands, hides a seam of gold ore and one of the destinations of this secret wealth is financing the rebellion against the Sons of Hordan.

THE FREEMEN COUNCIL

Every village of freemen is autonomous, but the former slaves soon learnt that a single village cannot stand against the might of their old masters, so the various slave groups collaborate and work in concert.

At least, this is the theory. The Freemen Council is made up of the chiefs and personalities of the various villages. They gather frequently to discuss problems and to decide strategies, in order to solve them, but sadly they aren't very united and the various leaders bicker frequently.

But let's look more closely at some of the members of the council.

Gholvar, a former Borderlands slave, is the head of the High Village, one of biggest and better armed refuges in the Brokenchain Mountains. A great part of the Brokenchain Watch is under his

orders, and he constantly quarrels with Demos (see below) on how the few resources of the slaves should be divided: in his opinion, his men, which are the shield of the rest of the communities, should have more food and weapons than the weak farmers and fishermen of the Slave Coast.

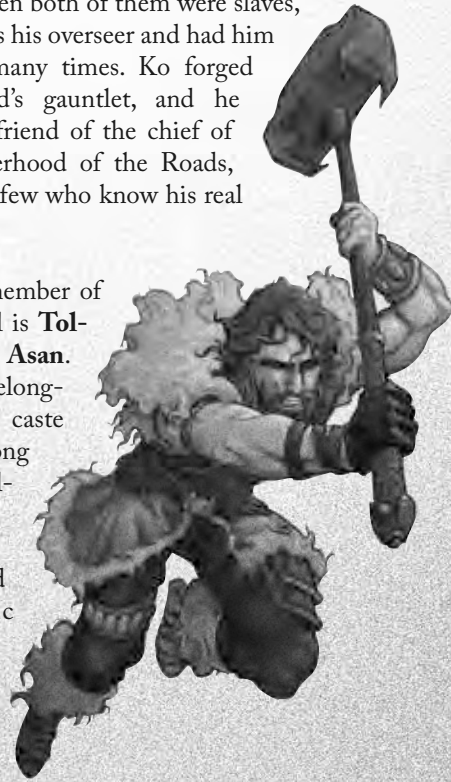
Demos could not be more different from Gholvar, as day is from night; he is a fat Eunuch, a strange find among the freemen, because usually those of his sort are more than happy to stay with their masters. Demos was the administrator of a large rice plantation, and he was a robber. Discovered, he had to choose between an ignoble life as a fugitive slave or a respectful death after long torture. He chose ignominy, and rather happily too. Despite his faults, Demos is an excellent organizer and the coastal villages are prospering under his meticulous administration. Demos is the strongest opponent of Gholvar's demands; after all, the food is grown by the hard work of the villagers, and it isn't right that it goes to warriors who stay idle all the day. In truth, Demos is continuing his thieving, and a good part of the shortage is due to the "small safety hoard" he is making for himself, by trading with the few enterprising merchants which sail to the Coast of Slaves.

Angitta is the sole woman in the Council. Her presence was initially imposed by Tosar (see below) because he wanted the weak, children, women and elders to be represented in the Council. Angritta is a tired-looking Savannah woman, still attractive despite the harshness she has endured (her two daughters were sacrificed on the Black Altar of Hordan two years ago), and is full of good sense. She constantly tries to mediate between Gholvar and Demos, knowing that both them have some right on their sides.

Tosar is the most charismatic person in the council, the one everybody respects and even fears. His true origin is unknown; a tall, lean man, full of scars, of indefinite age, his left hand is charred, consumed by fire, as was Tosar's in the legend. Head of the Priests of Tosar in the mountains, he speaks very few words and with a raspy voice. Tosar is considered by many of the freemen the incarnation of the divine Tosar, whose name he bears, and in the past he often led them in battle. In the last few years, probably feeling that his time is nearing an end, he stays in the shadows, but he is ready to intervene when the situation requires it.

Ko the Smith is a gigantic black man, with impressive looking teeth. Ko was a Cannibal of the Islands, even if he abandoned those unholy practices years ago (now he is vegetarian). Ko is the best smith of the freemen, perhaps because he is a Priest of Hulian. He supports Tosar in all his decisions, loves Angritta and feels affinity with Gholvar, but hates Demos deeply; when both of them were slaves, Demos was his overseer and had him whipped many times. Ko forged Iron Hand's gauntlet, and he is a close friend of the chief of the Brotherhood of the Roads, one of the few who know his real identity.

Another member of the council is **Tol-Van the Asan**. A slave belonging to the caste of the Long Heads, Tol-Van is a very cautious and diplomatic person,



and a Follower of the Dream. Tol-Van, given his inborn abilities, is a very logical person, even when he dreams, and offers few, but very good counsels. Officially he is only an emissary of the Dreamer, but he is more than ready to help. Sadly many of his companions, lesser Asans, Templomos and followers, are more interested in proselyting the freemen than helping them, and this has caused some attrition.

The final member of the Free Council is **Iron Hand**. The legendary bandit (see page 58), isn't a freed slave, but sympathizes with them, especially since years ago, wounded and battered, one hand reduced to reddish pulp, he was found by the Brokenchain Watch and saved. Later Ko, the smith, crafted for him a special metal gauntlet which allows him to use his damaged hand. Some of the slaves and the Priests of Tosar are convinced that Iron Hand's mutilation is a sign of Tosar, a way to mark this man as his own, but so far Iron Hand hasn't shown any religious compulsion.

SLAVES AND REBELS IN PLAY

Here follow some ideas on using Slaves and Rebels in play.

Life Among the Freemen. Freed slaves are egalitarian, but this doesn't mean that life among them is easy; the strong always prey on the weak, and this is true even in the free villages, where food is scarce and there are few guards maintaining order. In addition, characters coming from the upper echelons of society won't be welcomed by ex-slaves.

At the Council's Service. The heroes can enter the service of the Council, if they demonstrate enough skill and competence, but don't expect that every member of the Council respects them; probably they'll have to choose between Demos and Gholvar, and this will have consequences later in the campaign.

Impending Doom. The free villages are basically an outlaw community, a bunch of semi-organized ex-slaves. There is nothing, apart from the fear of their old masters and mutual needs, to keep them united. In future they could become a real nation, maybe, but for now a strong gust of wind could destroy them.



LIFE IN TRICARNIA

This chapter gives you some hints on how to add a particularly Tricarnian feel to your adventures, so that they have a different flavor from those set in other areas of the Dominions.

PEOPLE OF TRICARNIA

Tricarnia is a large land, full of very different people, and it may not be easy for the Game Master to create a character on the fly. With the following generator, like the one found in *JCT*, you can create a character concept by rolling a d20 three times. The first roll will give you a general

idea of the character type, the second will provide a personality trait (traits are the same as the Ally Personality Table of SWD) and the third, optional one, will indicate a special feature of the character, an indication of what he is doing or what he is. This last roll is purely optional and the GM can decide to skip it.

Groups of Characters. The same system can be used to quickly generate groups of similar characters. Simply roll once for the character concept, and once for each member of the group to determine their personalities. Finally, decide their Special Feature to or roll a die for the entire group (or several times if you want a variety of characters the group).

Encounters by Social Rank. The table groups together persons of the same social status. So, if you want to create a member of the low classes roll a d10, if you need

someone of middle importance, such as a petty noble or a eunuch, roll a d12+4 and finally if you want a member of high society roll a d10+10

PEOPLE OF TRICARNIA TABLE

D20	Concept	Personality	Special Feature
1	Useless Servant*	Young	Runaway
2	Farmer or Generic Worker*	Cruel	Sick
3	Caste Slave (Low)*	Old	Mercenary
4	Soldier*	Happy	Courier
5	Ranger or Hunter*	Experienced	Undercover
6	Healer *	Gung Ho	Noble House
7	Sailor or Traveler*	Lazy	Trouble
8	Guard Enforcer *	Sneaky	Secret
9	Freeman	Bright	Money Problems
10	Merchant or Artisan	Dumb	Treasure
11	Foreigner	Rough	Cult Member
12	Petty Noble or Officer	Agile	Liberator
13	Caste Slave (High)	Observant	Dreamer Cult
14	Eunuch	Clueless	Criminal
15	Artist or Musician	Mysterious	Friend in High Places
16	Lotusmaster	Creative	Madness
17	High Ranking Eunuch	Artistic	Demon
18	Priest	Fearless	Wizard's Servant
19	Sorcerer	Cowardly	Silent Hand
20	Priest Prince (with or without followers)	Heroic	Traitor

(*) This character is probably a slave.

SPECIAL FEATURE DESCRIPTIONS

Special Features are deliberately generic and a little cryptic to stimulate your imagination. Below you will find clarifications and specifications for all of them.

Courier. This character is going to deliver something to someone: he could be a

messenger, a peddler with a cargo to sell, or something similar. Usually he is in hurry.

Criminal. This character is dishonest. He can be a desperate cutthroat with an improvised blade or a cunning she-thief dressed in velvet and skilled in seduction. Whatever his nature, crime is his business.

Cult Member. This character is part of one of the cults of Tricarnia. He can be a priest or simply a follower, but his faith

has a strong impact on his behavior and his priorities.

Demon. Beware of this character! He is a demon in disguise, has a demon on his tracks, or is somewhat involved with demons.

Dreamer Cult. This character is part of or involved with the Cult of the Dreamer. He may even be a Templomos or an Asan.

Friend in High Places. This character knows someone important, and is (or thinks he is) their protégée, and constantly reminds others of this.

Liberator. This character is part of the Brokenchain Liberators or another organization secretly active in freeing the slaves. He may even be a Priest of Tosar! Note that this doesn't mean that the character presents himself as a Liberator (unless he wants to risk his neck). Probably he is disguised in some manner.

Madness. This character has lost his mind for some reason, and he isn't himself anymore. He could be a freshly awakened Sleeper or simply a slave who has seen or endured too much in his troubled existence.

Mercenary. This character can be a real mercenary fighter (for hire or under contract), or simply someone with very loose morals, open to work for whoever pays him best.

Money Problems. This character is abnormally rich or poor for his social class and status. If he is someone which is supposed to be rich (for example a noble), he is poor. If he is a slave or similar, he is strangely rich, well-fed, dressed and so on. What can be the cause?

Noble House. This character is involved in some manner with one of the Noble Houses of Tricarnia (a great or small one), and can count on its support. Optionally, the character can be in some type of trouble with the same nobles.

Runaway. This character is escaping from someone or something.

Secret. This character is hiding a secret of some sort, which may or may not be dangerous, funny or even important.

Sick. This character is suffering from some sort of illness. It can be physical, mental or even a malady of the soul (such as melancholy, which is fairly common in Tricarnia).

Silent Hand. This character is actually an agent of the Silent Hands, the spies of the High Prince of Tricarnia, obviously undercover. Is he looking for you or is it just an accident you met him?

Traitor. This character is a betrayer. He could have betrayed someone in the past (who is looking for him) or be ready to betray you, if the occasion arises. Watch your back!

Treasure. This character has something very precious with him. It can be clearly exposed or secret, and it could even be that the character himself isn't aware of the importance of what he has!

Trouble. This character is in some sort of trouble. And his problem can easily become those of the heroes.

Undercover. Whoever this character looks like, in truth he is a completely different type of person (reroll the Concept and, optionally, the Personality).

Wizard's Servant. This character is at the service of a powerful sorcerer. Beware of him, and of his master, of course.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: NALDAGO THE PIOUS

Here follows an example of this table in practice.

Needing a NPC character met on the road, the GM rolls respectively 18, 5 and 18 on the People of Tricarnia Table. The result is Priest, Experienced, Wizard's Servant. The GM decides that this man, probably of middle age, is a priest of a minor deity, with many contacts and social skills, which he uses to further the goals of his master, a powerful sorcerer in the service of Val Toraasa.

So Naldago the Pious is born. He is a gentle-looking, middle-aged man, with snow-white hair and features which reveal only a few drops of Tricarnian blood. Naldago is a priest of Aalisha, Mistress of Sorrows, and officially he travels Tricarnia looking for old songs and poetry to collect. In truth, Naldago is working for Maar-Vas, one of the most powerful mages of western Tricarnia, doing all sorts of jobs, and some spying, for him...

PLACES OF TRICARNIA

The Land of the Sons of Keron is in great part a crumbling mass of ruins, where strange echoes of the past and evil, forgotten creatures lurk in shadows. Representing this feeling during the game isn't always straightforward, so in

this section you'll find several examples of places and moods to help you design a good Tricarnian location.

Simply draw two cards from the Action Deck (or choose freely) and check the tables below. The first card represents the location itself, the second one the "mood", the special atmosphere that permeates the location, which represents an additional twist you can add to a specific place.

Note that they are very generic, so you can easily customize them.

As always, these are only suggestions and examples to create your own locales and moods.

Descriptive Atmospheres. Note that not every place in the adventure must have an Atmosphere; some of them are simply, well, places. We recommend you use the Atmosphere Rules only for important locations or when dramatically appropriate. In any case, if you prefer a "weaker" Atmosphere you can just keep the description and ignore the rules.

TRICARNIAN PLACES TABLE

Deuce – Abandoned Citadel. Many were the Citadels of Tricarnia, but the Caled Wars, the fights against neighbors and the simple extinction of noble families left them empty. A typical Tricarnian Citadel is a single, great palace, with corridors, courts and rooms all interconnected. There is no sense of separation between public and private buildings in a Citadel, because everything in it belongs to the Lord, and any people in it, from other family members to slaves, are guests of his house.

Dwellers: If the card drawn is red, the Abandoned Citadel is probably empty,

if it is black it now houses someone: runaway slaves, a crazed hermit, a nest of some (dangerous or not) creatures, or it may even be the prison of a long-forgotten demon!

Three – Gallows. Slaves sometimes need an example, and Tricarnians are masters of this art. Along the roads, or close to the borders between the territories of various lords, cages are placed where rebellious (or simply unwanted) slaves are placed, to die, or where once executed, they are left to rot and as food for wild creatures. Note that “gallows” is a generic term, the Sons of Keron can be very creative in crafting killing machines, so you can expect a variety of devices with this scope, in some cases even whole buildings.

Survivors: If the card drawn is red, when the party arrives, there is still a prisoner alive on the gallows; maybe he is starving in a cage or the gallows is slowly suffocating him, but he still has a pinch of life in him. If it is black, there are no survivors and all the prisoners of the gallows are now corpses (but this doesn't necessarily mean they are harmless!).

Four – Slave Village. Sometimes Tricarnian Lords, especially when they have large lands (or if they don't like the stink of the slaves), allow their servants to live in villages separate from the main Citadel. These place are usually very poor: a few huts and shacks, flea-ridden, built on poles in the Xalaryka, or on solid ground in the Drylands. Slaves are left more or less on their own in these places, but there is always a guard corps, led by a Eunuch Overseer, keeping the law. Despite their great poverty, slaves living in a village enjoy a greater degree of freedom than those in a Citadel.

Secret Guests: Slave villages are partially on their own and the surveillance is quite lax, so it is easy for secret guests to hide among slaves. If the card drawn is red, the village hides a group of interlopers: they can be Brokenchain Liberators, followers of the Dreamer, even bandits or Brothers of the Roads. If the card drawn is black, the village is clear and completely under the control of the local authority.

Five – Overgrown Forest/Swamp. Tricarnia, in the past, was one of the most intensively farmed areas of the Dominions, but today many of the fields are abandoned, and the wilderness has reclaimed them again. Sometimes you can still see a glimpse of the previous state of this area; an irrigation channel, an old shack, or some fruit trees devoured by swamp vines.

Wild Beasts: If the card drawn is red, the overgrown area is now the territory of some beast; maybe a single big one, or a group of small ones. It doesn't automatically mean they are dangerous. A swampy land could be inhabited by a large warthog or an overgrown orchard could be the den of a colony of black squirrels. If the card drawn is black, the piece of land is devoid of any animal life.

Six – Elevated Road. Tricarnian roads, given the nature of the land, are peculiar; they must be built so that flooding doesn't destroy them, so they are elevated. This is basically done in two ways; either building them on the top of a roadbed or as wooden catwalks built on the top of tall poles.

Road State: In the past, the Brotherhood of the Roads watched and maintained roads, but today they are on their own. If the card drawn is red, the piece of road where the characters now are is in good shape, if it is black, there is something bad

about it; it could be partially or totally destroyed, preventing travel on it, or there may be an hidden danger of some type, like rotten planks in the catwalk, which could collapse under the weight of the adventurers or of their mounts. If the card drawn is black, this piece of road is safe.

Seven – Sunken Ruins. The ground of Tricarnia is largely muddy, so if not constantly watched and reinforced, buildings tend to sink into the ground under the pressure of their own weight. This building was abandoned long ago and is suffering from that very problem. The exact nature of the structure is left to the GM: it could be a guard post, a small citadel, the rare house of a freeman or even an ancient Keronian ruin. Depending on the area the place can be only filled with mud or partially submerged by water.

Dangerous Locale: If the card drawn is black, the sinking is still going on and the place isn't safe at all. If the characters enter this place, at the worst possible moment (and maybe because of their actions) the ruins suffer another sinking episode, a minor earthquake or other cataclysmic event which potentially endangers the people inside it. If the card drawn is red, the Sunken Ruins are stable and the place isn't immediately dangerous.

Eight – Crossroad. Crossroads are traditionally a good place to build a city or other conglomeration of buildings and people, but, this being Tricarnia, that doesn't happen. But crossroads are good places to meet travelers, foreigners and, if you pay heed to the stories they are also frequented by demons, which are somewhat attracted by them.

Unexpected Encounter: Crossroads are excellent places to make encounters, even the most unexpected ones. If the

card drawn is a red, the party has a peaceful, potentially helpful encounter, for example travelling merchants, a group of Red-Touched wanderers or even a lord travelling with a small retinue of guards and servants. If the card is a black, the meeting at the Crossroad is a potentially dangerous one: the merchants aren't true merchants but disguised bandits, one of the Red-Touched is already infectious and can spread the Red Death, or finally there could be a demon somewhere!

Nine – Field. If you are in the Xalaryka or other swampy area, you are probably crossing a rice field, tended by the slaves of some Lord; on solid ground, you are in a field of grain, an orchard or even a forest where slaves cut down the precious lumber. If you continue on this road, you'll probably meet the workers of this place or their overseers sooner or later.

Prosperity: If the card drawn is red, the fields are well tended and the crops abundant. If the heroes want, they can harvest something to eat quite easily there, but this could have consequences later if they met one of the slaves or, even worse, the overseers. If the card drawn is black, the fields aren't in good shape: drought, some malady or simply the devastation of war has reduced them to little more than brambles. If the party meets someone working there they could be in need of food or desperate enough to try robbing the characters.

Ten – Bridge/Ferry. Tricarnia is a difficult land for travel, due to the swamps, but doesn't present a lot of obviously impassable obstacles. However, some swampy areas are so dangerous and certain hills so steep that bridges and ferries are quite common in the land of the Sons of Keron. Some of them are even so old that they pre-date the Fall

of the Dread Star and are built in an archaic style, which today can no longer be reproduced. A bridge or a ferry is a precious commodity for any Lord, because it can be used to raise tolls, and is a method of controlling the traffic on his land.

Bridge Status: A bridge or a ferry can be very good for an impromptu scenario, especially if it is the only way to cross a particular geographic feature. If the card drawn is a Heart, the bridge is in good shape, and controlled by a properly-constituted authority (for example the local Lord), who asks for a reasonable toll, the nature of which is left to the GM. If the card drawn is a Diamond the bridge or the ferry is controlled as above, but the toll asked is totally out of proportion, usually because the bridge's controller wants to extort a service of some sort from the passerby. If the card drawn is a Club the bridge is controlled by someone evil: bandits, a hideous monster concealed under it, or it may even be subject to a curse of some type. Crossing it won't be easy. Finally, if the card is a Spade, the bridge is destroyed or the ferry sunk,

so the party must find another way to continue their travels.

Jack – Battlefield. Tricarnia isn't a peaceful land: her history is full of wars, bloodshed and treason and a battle of some type occurred here. Depending on the place and the situation it may be the site of a very old confrontation, but still full of old weapons and creatures eating the bones of the fallen, or a very recent battlefield, where the fallen are still crying out, begging for a *coup de grace*, and the winners are looting the bodies of the dead.

Among the Fallen: A battlefield can be a very dynamic or a totally static place, depending on when the battle happened, but what it really matters is if there is already some danger for the party. If the card drawn is black, the place is quite dangerous; there may be looters and grave-robbers, carrion-eaters, the restless souls of the dead, or the battle may still be underway, if the place is still contested. On the other hand, if the card drawn is red, the place is quite safe, if somewhat spooky.



Queen – Altar. The heroes find an altar dedicated to some of the ancient deities of Tricarnia. Some of them are so old as to be only a crumbling mass of stones, covered in plants, while others are still used today and are filled with the greasy offerings the Sons of Keron make to their unholy protectors. It isn't unusual to find temples or domes built around very important altars, some of them protected by fanatical cultists.

Beware of Gods and Men. If the card drawn is a Heart, the altar is still an important place for some cult. Heroes stopping nearby, even if they don't see anybody, are probably closely watched, and any attempt at defiling the altar is severely punished. On the other hand, if they observe the proper rituals and show respect there is a good chance they will get the favor of the local population. If the card drawn is a Diamond, the altar is still active and is a powerful place of unholy magic. Characters with the Sorcery Arcane Background gain the Fast Recovery Edge while within 3" from it and receive +2 to any Sorcery roll, but their Backlash chance is raised to 1-2. If the card drawn is a Club, the altar is still in use, but by someone very evil: a sect, a powerful sorcerer, or it may even be a supernatural trap for a demon or a monster. Finally with a Spade, the altar is only what it appears to be: a stained block of stone.

King – Tower/Observatory. Tricarnians like towers. There are quite a number of them, dotting the land. Some of them are military structures, created to control the land and to see incoming enemies, while others are observatories, where astrologers of the past and the present watch the skies looking for clues about the future. Finally, some of them are the *sancta sanctorum* of sorcerers: for some reason supernatural energies flow very well in pointed

structures, and mages often exploit this peculiarity.

Lurking in the Tower. If the card drawn is a Heart, the tower is inhabited by someone potentially friendly (this doesn't necessarily mean he is a good person), if it is a Diamond the tower hides a treasure of some type, which any inhabitants (the tower can also be deserted) may or may not know about. If the card drawn is a Club the tower is occupied by someone or something hostile and malevolent. It doesn't have to be anything blatant; the worst enemy is the one who introduces himself with smiles and gifts. Finally, if the card drawn is a Spade, the tower is an empty shell, only the ruin of a forgotten place.

Ace – Citadel. Citadels are the main settlement type of Tricarnia. As explained above, Citadels are extended palaces, often veritable labyrinths of chambers, corridors and courts. Many of them are built to mirror the personalities of the owners, so you can find marvelous, elegant ones, surrounded by delicate gardens, or gloomy, horrible places with demonic servants sneaking in the shadows. Whatever their nature, they are always heavily protected, with tall walls, strong gates or, in some cases, with sorcery. Characters can expect to have some normal interactions with the persons inside; there are quarters for travelers in place of inns, and the Lord's smithy in place of shops, but you can find every place and commodity you could find in a city (although foreign wares tend to be very rare), if you have the Moons to pay and if you accept the fact that you are actually doing business with the Lord himself.

Citadel's Lord. If the card drawn is a Heart, the player characters will attract in some way the attention of the local Lord

or of some other figure of importance (the Lord's daughter, one of the main Overseers and so on). This doesn't automatically mean trouble, if for example the Lord can invite them to dine at his table, but the situation can easily turn bad. If the card drawn is a Diamond, the characters are offered the opportunity to do something lucrative in the Citadel, which can be legal (such as selling a particular cargo they have at a ludicrous price) or illegal (for example they can enter the local Temple of Hordan and notice that the statue's nipples are actually rubies). If the card drawn is a Club the characters make contact with someone or something illegal, at least under the local laws. They could be the victim of a thief, or witness an illegal act, or even be contacted by a Priest of Tosar or the Brokenchain Liberators, which can lead to serious trouble. Finally, if the card is a Spade, their stay in the Citadel is without incident, as long the party keeps a low profile.

Joker – Dream Kingdom Entrance! Draw another card, ignoring Jokers. The location contains a concealed entrance to the Dream Kingdom (see next section)!

TRICARNIAN ATMOSPHERE

TABLE

Deuce – Fear/Despair. This place is full of the metallic smell of fear. It isn't anything really tangible, it is more like an ancient echo. If a character is forced to make a Fear check here, the roll suffers an additional -2 modifier.

Three – Melancholy/Bitterness. This location is full of melancholy and bitterness. Probably someone in this place suffered deeply or longed for long time. Only very sensitive characters are affected by Melancholy, in game terms those with

Spirit d8+ or the Yellow Hindrance. These heroes, whenever they want to spend a Bennie to re-do an Attribute roll, must first make an unmodified Spirit roll (on which they cannot spend Bennies); in case of failure they cannot spend a Bennie to re-do the Attribute roll. They are still allowed to spend Bennies to Soak wounds.

Four – Miserliness/Greed. Someone in this place was very stingy or consumed by an incredible greed. Characters with the Greedy Hindrance, if they find wealth of some type (or something else they long for) must immediately make a Spirit (-2) roll (-4 if they suffer the Major version of the Hindrance). In the case of failure they become so obsessed by the need to possess it that they fall under the GM's control for the remainder of the scene. The player can make a Spirit (-2) roll after each five minutes of play (game time) to re-take control of his hero.

Five – Bloodlust/Madness. Blood ran in this place and madness spread wildly. You can feel it even now, a subtle anguish in the air trying to force you to draw your blade and wreak carnage. Characters with the Berserk Edge suffer an additional -2 to the roll to go berserk and heroes with the Bloodthirsty Hindrance automatically gain the Berserk Edge.

Six – Unseen Watcher. Pick a character at random (or a hero with the Danger Sense Edge, if present). The adventurer feels that someone or something is spying on him with malevolent eyes. This can be true or only a false impression. The character must immediately make a Spirit (-2) roll. If he fails the situation scares and unnerves him, so that he loses a Bennie, while with a success he is ready for anything, gaining a Bennie.

Seven – Impending Doom. There is a sensation of incoming disaster in this place, like when, during a storm, you can feel that lightning is about to strike. In this location only, consider any 1 on the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, as a critical failure. In addition apply the Critical Failures setting rule (see SWD page 94).

Eight – History. This place is permeated by history; from the very walls the characters feel the intensity of what happened in this place, centuries ago. Any character is allowed a Knowledge (History) roll, with a success or better they immediately remember something about the place – something potentially useful if they scored a raise, like the existence of a secret door. Characters with the Sage Edge are also allowed a Smarts (+2) roll: in the case of success, they immediately receive a Bennie for the fascination of being in such an important place.

Nine – Secret. There is a secret of some sort in this place; it can be a secret area, that no-one ever found, or this place can be the key to resolving a mystery, large or small. If the party manages to solve the mystery they must be rewarded with a Bennie.

Ten – Euphoria. This place makes the heroes feel alive. It is so ripe with energy and life that the character feels incredibly well. Characters receive +1 to Spirit rolls, in addition any Seduction attempt receives +2 to the roll.

Jack – Vengeance. This place is perfect for grim vendetta. A hero with a Death Wish or any other character trying to accomplish his vengeance in this place gains +1 to all Attribute rolls. If he manages to take his revenge, the hero is rewarded with an extra Experience Point at the end of the

session; but if he fails he is conscious of having lost the best opportunity of his life and begins the next three sessions with one Bennie less.

Queen – Ancient Love. In this place an ancient love story found its end, tragic or otherwise. Any character with the Vow Hindrance, of any type, must make a Spirit (-2) roll; in the case of success he enters into contact with the spirit of one (or both) of the lovers. Consider the lover as an Ancestor Ghost, and make a Reaction Roll to decide his or her attitude (or simply give them a suitable behavior considering the personality of the character seeing them).

King – Shameful/Proud Memories. This location, in the past, was a place where a great ignominy was committed (if the card is black) or a great deed was performed (if the card is red). Characters with the Noble (including Fallen Noble) Edge must make a Spirit roll; in the case of failure, for a location of Shaming Memories, they lose a Bennie, while with a success, in a location of Proud Memories, they receive an Edge of their choice (for which they meet the requirements) while they stay there. Any other case has no effect.

Ace – Sorcery. This place is imbued with some type of magic. For every hour the characters pass there, pick a card from the Action Deck: if it is Hearts something weird and inexplicable happens: for example objects change place, a ghostly music is heard and so on. Magic is powerful but unstable there: characters with the Sorcery Arcane Background benefit from the Wizard Edge when standing there, but any roll on the Sorcery Critical Failure Tables is made with +2.

Joker – Dream Kingdom Influence. This place receives strong emanations from the

Dream Kingdom. If the characters decide to sleep there, each of them must play out an Interlude (see SWD page 91), which is in truth a strange dream made from the adventurer's desires. Unlike the normal Interlude rules, in the middle of the dream each character must make a Spirit (-2) roll (+2 if he has the Dreaming Arcane Background); in the case of success the player can continue to describe the dream as he wishes (and he gets a Bennie at the end of it), while with a failure the GM can stop the player and continue the dream himself, transforming it into a nightmare. In this case the character loses a Bennie.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE BROKEN WALLS OF VAL NOMARA

Here follows an example of Locations and Atmospheres in play.

The GM needs an interesting location to add some spice to a journey. He draws two cards from the Action Deck, respectively a Seven of Clubs for Location (Sunken Ruins) and a Four of Hearts for Atmosphere (Greed/Misery). He decides that the party, surprised by night, finds refuge among the broken walls of Val Nomara, an ancient Citadel overrun by Caleds centuries ago. The place is partially submerged in mud, but it looks safe. While the heroes are preparing their camp in one of the halls, one of them stumbles across a pile of debris, amongst which there is a large, greenish gem! Any character with the Greedy Edge must roll against Spirit (-2) or be controlled by the GM, who decides that he jumps over the gem, to instinctively grab it, wrestling it away from everyone else! During the fight, one of the fighters is violently pushed against a pillar which collapses, causing

a small earthquake in the already-shaking palace...

THE DREAM KINGDOM

Very few people in Tricarnia know the existence of the Dream Kingdom. This doesn't mean that few of them experience it: a lot of people (and probably beasts and even plants) visit this strange realm during sleep with their minds and souls, pouring their energy into it, slowly cracking the walls of the Dreamer's supernatural prison.

THE NATURE OF THE DREAM KINGDOM

Basically the Dream Kingdom is a pocket dimension where the Demon God Tirain, Master of Cages entrapped his brother



Khalir. Characters who played *B&B #3 – Green World* have already explored a similar place. Nobody really knows if Tirain actually builds the Cages, as these pocket dimensions are called, or if he only finds them while wandering in the interstices of the universe, but what really matters is that every Cage has its own laws and rules and that Tirain can understand and master them better than any other being.

The Dream Kingdom is a closed universe, at the center of which lies Khalir, the Dreamer, in a deep slumber. The Dream Kingdom's main law is this one: while the Dreamer sleeps the Dream Kingdom exists, and while the Dream Kingdom exists, the Dreamer must sleep. This is apparently a paradox, but its actual meaning is that it is the energy of the Sleeper himself which creates his own prison. Only by adding extra energy to the equation (that of the people suffering from the Dream Fever or the members of the Cult of the Dream) will this mechanism shatter and the Dreamer be free again.

The Dream Kingdom is a place made from the psyche so it obeys symbolic laws: for the most part anything you find in it is a representation of something of the real world. This will be explained better in the Ecology section.

GETTING IN AND GETTING OUT

There are basically two ways to enter the Dream Kingdom: with your mind or with your body.

The first is the commonest way: people continuously dream. What really happens, if they have contracted the Dream Fever, is that their soul travels to the Dream Kingdom and lives there for a while. The substance of the Dream Kingdom is

reactive, so it uses the emotions, desires and fears of the sleepers to create taxing situations (both positive, like beautiful dreams, and negative, like nightmares) which grant energy to the Sleeper.

At this level, which is called Dream Sight, dreaming can be dangerous but only if the energy drain is too great, when the victim dies of Dream Fever. Luckily this is a rare event; the Cult of the Dreamer knows and teaches to its adepts how to limit the leeching process, so that they are only drained of a part of their energy.

The real danger starts when you are closer to the Dreamer; in this case your mind enters more deeply into the Dream Kingdom, and becomes part of it. For people in this state, dreams are very real; if they dream they are hit by a sword blow, their body suffers a physical shock equal to that of the dream. In certain cases, these souls remain entrapped in the Dream Kingdom for a long time, even permanently.

Asans call this process a Dream Trip and it can be really dangerous because you are actually visiting the Dream Kingdom with your full consciousness.

How can you leave this place? By awakening, of course. But this isn't simple; people in a Dream Trip cannot wake normally. You can slap them in the face or puncture them with a needle, but they don't wake up. They can wake only if they find a Door leading out of the Dream Kingdom. The exact nature of a Door varies; it can be an actual door, of some building of the Dream Kingdom, or a passage, an act or a ritual. When the people in the Trip pass through it, their will is strong enough to leave this dangerous dimension and they wake up. Usually finding one of these Doors is an adventure by itself, but persons

with the Dreaming skill can find them more easily (see sidebar).

There is another way to enter the Dream Kingdom; with the passing of time, the power of the Dream Kingdom is getting greater and greater, and its borders now touch the edges of our reality. This means that, in certain places, doors and passages exist which allow physically entry to the Dream Kingdom. Often these passages are special places: glades, mushroom circles, old towers and so on.

These physical entrances, which are called Dream Gates, may work only in one direction, or be temporary, or appear periodically (for example, only during nights of the full moon).

Once inside, the persons are treated exactly as if they were sleeping, and they must find another Dream Gate to leave; note that finding a Dream Gate is much more difficult than finding a simple Door. A Door is only a materialization of the will to wake up, while a Gate is a leak in the prison of the Sleeper, and is usually guarded and protected by some guardian or trap.

This process is called Dream Travel, and when the characters finally find out a Gate out of the Dream Kingdom, they have a surprise; they are no longer in the place where they entered, but in a totally different location.

DREAM KINGDOM SETTING RULES

Here follows a series of setting rules you can use when dealing with the Dream Kingdom.

DRAMA RULE

The basic rule is that the GM decides, when dramatically appropriate, that the characters can have contact with the Dream Kingdom (for example after a stressful experience).

DREAM SIGHT

Characters experiencing Dream Sight basically have a bad or very strong dream. When they wake up, they must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of

Fatigue. This is basically what happens when you are affected by the Dream Fever Hindrance.

DREAM TRIP

During a Dream Trip your consciousness enters the Dream Kingdom. It can be triggered by some GM events or can be handled with this rule: when a receptive character (anyone with Spirit d10+ or Dreaming d10+) sleeps, draw a card from the Action Deck; if it is a red figure, a Dream Trip may occur. The receptive character makes a Spirit or Dreaming roll, whichever is higher. With a success, he experiences a Dream Trip, for each raise up to two persons connected in some way with him (his friends, enemies or simply someone sleeping nearby) joins the Dream Trip.

Time. *Time during a Dream Trip is relative; characters can live an adventure a week long in the Dream Kingdom, but only a night of sleep will pass in reality.*

Damage. *Damage suffered in a Dream Trip is real while you are in the Dream Kingdom; any Wound you suffer in the dream becomes a level of Fatigue (which wears off after a night of solid, undisturbed sleep) in reality. The only exception is death; if you die in a Dream Trip you are dead in the real world too.*

Gear and Objects. *You enter the Dream Trip with your standard gear, unless the GM decides otherwise (for example, if you are experiencing the dream of a royal banquet, it can be assumed you enter the Dream Kingdom without weapons and armor but with fine clothes). You cannot bring anything away from the Dream Kingdom, and any object you own in reality which is lost or consumed in the Dream Kingdom is restored in reality. For example, if a Lotusmaster uses his concoctions during a Dream Trip, when he wakes up, he finds his reserves intact. The only exceptions are Dream Objects (see below).*

Gates. *Gates can be placed anywhere the GM wants. If you want to leave this to fate, draw a card from the Action Deck; if it is red, it is a safe place, if it is black, it is a dangerous place. The higher the card, the higher the level safety or danger. So a deuce of Diamonds is a not-so-safe place (a wood nearby the Citadel of an evil lord), while a Jack of Clubs is somewhere very dangerous (the armoire of the bedroom of the same lord). Jokers work as per their color, but in addition characters get a Bennie.*

DREAM TRAVEL

In Dream Travel it is the physical body of the person which enters the Dream

Kingdom. From this moment on, whatever he is dreaming is reality.

Time. *Time can flow a little differently from reality, if the GM wants, but it need not. Usually time passes on a one-to-one ratio.*

Damage. *Any damage suffered in the Dream Kingdom is absolutely real.*

Gear and Objects. *You enter the Dream Realm with what you have on your back, if you lose, consume or destroy something, it is lost forever, as in reality. Objects found in the Dream Kingdom cannot usually be brought back to reality, apart from Dream Objects (see below).*

DREAM OBJECTS

These particular items exist in both dimensions: the reality and the Dream Kingdom. Usually they are imbued with strong emotions: for example, a personal heirloom or a powerful relic. The status of a Dream Object is decided by the GM. Note that a Dream Object can only be "moved" between realities through Dream Trips and Dream Travel (Dream Sight isn't enough).

THE DREAMING POWER

Characters with the Dreaming skill have several advantages in the Dream Kingdom.

First, they can use Dreaming, reduced by one die step, in place of Fighting, Shooting, Survival, Throwing or Tracking. After all, they are on their turf here, and their imagination can be used in place of their real skill.

Second, a character with the Dreaming skill can sense the presence of a Door or a Gate with a Dreaming (-2) roll, if it is within Spirit x 100 yards.

ECOLOGY

The Dream Kingdom basically follows three rules: it is representative, malleable and symbolic.

Representative means that, since it is shaped by the imagination of the Dreamer himself and the people entering it, it basically resembles our world: it has ground, sky, plants, animals, people and so on. At a first sight, it *could* resemble the real world.

But the Dream Kingdom is also malleable: it shapes and re-shapes itself continuously, according to the imaginations of the Dreamer and the visitors. Some places tend to be more solid, such as the Black Castle (see Personalities and Places), but others change continuously. For this reason even a frequent visitor has problems finding his

way in the Dream Kingdom. Further, the Dream Kingdom doesn't seem to have any real boundaries: nobody truly knows how big it is, probably it expands and contracts as much as it needs to contain visitors.

The third fundamental rule is that the Dream Kingdom is symbolic: many of its features are psychological representations of something in the mind of someone. One of the characters is paranoid? Probably the trees of the forest the group is crossing in the Dream Kingdom are black and shady and some of them have eyes, which occasionally open to spy on the party.

Once you learn the trick it is simple, but in the Dream Creatures sidebar you'll find several examples of how to create suitable monsters and characters.



DREAM CREATURES

Creatures of the Dream Kingdom pose no problem on the rules side, you can easily tweak an existing one with some minor alterations, but they can give some problems on the flavor side. To help you with this, you can pick an existing creature (a human NPC, an animal, a plant or an inanimate object) and then pick a Card from the Action Deck and apply one of the Dream Tweaks below. Note that as always these are only suggestions to stimulate your imagination and help you to create your own.

Dream Creatures Tweak Table

Deuce – Fear Monger. *The creature causes Fear! If it already has this Special Ability, it is enhanced (apply a -2 to the Fear Check). In addition, if the card drawn is black the creature also feeds on fear: while someone is under the effect of its fear (Nausea/Panic counts), the creature raises one Trait of the GM's choice by one die step (as per the boost trait Power). If it provokes a permanent fear effect (like the Mark of Fear entry on the Fear Table), the increase is permanent.*

Three – Hybrid. *The creature is a hybrid, such as a beast-human or a plant-animal. This has a somewhat stronger effect than Different Realm (see below). Pick the profile of one of the two creatures making up the hybrid (if the card is red pick the stronger one, if it is black pick the weaker one), raise two Attributes at random by one die step and lower another two in the same manner. In addition change the Smarts type; if it is animal (A) it becomes human, if it is human it becomes animal (A).*

Four – Language Modification. *Language has a strong symbolism in dreams. If the creature can normally speak, now it can't; instead it emits sounds and growls like an animal, while if it normally cannot speak, this specimen can. Note that the ability to speak, in the Dream Kingdom, doesn't necessarily change the intelligence of the subject.*

Five – Different Realm. *The creature has something belonging to another realm of creatures; for example, an animal has a plant feature (perhaps leaves), a plant has an animal feature (e.g. eyes), or an object has a living feature (for example sweat). In game terms you can give it one of the following modifications, depending on the card suit, if they make sense in your concept of the creature. For Spades lower an attribute of choice by a die step and raise another one, with Hearts raise Spirit by one die step, for Diamonds give Armor +1 and for Clubs give an additional natural attack (Str+d4, doesn't cause multi-action penalties).*

Six – Minor Cosmetic Effect. *The creature is only slightly different from the real counterpart. No rules changes apply.*

Seven – Major Cosmetic Effect. *The creature is really weird. It has a major cosmetic effect which makes it strange in some way. If the card drawn is red, it is strangely attractive and gains +1 to Charisma, if it is black, it is disgusting or repulsive and suffers -1 Charisma.*

Eight – Sexual Mutation. *Sex has a great importance in dreams, and this creature has a sexual feature which is overdeveloped (if the card is red) or underdeveloped (if it is black). This doesn't automatically have a game effect, but if you want, you can add a modifier (your choice if positive or negative) to the Persuasion skill (limited to seduction attempts) or a Habit Hindrance, left to the GM and probably sexually connected. If you prefer to avoid mature themes in your games, consider this entry a Major Cosmetic Effect.*

Nine – Lost Soul. *The creature doesn't belong to the Dream Kingdom: it is a traveler, like the characters, but something happened to it. If the card drawn is a Club, the creature is trapped in another form (draw another card), only when killed will it turn back to its original state and be free. If it is a Diamond, the creature lost its memory (it also has the Outsider Hindrance), but it should be possible to help it. If it is a Heart, the*

creature is lost, but looking for a friend, and could become an Ally of the party. If the card drawn is a Spade the situation is even more complex; the creature looks like a dweller of the Dominions, but in truth it is originally of the Dream Kingdom; it will assume its real shape after being killed. If it tries passing through a Gate or a Door it disappears.

Ten – Need and Greed. This creature is the embodiment of one of someone's needs or greed; lust, desire for wealth, vengeance and so on. A character staying with it for more than 2d6 minutes must make a Spirit roll or gain a mental Hindrance the creature has (the most typical are: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty, Death Wish, Greedy, Habit). If the character already has that Hindrance, it worsens to the Major version, if possible. The Hindrance disappears naturally when the creature goes away: the character is allowed a Spirit roll each hour to get rid of it, but, if he scores a critical failure, it becomes permanent.

Jack - Size. This creature can be really large or small! Roll a d4 (which can ace). If the card drawn is black consider the result as a penalty to the actual Size (so if you roll 3, the creature suffers -3 to its Size), if it is red the creature has a bonus to Size. Apply the Small/Large/Huge/Gargantuan Special Abilities as normal.

Queen – Hive Mind. The creature is only a mindless drone, part of a hive. It is automatically an Extra, with Smarts reduced by two die steps (minimum d4). While the creature is within range of the Hive Queen (a Wild Card specimen, with four Bennies), it can use the Smarts of the Queen and benefits from her Bennies. Drones are immune to fear and any other mental effect.

King – Natural Magic. This creature is magical by itself! The exact nature of its powers is left to the GM, but depending on the suit of the card drawn several configurations are possible.

NATURAL MAGIC TABLE

Suit	As*	PP**	NoP**
Clubs	d6	10	4
Diamonds	d8	15	3
Hearts	d10	20	2
Spades	d12	25	1

*Arcane skill

**Power Points

***Number of Powers

Ace - Clone. The creature is a copy of someone or something one of the player characters has seen or knows! The suit of the card determinates its real abilities and attitude, as per the table below. By Relative Strength we mean how much stronger or weaker it is comparing it to the original one (usually a combination of three die steps in Attributes and/or Edges, more or less), while by Attitude we mean its behavior toward the player characters (as per the Reactions Table of SWD page 26); for example, if the original was Friendly, and you draw a Club, it is Uncooperative. Neutral remains Neutral.

CLONE TABLE

Suit	Relative Strength	Attitude
Club	Weaker than Original	Opposite of Original
Diamond	Stronger than Original	Opposite of Original
Heart	Stronger than Original	Same as Original
Spade	Weaker than Original	Same as Original

Joker – Really Weird! The creature is really strange, draw two other cards and try mixing the effects.

PERSONALITIES AND PLACES

As explained above, the Dream Kingdom is an ever-changing place, but there are some features in the chaos which are more or less stable.

The first one is a place, the **Black Castle**. This structure can appear beautiful or horrible, changing from moment to moment, but it is always in the middle of the Dream Kingdom. It contains the Dreamer, or at least a representation of his physical body, in the form of the Lord of the Castle, a creature which has a fraction of the Demon's spirit. The castle is a dangerous place, watched over by the **Castle Guardians**, monsters of various sizes and types; the shape they prefer is that of large flying humanoids, similar to gargoyles, armed with spears, axes and other similar weapons. On occasion, these creatures kidnap travelers in various parts of the Dream Kingdom and bring them to the Lord of the Castle.

Among the servants of the Black Castle, there is one everybody fears: the **Snake of Dreams**. It is an enormous Lhoban Dragon, which can turn invisible, and seems to have a strange love-hate relationship with the Lord of the Castle. In truth, this is the spirit of Laobeng, the Dreamer's Voice, forced to serve his master in this world.

Another creature feared throughout all the Dream Kingdom is the **Boar King**. An enormous, hideous boar, it appears to be a King of Beasts, but a very peculiar one. Always foaming at the mouth, it is constantly chased by a pack of pitch black mastiffs, which also are in the service of the Black Castle. The Boar King, in truth, is the spirit of Jestiriel, who totally lost himself in this realm.

A third unique creature of this realm is the **Three-Legged Ibis**, a mysterious creature with three eyes and three legs, which, legends say, can find any Door or Gate in the Dream Realm. It is commonly known that the Lord of the Castle will pay an enormous reward for whoever brings him this beast.

GM TIP:

A NOTE OF CAUTION

The Dream Kingdom is a very powerful device in the hands of the GM, allowing him to make the players live out very weird adventures. Visiting imaginary, misty realms is also a staple of the Sword and Sorcery genre, but you must be very careful not cross the line into absurdity. Sword and Sorcery dream realms should be mysterious, strange and full of wonder, but with a grounding in realism. If you are doing an Alice in Wonderland Dream Kingdom scenario, you probably are walking outside the genre.

Note that this is perfectly fine, if your party enjoys it.

ADVENTURES IN THE DREAM KINGDOM

The Dream Kingdom is basically "a world within a world"; it is a powerful tool for the GM because it allows the creation of incredible escapades of fantasy, changing the tone of the campaign deeply. It is a place full of mystery and wonder and the players could have a number of reasons for visiting it; simple survival (if they are trapped in it), looking for something or

someone (some really incredible relics can be hidden in this place), or even because of a powerful way to influence the real world (for example, once a specific Gate is discovered, the party can decide to use it to move an army through it, catching enemies unaware).

The possibilities are endless...

DANGERS OF TRICARNIA

Tricarnia's nature can be even more deadly than some of its dwellers. In this section you'll find some illness and poisons typical of these cursed lands: beware of where you put your feet and what you eat!

BAACHAGA'S EYES

These small, apparently harmless frogs are usually found only in the remotest swamps of Tricarnia. They owe their name to the peculiar pattern of their skin, which is covered by small pustules very similar to human eyes. These pustules are full of a rare psychotropic substance, which makes them highly sought-after by followers of Baachaga, who use them in their holy rituals. Because the dose of toxin contained in a single frog is small, there are basically two ways to be influenced by them: the first is eating one or more raw (the customary Baachagan ritual), the second is finding a swarm of these beasts, and being touched by dozens of them in few moments (basically when a character is caught under the template of a Swarm made of Baachaga's Eyes).

In both cases, the character must make a Vigor roll with -1 per additional frog eaten or per additional round passed in the

swarm. In case of failure, draw a card from the Action Deck and check the results below. The effect lasts for 1d4 hours (2d6 with a critical failure).

Clubs – Tremendous Visions! The character experiences a really bad trip, his drugged mind gives him horrible visions; he must immediately make a Fear (-4) roll. In addition, he suffers -2 to Fear Checks till the effects of the frogs wear off.

Hearts – Insatiable Lust! The character is caught by an incredible sexual appetite, and will try to approach any suitable partner present! He will probably forget all about this when the effect of the drug wears off. He can be kept at distance with an opposed Persuasion or Intimidation roll, but if either of the two sides roll a 1 on the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, he gets violent!

Diamonds – Visions of the Future. The character experiences a prophetic vision, as if he had cast the *divination* Power, on a subject decided by the GM.

Spades – Expand The Mind. The affected person temporary acquires the Sorcery skill at d4 (or increases the skill by two die steps if he already has it). Note that if he doesn't know a Power or have access to it (see page 106) he cannot effectively use the skill, apart from making cooperative rolls with another mage.

Joker– The Many Shapes of Baachaga.

The character experiences the full power of Baachaga, the capability of shifting form! For the duration of the intoxication, he gains the *shape change* (any creature he has seen) Power, with 20 Power Points. He uses Vigor as the arcane skill, but if he rolls a 1 on the skill die, he must immediately roll on the Incapacitation table at -4 (see

SWD page 68) because the system shock will likely kill him.

BLACK WHISPERER

This fat, black, worm, long as a finger, is usually found in the stomach of dead warthogs. They are quite rare and harmless, unless you swallow one alive (a thing that you wouldn't do willingly).

In this case the small beast, animated by a feeding frenzy, digs into the stomach wall of the victim, reaches the spine, and grabs it. From this moment on, the victim loses a Vigor die step and becomes a slave of the animal, which drives him to satisfy its basic needs (mainly eating a lot). The parasite is very dangerous over the long term, and the host must make a Vigor roll each week or lose another die step of Vigor. If this reduces it below d4, he dies.

The only known way to remove the parasite is by a surgical intervention, which given the medical standards of the Dominions is quite risky; it requires a Healing (-4) roll and each point of failure causes a non-Soakable Wound to the victim.

Black Whisperers are nasty, but the greatest danger comes from the fact that certain Lotusmasters know a particular concoction (which is a trapping of the *puppet* Power), called Onyx Lotus of the Worm. It works in this way: the worm is slightly wounded, thrown into the potion and then recovered. At this point the Lotusmaster drinks the disgusting liquid, while the worm, still alive, is forced down the throat of the poor victim. The effect is that the victim, through the worm, is now under the permanent control of

the Lotusmaster, until the parasite is removed...

RED PLAGUE

The Red Plague is probably one of the most feared maladies of the Dominions. A Vigor roll to avoid contagion is required in the following circumstances: breathing the Red Wind (+2, one roll per hour), drinking or eating infected substances (-4) or being in contact, wounded or Shaken by a wounding effect by a sick person (0 for Shaken and being in contact, -1 per Wound taken). If the roll fails the character is ill and the malady begins. This is a Dramatic Task, based on Vigor (-4), rolling once per day. During this period the patient is feverish, covered in pustules and infectious. Check the table below for the effects.

RED PLAGUE EFFECTS TABLE

Successes	Effect
2 or less	<i>Atrocious Death.</i> The victim dies in excruciating pain.
3	<i>Red Bringer.</i> The victim recovers, but turns into a wretched creature, a Red Bringer (see page 223).
4	<i>Red-Touched.</i> The victim recovers, but suffers from the Red-Touched Hindrance. A life of suffering awaits him.
5	<i>Immunity.</i> The victim not only recovers, but becomes immune to the Red Plague!



CREATURES OF TRICARNIA

This chapter details several beasts and creatures typical of the land of the Sons of Keron.

BEASTS

Animals can be really dangerous in Tricarnia. Here you'll find some of the nastier ones.

BALKOTH

A Balkoth, or War Beast, is sort of cross between a lion and an enormous dog, with a long muzzle with a curved horn on it, like a rhinoceros, and small bone spikes protruding from its joints, in particular the elbows. Balkoths probably have a demonic origin, and were used in ancient Keron as the battle mounts of Priest Princes and great warriors. Some specimens survived

and today still exist in Tricarnia, both wild and tamed. In truth the difference isn't that great: a Balkoth, regardless of whether it was raised in captivity or grew up free, is extremely ferocious (you cannot approach one in any manner during the mating season) and attacks on sight. There are only two ways to break a Balkoth: the first one is wrestling the beast into submission, the second is enchanting him with a Balkoth Crystal, a particular stone which has a strange influence over the beast (see sidebar).

Today probably less than one hundred trained Balkoth exist in Tricarnia, but owning and controlling one of these beasts makes a warrior a fearful force on the battlefield.

Characters with the Beast Rider Edge can take a Balkoth as companion, but only if they also have sufficient Rank. They are considered Heroic creatures for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power, but the

BALKOTH TAMING

Balkoth are extremely fierce beasts, and even if tamed, they only obey their master and recognize no other authority. There are basically two ways to break a Balkoth:

Force it to Submit. *This requires the would-be master to wrestle the beast in unarmed combat, one to one. The man must make non-lethal attacks, while the beast uses all its strength. If the tamer manages to inflict three Wounds, the Balkoth breaks and accepts him as its master for life. The only thing that can make a Balkoth betray its master is a Balkoth Crystal (see below). A Balkoth can only be tamed this way once in its life, and only before it reaches adulthood (three years).*

Balkoth Crystal. *These strange black crystals are found in the Red Desert or, very rarely, in the Brokenchain Mountains (the latter ones have a milky color). A free Balkoth seeing a Balkoth Crystal within 6", must make a Spirit (-4) roll or fall under the control of the crystal's owner, as per the puppet Power. The roll must be repeated every round, till the beast fails. The effect is permanent: in narrative terms the Balkoth's soul is entrapped in the gem. A Balkoth's Crystal can only store the soul of a single Balkoth, and, if the beast dies, the Crystal is considered depleted and cannot be used anymore.*

caster must own a Balkoth Crystal, even a depleted one, to summon such a beast.

Balkoths are Henchmen.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d8

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities

- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Demon Sniffing:** A Balkoth has a supernatural ability to find demons, even in a false shape. It can follow their scent with a Tracking roll and it can make an opposed roll, pitting its Notice (+4) versus the demon's Persuasion, to identify a disguised one. Balkoth hate demons.
- **Furious Growl:** A Balkoth can growl to scare enemies. This counts as an Intimidation roll, made against any enemy in a MBT centered on the Balkoth.
- **Loyal Fighter:** A Balkoth used as a mount is also a fighting companion. Both he and his rider receive +1 to attack rolls as per the Gang Up modifier.
- **Pounce:** A Balkoth can pounce against an enemy to rend him with its sheer weight and razor-sharp claws. It can leap 1d6" to gain +4 to attack and damage rolls against an opponent. It suffers -2 to Parry till its next action however.
- **Size +3:** A Balkoth is smaller than a horse, but much sturdier. It can easily carry a fully-armored man and a passenger on his back.

GIANT LEECH

Leeches are common in Tricornia, which is mostly swampy, and the Sons of Keron have a number of uses for them. Tricornians use slaves to "fish" leeches, this being one of the worst chores a servant can be assigned, because it means being

thrown in leech-infested waters and being retrieved covered in these nasty creatures.

While small leeches (apart from a couple of exceptions) are relatively harmless, there are several species of giant leeches that, because of their size, are really dangerous to man. The stats below refer to a standard, giant water leech, but other varieties exist (see sidebar on next page).

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** A Giant Leech swims very quickly, and has Pace 8 in water.
- **Leech:** Str+d6. The typical attack of a Giant Leech consists of "grappling" the victim with its body and then sucking his blood. In game terms, any character hit by a Giant Leech is considered grappled and suffers automatic Leech damage (Str+d6) until he breaks free by winning a Strength (-4) opposed roll, which can be cooperative. Attacking a Leech attached to a victim is quite dangerous for the victim, if the attacker rolls a 1 he hits the victim instead of the monster.

LAZARTAS

Lazartas are cloaked in mystery: the word itself, meaning "lizard," doesn't belong to any known language; it isn't Keronian, Imperial or even Valk, but since the Lazarta Jungle was discovered by the first Tricornians, it has always been used to identify the various types of reptilians dwelling in it.

Lazartas probably aren't a single race, but a broad family of cold-blooded creatures which survived the passing of eras in some manner and were then mutated by the appearance of Lotus, millennia ago.

LEECH SPECIES

These unpleasant beasts exist in several varieties in Tricarnia, each of them with its own peculiarities. Here follows a list of the commonest ones.

Blackspine Leech. *Leeches are invertebrates, lacking any spine or bone. This is true in general, but not for this particular creature, which has a central bone, similar to the spine of snake, ending in a stinger, full of paralyzing poison. Use the Giant Leech profile adding a Stinger attack (Str+d4) which causes the injection of a Paralyzing Poison (see SWD page 89).*

Blood Tear Leeches. *These water leeches are very tiny, the size of a human finger, but they are deadly because of their appetite for blood and their sheer numbers. They owe their name to the intense red hue they assume after feeding. These beasts move in large swarms, and assault beasts and people foolish enough to cross their hunting grounds. In game terms, use the Swarm profile, but the damage caused is 2d6.*

Ground Leech. *A big, fattish creature, a Ground Leech lives among the bamboos, tall weeds and similar moist areas. It is a little faster than a standard Leech (Pace 5), but cannot swim, and is considerably stronger (raise Strength and Vigor by one die step).*

Leaf Leech (or Dead Man's Collar). *This Leech is big as a cat, more or less (Size-2, Strength d4), and lives camouflaged on the branches of trees. When a suitable prey passes under it, it drops on it and starts sucking. While only a nuisance for big beasts, like warthogs and swamp cows, they can be really dangerous for men, because they have the habit of falling on the neck (Called Shot -4, penalty offset by the Drop) and, in case of success, strangling the victim (consider this a Grapple attack with +4 to both opposed rolls to break free and to damage).*

Vorak Leech (or Mantis Leech). *Stories say that these monsters are the offspring of one of the many deranged experiments Jestiriel conducted in the depths of Nal Nomantor, twisting normal beasts with the powers of Lotus. Whatever their origin these creatures are quite big (Size+1), covered in a thick, gum-like skin (Armor+1) and fitted with two dorsal appendages similar to mantis claws (Str+d6, Reach 2, can make two attacks per round without penalties). They are really horrible to see (provoke Fear) but their mouth is quite small, and given the poor mobility of the creature, unfit for combat (remove the Leech Monstrous Ability).*

Whatever their differences all of them share some common elements: they are scaly, cold-blooded and basically serpentine. In addition they are very susceptible to music and songs, as Tovakor, the Lord of Scales, discovered. Probably without the existence of these strange creatures the story of Tricarnia would have been different. Here follow examples of some of the commonest types.



TYRANT

Very few people have seen a Tyrant Lazarta and survived to tell the story. These beasts are almost legendary: big as houses, they are basically enormously long snakes with huge leathery wings and a couple of claws. Apart from their sheer mass and ferocity, nature gifted Tyrants with a huge membranous sac, placed in the gorge, filled with a strong acidic substance they can split. A person hit by this deadly substance turns into a bubble of reddish pulp in few minutes.

Tyrants are very rare but there are rumors that a few of them, an entire nest, can be found in the Lazar Caldera. Stories say that Tovakor's chosen Lazarta, Skyviss, was a Tyrant, as probably is Karos, the Lazarta of Lord Drakovor (see page 61).

Characters with the Beast Rider Edge can take a Tyrant as companion, but only if they also have the Blood of Tovakor Edge and sufficient Rank. They are considered a Legendary creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

The following stats represent a young one, available to a Beast Rider character. For elder beasts increase Size accordingly (up to +9).

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 15(3)

Special Abilities

• **Acid Spitting:** Tyrants spit venomous acid using the Cone Template. Any character hit by the cone must make an Agility (-2) roll or be hit by the acid, suffering 2d8 damage for three consecutive rounds. A Tyrant cannot spit in the same round he attacks with bite and claws.

• **Armor +3:** Tyrants' skin is hard as iron armor.

• **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6. The beast can attack with both bite and claws in the same round, without any penalty, but he cannot use Acid Spitting in the same round.

• **Fear -2:** These beasts are terrifying. Any character seeing a Tyrant must make a Fear (-2) roll.

• **Flight:** Tyrants fly at Pace 12, with Climb 0.

• **Large:** Tyrants are very big and attack rolls against them are made at +2.

• **Size +5:** Tyrants are huge beasts, with long serpentine bodies at least twenty feet long and thick as tree trunks.

• **Weakness (Acid Sac):** The Tyrant's venomous sac is quite visible and vulnerable. If a character manages to hit it, with a Called Shot (-4) it has only Toughness 7 (2). After suffering a Wound, the sac breaks, releasing an acid shower (see above for damage) to whoever is in a SBT, but from this moment on the Tyrant cannot use the Acid Spitting ability.

• **Weakness (Music):** Lazartas are very sensitive to music and songs, and receive -2 to the opposed roll against any power based on music.

QUETZAL

Quetzals are small snakes, similar to vipers, fitted with a pair of wings, which makes them good fliers. These beasts

are very dangerous: they usually stay coiled around the branches of trees, and dive down when they find prey; usually mice and insects, but they aren't shy of attacking bigger beasts, like rabbits or even badgers. They have a poisonous bite, and their poison is really dangerous. They are very intelligent and curious beasts, even playful, but very short-tempered.

Characters with the Beast Master Edge can take a Quetzal as companion, but only if they also have the Blood of Tovakor Edge. They are considered a Seasoned creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str.
- **Poison:** The Quetzal's bite delivers a Lethal (-2) poison. Given the small size of the beast, after a bite at least one hour must pass before the poison can be used again. Quetzal poison is a strong hallucinogenic too (see sidebar).
- **Flight:** Quetzals fly at Pace 6, with Climb -2.
- **Quick:** Quetzals are very fast. They may discard Action Cards of 5 or lower. They must keep the replacement card, however.
- **Size -2:** Quetzals are very small.
- **Weakness (Music):** Lazartas are very sensitive to music and songs, and receive -2 to the opposed roll against any power based on music.

SNAPPER

Snappers are bipedal saurians, from three to five feet tall, and with a long, thick tail that they use for balance while walking

and a pair of three-fingered claws they can use with surprisingly skill; hunters of the Lazarta Jungle report that these damned beasts have learned how to open the doors of their huts, making no place secure.

They have a spotted body, natural camouflage in jungles, and massive, strong jaws. Snappers are ferocious hunters, and their jaws can tear away a man's arm with ease; they usually hunt in packs of three to six, which communicate through high-pitched shrieks.

Characters with the Beast Master Edge can take a Snapper Lazarta as a companion, but only if they also have the Blood of Tovakor Edge. They are considered a Seasoned creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Tracking d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6(1)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Thick hide.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Camouflage:** Snappers receive +2 to Stealth rolls while in jungle or heavily-forested areas.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Snap!:** Snappers can make two attacks per round, one with bite and one with claws, without penalty; or alternatively they can attempt a Snap, a very strong bite, causing Str+d6 damage with AP 2.
- **Weakness (Music):** Lazartas are very sensitive to music and songs, and receive -2 to the opposed roll against any power based on music.

HERO'S JOURNAL:

QUETZAL POISON

Victims of Quetzal poison endure an incredible experience, during which they see strange visions, and they usually die of a massive sensory overload.

In smaller doses, it is a powerful yet subtle hallucinogenic, highly sought by Lotusmasters. A dose can be recovered from a dead beast with a Lotusmastery or Survival roll; the same can be done from a live specimen with -2 to the roll (no penalty if the beast is tamed). For each success and raise a dose of poison is extracted, which can be used as is or as Refined Lotus granting +2 to any opposed rolls on powers with a mind-affecting trapping.



SWAMP SHARK

Swamp Sharks are probably a monstrous evolution of Giant Leeches, but given their peculiarity, are treated as separate creatures. These beasts are a cross between a giant leech and a water snake. They can grow very long, up to six yards. They have six vestigial fins, which have evolved into claws they use to "paddle" on water, being floating creatures. But the real thing that makes this monster dangerous is the mouth: a sort of reddish hole of flesh, surrounded by a crown of dagger-long teeth. The monster is capable of raising up on its spine and delivering a terrible bite, which in certain cases swallows the whole victim. The slaves of the rice fields fear these beasts over any other one, and call them "Lashatur", which means "Beast that Devours."

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic Ambushers:** Swamp Sharks float on water at the slow Pace of 5, but they are naturally silent in their movement, so they are considering to be using Stealth. When discovered, they are capable of short bursts of amazing speed, using the coils of their body as an enormous spring. They can "run" on water, rolling a d12 as their Running die, but after doing this for one round they must move at half Pace for a whole round, contracting all their coils again.

- **Armor +3:** Swamp Sharks have a very thick and gummy skin, making them impervious to almost any attack.

- **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 2, Reach 3. Ignores Parry bonus from shields. If the monster hits with a raise, it has swallowed the target! The victim suffers 3d6 damage per round, but it can break free by prying open the jaws of the monster - this requires winning an opposed Strength roll with the monster, with the victim rolling at -2.

- **Fear:** Seeing an attacking Swamp Shark for the first time is a terrible experience, and requires a Fear check.

- **Large:** Due to their size, attack rolls against Swamp Sharks are made at +2.

- **Size:** +4: Swamp Sharks are very long and weigh up to two tons.

- **Weakness (Soft Belly):** This evil bastard is armored and tough, but has a soft spot: the belly. Hitting this isn't easy, but there are at least two ways to do it. First, a character can swim under the monster and attack him from this awkward position (use the lower of Fighting and Swimming dice) or he can wait until the monster rises up to bite and strike it in that moment! This is done by staying on Hold and interrupting the Swamp Shark. The attack, in both cases, is made without any penalty, ignores the creature's Armor, and deals double damage.

HERO'S JOURNAL: SWAMP SHARK TROPHIES

This beast is dangerous and evil, but the carcass is prized by hunters.

Swamp Shark Leather. *The skin of the monster is tough, strong and surprisingly light. It can be used to craft Light or Medium Armor which weighs only 50% normal. Skinning the beast is done with a Survival roll, which can be cooperative. For each success and raise the character retrieves enough material for a full suit of armor, which can be used directly (see Crafting below) or sold for 500 Moons.*

Swamp Shark Teeth. *These nasty things can be used to make razor sharp daggers or arrowheads (+1 damage to both). They can be recovered with a Survival roll, with each success and raise a batch of teeth is recovered, which is enough for a single dagger or up to five arrows. They can be used directly or sold for 300 Moons.*

Crafting. *To craft an item, use the Crafting rules found in the Trollhunt adventure or otherwise a Dramatic Task based on Repair, which requires the possession of at least an Armorer's kit. If the character scores at least three successes, he crafts the item.*

YALARUKA

Yalaruka are a particular sub-species of Shadow Bats, which dwell exclusively in the Teeth of Night, the black stone islands surrounding Ral Hordaka. They are somewhat smaller than typical Shadow Bats of the Brokenchain Mountains, but much more ferocious. The Hordakans have used them for centuries as war mounts, bringing fear and ruin to the battlefield.

These beasts are vampires, and their main food is blood, both animal and human, a habit they share with their cruel masters.



GREATER YALARUKA

This beast is strong enough to carry a fully armored man on its back and a human-sized prey in its claws at the same time.

Characters coming from Ral Hordaka with the Beast Rider Edge can take a Greater Yalaruka as mount, if they meet the Rank requirement. These heroes will probably belong to the dreaded Nightriders.

A Greater Yalaruka is a Heroic creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

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

Special Abilities

- **Bat Senses:** Yalaruka ignore all darkness penalties.

- **Bite:** Str+d6

- **Blood Frenzy:** A Yalaruka smelling blood (within 12" of it) becomes frenzied, receiving +2 to damage and attack rolls, but it becomes uncontrollable (-2 to any Riding roll from his rider).

- **Bloodsucking Beasts:** Yalaruka usually attack with their claws, but if they score a raise on the Fighting roll this means they managed to grab their opponent and bite him! In this case the victim is automatically grappled and suffers bite damage. The prey can try to break free during his action, by winning an opposed Strength roll. In the case of failure he automatically suffers bite damage.

- **Claws:** Str+d4.

- **Fear:** Characters seeing a Yalaruka for the first time must make a Fear check.

- **Flight:** Yalaruka fly at Pace 12, with Climb 0.
- **Size +2:** Yalaruka are equivalent in size to a warhorse.
- **Weakness (Light and Sound):** Yalaruka are very susceptible to strong sounds and flashes of light. They subtract 2 from opposed rolls against light - or sound-based attacks and have the same penalty to recover from Shaken effects caused by light or sound.

LESSER YALARUKA

Sages debate if these dog-sized vampire bats are a different race from the Greater Yalaruka or only dwarf individuals. Hordakans ceased to ask themselves that question centuries ago and now they use these creatures as hunting and war companions. These beasts are ferocious and loyal toward their masters, and silent as shadows.

Characters coming from Ral Hordaka can take a Lesser Yalaruka as a pet if they have the Beast Friend Edge.

A Lesser Yalaruka is a Novice creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities

- **Bat Senses:** Yalaruka ignore all darkness penalties.
- **Bite:** Str+d4. If a Lesser Yalaruka hits with a raise, it means it managed to grab the opponent and plant its vampire teeth in a vein, draining his blood. The victim is considered grappled and suffers automatic bite damage unless he breaks free winning an opposed Strength roll.
- **Blood Frenzy:** A Yalaruka smelling blood (within 12" of it) becomes frenzied, receiving +2 to damage and attack rolls, but it becomes uncontrollable (its master

must win an opposed Spirit roll to make the beast obey his commands).

- **Flight:** Lesser Yalaruka fly at Pace 6, with Climb 0.
- **Size -1:** Yalaruka are big as dogs, but with a wingspan of three feet.
- **Weakness (Light and Sound):** Yalaruka are very susceptible to strong sounds and flashes of light. They subtract 2 to opposed rolls against light - or sound-based attacks and have the same penalty to recover from Shaken effects caused by light or sound.

HERO'S JOURNAL:

THE DEATH SHADOWS

Usually Greater Yalaruka live around twenty years and grow big as horses. But there are stories of some of these creatures, called Royal Yalaruka, whose lifespan is measured in centuries. These monsters can become large as houses and their sheer mass, in flight, covers the sun. Today these beasts pass most of their lives sleeping in the depths of the Teeth of the Night. Only the Lords of Ral Hordaka know the proper spells to wake and summon them, and they do this only in moments of very dire need, because once awakened these beasts cannot be easily controlled.

According to the tradition, there are three Royal Yalaruka still alive: Thayssa the Terrible, Aashira of the Three Eyes and Avashik the Pale. They are collectively called the Death Shadows and the last time they were used in battle was during the Caled Wars.

WAR TURTLE

A massive beast, the remnant of a lost era, a War Turtle can reach the size of an

ox cart. Some wild specimens still exist in the Xalaryka, but today most of them are found in the pits of Nal Lagar, where they are trained for war. These animals are carnivorous and freaking dangerous. One of them can easily swallow a man whole if hungry. Luckily they don't eat frequently (once every three days), but the pit masters of Nal Lagar usually feed them with slaves, the weak and the sick, so that they come to savor the taste of human flesh, which can drive them mad in battle. War Turtles are quite slow, usually, but they have a couple of glands on the neck which, if overstimulated, make them frenzied for a short time. Their riders use them during battle to make the best of these creatures. In war they are used to trample enemies and, sometimes, they are fitted with special rams they are trained to hammer against walls and gates, smashing them.

A War Turtle of average dimensions usually carries a rider and two to four other soldiers (often a mix of archers and spearmen).

Characters coming from Nal Lagar with the Beast Rider Edge can take a War Turtle as a mount, if they meet the Rank requirement.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6.

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (15)

Gear: Turtle Ram (Str+d6, AP: 6, Heavy Weapon, the rider must make a Riding (-2) roll to make the War Turtle attack effectively with it, can only be used against structures).

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** A War Turtle is perfectly at ease in water, where it has Pace 7.
- **Armor +4:** The shell of a War Turtle is one of the hardest and thickest in the Dominions.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.

- **Fear:** Seeing a War Turtle for the first time causes a Fear Check.

- **Frenzy Glands:** War Turtles have a set of glands on the neck. When they are stimulated (usually with a short staff, with a Riding roll), the creature becomes hyperactive for three rounds. Its Pace doubles, and it can make two attacks per round without any penalty. After this period the beast is Fatigued and after 1d4 hours will fall asleep for 2d8 hours. This ability can be used again only after the beast has slept.

- **Heavy Armor:** Normal weapons cannot pierce the shell of a War Turtle. You need a Heavy Weapon to damage these beasts.

- **Large:** Attack rolls against War Turtles are made at +2 due to their size.

- **Size +4:** War Turtles are really big.

- **Trample:** A War Turtle can trample opponents simply by moving over them. The beast must run to use this attack. Targets in the path of a War Turtle must make an Agility roll against the Turtle's Fighting roll or be trampled (Str+Size damage, d12+6).

- **Weakness (Head and Legs):** This beast has only two weak points: the head and the legs. Hitting them requires a Called Shot (-2 for the legs and -4 for the head). With a success the attack ignores the Heavy Armor and Armor of the creature. If you are targeting the head you also deal +4 damage.

MONSTERS

Tricarnia is an unsavory place, inhabited by all types of hideous monsters and abominations. In this section you'll find a number of them.

CASTLE GUARDIAN

This creature exists only in the Dream Kingdom, and it is at the service of the Lord of the Castle. It looks like a massively-built humanoid, with a body made of gray stone, and fitted with powerful bat-like wings. Castle Guardians speak Ancient Keronian.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Tracking d6.

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (9)

Gear: Bronze long sword (Str+d8) or bronze-tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, 2 hands, Reach 1) or bronze-tipped halberd (Str+d8, 2 hands, Reach 1).

Special Abilities

- **Armor +2:** They have a stony skin, but this is not as hard as you'd imagine.
- **Fly:** Castle Guardians fly at Pace 6 with Climb -2.
- **Flock Leader:** One in every twenty Castle Guardians is a Henchman with Fighting d10, and the Command, Ambidexterity and Two-Fisted Edges. It is armed with two bronze long swords and wears light black metal armor (+1) which enhances the natural armor of the creature.
- **Rocky Body:** The body of this creature is only partially organic. It seems to be rock, but it bleeds a black, syrup substance. It gains +1 to Spirit rolls to recover from being Shaken and to Vigor rolls to resist disease and poison.
- **Size +1:** Castle Guardians are somewhat bigger than men, and, being made of a rocky substance, they can weigh up to a ton.

DEMON

These unholy creatures have a long-time association with the Sons of Keron, so you can find a number of them in this section.



GUSARA

Gusara, which means "The Eaters" in Ancient Keronian, are demons obsessed by food, of any type, of which they guzzle huge quantities. When summoned, a Gusara appears as an enormous, fattish humanoid, with gray skin and a massive boar's head. They have long tusks which they are very proud of, and often engrave with runes, or embellish with jewels, even if they are stained with food. A Gusara usually sits somewhere munching, because it doesn't like any physical activity apart from eating, but when it stands up you can also notice boar hooves in place of feet. In this case you'd better run away, because standing up means it is really pissed off.

Gusara have a particular capability: when they eat something (or, and this happens with disturbing frequency, someone) they acquire all the victim's memories and knowledge, through a sort of unnatural digestion process (of which you always find disgusting traces in any place where they have rested). For this reason they are often summoned by sorcerers to know things, in exchange for which they ask ever-increasing prices (see sidebar). Gusara are among the few demons knowing the secret of how to prolong the life of men (see page 108).

A Gusara is a Veteran creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power, but you cannot evoke it for combat, it isn't really interested in that. It will only stay to trade knowledge for food. They usually agree to stay in the Dominions until they answer one question per Rank of the sorcerer summoning them.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Knowledge (any) d12, Persuasion d10.

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities

- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.
- **Gore:** Gusara are basically boars, and they like to charge and disembowel opponents, if they are allowed to eat the entrails afterwards, of course. If a Gusara moves at least 6" before attacking an enemy he gains +4 both to attack and damage rolls.
- **Gut Knowledge:** Gusara are receptacles of knowledge, based on what they eat. Whatever the question is, the demon is allowed a Knowledge roll to answer it, with a penalty for very obscure matters. Even if it fails the roll, so long as it doesn't roll a 1 on the Knowledge die, it is allowed to reroll after a day, during which it "digests" the question.
- **Invulnerability:** A Gusara is immune to any non-magical weapon.
- **Large:** Gusara are very big and attack rolls against them are made at +2.
- **Gusara's Magic:** Many Gusaras, in their eons-long existences, have eaten a sorcerer or two, so they have learnt a few tricks. They usually know the following Powers: *armor* (glyph of defense), *barrier* (wall of fire), and *stun* (word of power), which they cast with 20 Power Points and using Knowledge as the Arcane Skill.
- **Size +3:** Gusara are up to twelve feet tall, and weigh up to a ton.
- **Tusks:** Str+d6. AP 1.
- **Weakness (Tusks and Food):** A Gusara's power is held in its tusks. If both of them are broken (a Called Shot -2 to hit each one, they are Toughness: 8) the creature loses his Invulnerability, Gusara's Magic and Gut Knowledge Special Abilities. In addition, there are two things a Gusara cannot eat: the heart of a totally memoryless man and the tears of a pure soul. If it is tricked into ingesting these foods, the demon must immediately begin a Dramatic Task based on Vigor (-4). For each failure it suffers one non-Soakable Wound and loses its Invulnerability till it is fully healed.

GM's TIP: DEALING WITH A GUSARA

Gusara are excellent plot device for the GM to pass information and plot hooks to the party, but they must be handled with caution, because, in the hands of a smart player, they can potentially break a game. Here follow some considerations and ideas.

Gusara Wisdom. *Knowledge must not be confused with omniscience. A Gusara knows everything that anything it ate knew or entered in contact with. If it ate a peach that was in the hands of a Priest Prince, it can know what the Prince thought when his fingers touched the fruit. If it ate the Priest Prince himself (alive or not) it gets all his knowledge. So, you can ask it who were the main Sages of the Library of Syranthia during 1500 AF (it could know about them) but it cannot give an answer on what a specific Sage thought (at least if it didn't eat his corpse). Generally, any bookish knowledge (including sorcerous rituals) is open to the Gusara, while personal experiences and secrets are rarer.*

Spilling the Beans. *A Gusara looks like an enormously fat pig, only interested in food (and in effect it is just that), but it is a clever bargainer. It starts by asking for something small and apparently innocent (such as a fruit: but be careful if a hero touches it before giving it to the demon), and then it will require bigger and more wicked things (like human beings or body parts from the summoner, like hair, nails and so on, which are excellent Soul Shards, see page 107). In addition it will try to say the least it can on a topic, or to delay the answer with the excuse it must "think" on them.*

Gusara Teeth. *These items are very powerful magical ingredients, and, if added to any Lotus concoction with an effect linked to knowledge, like boost trait (Knowledge (Battle)) it grants +4 to the arcane skill roll. A Gusara will do anything to get its teeth back: it can simply eat a tooth to make it regrow in a year and a day.*

HELMED DEMON

A helmed demon resembles a towering, muscular human with a bronze-colored complexion and strange tattoos. But this isn't the main feature of this creature: the first thing you notice is the massive, horned helm that he wears, shaped to resemble a horrible skull. It covers all the face of the monster apart from an eye slit through which glows a reddish light. The helm isn't normal armor: it is part of the head of the creature, and cannot be removed without killing it. The monster feeds through a narrow mouth, full of nightmarish filed teeth, which is partially covered by the helm, too. These demons are hellish soldiers of some other dimension and appear in this world armed with a powerful weapon, made of supernatural metal. Priest Princes use them as guards for precious treasures and as shock troops during battles.

A Helmed Demon is a Veteran creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

Ensorcelled Weapon: The weapon of a Helmed Demon is magical and so it can damage supernatural creatures. If taken from a Helmed Demon, it lasts till the next sunset or dawn (whatever is closer) and then turns into a green, smelly smoke. Sorcerers can bargain with a Helmed Demon for its weapon; this is considered a Veteran favor and the weapon is usually given permanently to the mage (it doesn't disappear at sunset or dawn).

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6.

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Gear: Rune-covered bronze long sword or battle axe (Str+d8, AP 2, magical weapon), demonic helm (+3).

Special Abilities

• **Armor +1:** The skin of a Helmed Demon is really hard to pierce.

• **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.

• **Fear:** Helmed Demons can make even the strongest warrior tremble, so, the first time they are seen they cause a Fear Check.

• **Hardy:** Helmed demons are almost insensitive to pain and can resist a wound that would kill a man. These creatures don't suffer a Wound from being Shaken twice.

• **Size +1:** Helmed demons are taller than men, usually they reach 8 feet, helm excluded.

• **Sweep:** Helmed Demons can attack all adjacent enemies with a single attack at -2.

• **Weakness (Eye Slit and Helm):** An attack through the eye slit of the helm (Called Shot at -4) ignores the Armor and Hardy Monstrous Abilities of the creature and deals +4 damage. The helm can be targeted more easily (Called Shot at -2); it has Toughness 11 but allows ignoring the Hardy Monstrous Ability. Once the helm is destroyed the creature must make a Vigor (-2) roll each round or suffer a Wound.



HOUND OF CALDAIOS

This person, tall and lanky, has an unhealthy gray complexion, but nothing else reveals his true nature. In truth he is one of the dreaded Hounds of Caldaios, a demon in human guise, dedicated to a single task: finding and recovering the Heart of Caldaios. Gifted with a very long lifespan, his true aspect is horrible: his face is a hideous monstrosity full of teeth and his hands hide razor-sharp claws. Occasionally Caldaios the Cruel

uses them for other specific tasks, but this is very rare.

Any Caldeian must immediately obey the order of a Hound of Caldaios, on penalty of death, but usually these guys prefer keeping a low profile.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Sorcery d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Tracking d8.

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

Gear: Black robe.

Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str+d6. A Hound of Caldaios can bite only when in his natural form (see Hideous Aspect below).

• **Claws:** Str+d4. A Hound of Caldaios can use claws only when in his natural form (see Hideous Aspect below).

• **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.

• **Hideous Aspect:** Seeing a Hound of Caldaios in its real aspect is so terrible, that it requires a Fear Check. A Hound is usually in human shape, but can turn into its demonic form when very excited (Shaken and Wounded are good examples) or to scare someone.

• **Invulnerability:** A Hound of Caldaios cannot be killed by anything apart from steel, magic and fire. Normal attacks can still make it Shaken, though.

• **Magic Hound:** A Hound of Caldaios can sniff magic and is able to conceal its own powers. It can use the *detect/conceal arcana* Power at will, without paying any cost. In addition it can “smell” the tracks of

magic: it can use Sorcery in place of Tracking to follow a quarry, if she has a magical item with her or is a magic user of some sort (having the Sorcery Arcane Background is usually enough to leave a track the hound can follow).

• **Sorcery:** Hounds of Caldaios are also sorcerers of some skill. They usually have 20 Power Points and know a number of Powers: *bolt* (call hellish fire), *dark sight* (demonic eyes), *draining touch* (touch of death) and *puppet* (hypnotic voice) are a common choice, but they vary from individual to individual.

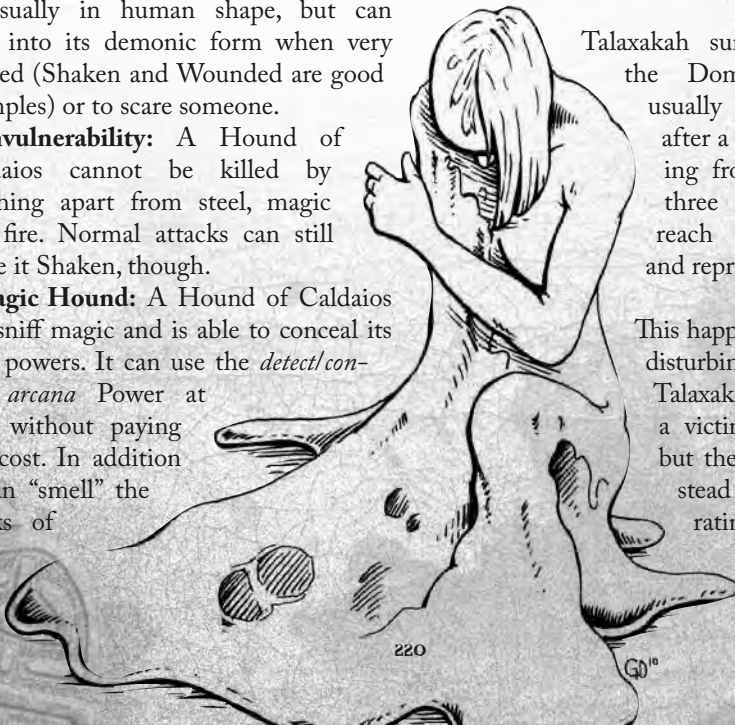


TALAXAKAH

Talaxakah are shapeshifting demons of great power, usually in the service of Baachaga, who concedes their use to his most trusted followers. A Talaxakah, in its normal form, is a vaguely humanoid shape of gray protoplasm. This demon “eats” in a particular way: whenever it touches a victim, it melts and incorporates the flesh of the individual. When the victim is completely melted, the Talaxakah acquires the ability to take its shape.

Talaxakah summoned in the Dominions are usually immature, after a period ranging from one and three weeks, they reach adulthood and reproduce.

This happens in a very disturbing way: the Talaxakah must “eat” a victim, as above, but the process, instead of incorporating the victim, creates another



Talaxakah, identical to the parent, with the same powers and an initial form, which is the one of the eaten victim.

A Talaxakah is a Legendary creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d12, Stealth d10, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8.

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

Special Abilities

- **Assassin:** Talaxakah are deadly opponents, very able at catching their opponent flat-footed. By spending a Bennie they can gain the Drop on the enemy.

- **Consuming Touch:** Str+d8, AP3, this is considered a Touch Attack. A Talaxakah can freely transform one of its limbs into a tentacle of protoplasm, through which it eats and reproduces. The monster can use any creature Incapacitated by its Consuming Touch for Mimicking or Reproduction (see below).

- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.

- **Fear -1:** Seeing a Talaxakah is its natural form is very disturbing, and causes a Fear (-1) Check.

- **Invulnerability:** A Talaxakah's physiology is totally alien: it is immune to any mortal weapon not made of steel. Apart from this, acid and fire damage it.

- **Mimicking:** A Talaxakah can take the form of a victim it consumed (Incapacitated through its Consuming Touch). Physically, the copy is perfect. The Demon doesn't acquire the memories of the victim, but being a consummate actor it can easily impersonate her (people who know the victim very well can make a Notice roll opposed by the Talaxakah's Persuasion to detect something strange). The mimicking process is limited to the

body of the victim; the monster cannot copy its gear.

- **Reproduction:** A Talaxakah which Incapacitated a victim using its Consuming Touch can decide to reproduce itself by spending two Bennies. The process (which lasts one minute per Vigor die of the victim) creates a new Talaxakah, which already knows how to take the shape of the victim used to create it. A Talaxakah cannot reproduce more than once every thirteen months.

- **Weakness (Dread Star Matter):** Talaxakah have an ancestral nemesis: Dread Star Matter (see GE page 146). If the creature enters in contact with even a small sample of it, an incredible thing happens, and the Matter starts devouring the demon, which must make a Vigor (-4) roll each round or suffer one non-Soakable Wound. The process ends only after the Talaxakah scores three or more successes and/or raises on the Vigor roll.

Oovanai

Oovanai are bird-like demons, similar to dog-sized peacocks, with marvelous looking plumage. If you look at them more closely, you notice several strange details.

First, they have two long necks, each of them ending in a cruel-beaked one-eyed head.

Second, their marvelous plumage, well, they aren't really plumes but modified, multicolored scales.

Oovanai are fabled to be the chosen pets of Aalisha, Mistress of Song and Sorrows, and often they accompany her apparitions in the Dominions. The Oovanai aren't very smart, but are extremely ferocious, and when in large flocks, their floating plumage has a hypnotic effect on humans.

An Oovanai is a Novice creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power, but it can only be summoned outdoors and by day (these beasts are virtually blind during nighttime). A sorcerer evoking these beasts can always decide to spend 3 additional Power Points to summon additional Oovanai (for a maximum of one additional beast per Rank of the caster). Since these beasts flock like birds, ignore the raise effect of the *summon ally* Power. Instead another Oovanai Extra is summoned for free.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4.

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

Special Abilities

- **Beaks:** Str+d4. Oovanai can make two attacks with their beaks per round without any penalty.
- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.
- **Dodge:** Oovanai fly in an unpredictable way, ranged attacks made against them suffer -1 to hit.
- **Fly:** An Oovanai flies with Pace 8 and Climb -2.
- **Hypnotic Plumage:** Seeing a flock of flying Oovanai, with their hypnotic colors, is quite an experience, even if few survive to report it. In game terms, the first time a character sees a group of at least three Oovanai flying in the current scene, he must make a Spirit roll to avoid being Shaken. The roll is made at -1 per three additional Oovanai (so -4 with 15 Oovanai present).
- **Size -1:** Oovanai are quite small.

FEAR SPECTER

This creature is the coalescence and gathering of fears and bad dreams of men, so it doesn't have a real shape: it takes the form of the worst fear of the person seeing

it. Followers of the Cult of the Dream think that these monsters exist in the same dimension, place or whatever it is, that the Dreamer does, but they don't know if they are his servants, slaves or enemies.

A Fear Specter is a Veteran creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power and can only be summoned through the Nightmare Entrapping Edge (see page 95).

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

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

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

Special Abilities

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Cold Touch of Fear:** If the Specter hits with a raise against a non-Nauseated target (see below), the victim must immediately make a Fear check.
- **Fear -2:** Any character seeing a Fear Specter is facing his worst nightmare, so he must make a Fear Check or be Nauseated. In the case of failure the victim is only Nauseated, but the Fear Specter leeches energy from him, becoming stronger (see Force of Fear Special Ability). A character can recover from this state by making a Spirit (-4) roll, which counts as an action.
- **Force of Fear:** A Fear Specter feeds on terror, so for each creature Nauseated (see above) within 12" from it, it gains one of the following abilities: boosted trait by one dice step (vigour and strength), Improved Frenzy Edge, Hardy, Resistance (any non-magical weapon).
- **Weakness (Courage):** Fear is the most terrible enemy but melts in front of courage. A character showing real courage against a Fear Specter, can make an opposed roll against the monster's Spirit, using Spirit (-4) or Intimidation (-2). If the character wins the roll, the creature is Shaken (by a wounding effect), if he wins with a raise the Fear Specter suffers

a Wound. Give a bonus to the character's roll for good role-play.

GM'S TIP:

DEFEATING YOUR OWN DEMONS

A man who defeats his fears is invincible. If a character defeats an Extra Fear Specter by exploiting the monster's Weakness (Courage) he receives the Brave Edge till the end of the session.

If he defeats a Henchman or Right Hand Fear Specter, the Edge lasts for the whole session.

Finally, if he defeats a Wild Card Fear Specter he gains the Edge permanently.

GORA

Gora were only big, bipedal beasts in the past, a strange cross between bears and wolverines, dwelling in caverns and other underground environments, with soft, jet black fur. If a Sage of Syranthia had looked at them millennia ago, he would have found some resemblance with the Uwakawa of Ekul Desert (see *BE&B* 4 – *Shadows over Ekul*). Originally Gora were peaceful creatures, very shy, but they were tainted by the influx of the Dreamer which gave them a glimpse of self-consciousness, but also transformed them into terrible assassins and kidnappers, which stalk people in the night to drag them under the Brokenchain Mountains, where they face a fate worse than death.

An important fact: Gora don't dream, so the Dreamer cannot leech their mental

energies, even if he finds them useful in a number of other ways.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d12, Swimming d10

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

Special Abilities

• **Adaptive Sight:** Gora ignore any penalty for bad illumination, and they also see quite well in daylight.

• **Bite:** Str+d6.

• **Claws:** Str+d4.

• **Cavern Dwellers:** Gora are perfectly at ease in caverns, they receive +2 to Stealth rolls when underground.

• **Dream Immunity:** Gora don't dream, so they are immune to any Power cast with the Dreaming Arcane Background.

• **Fear:** Seeing a Gora in all its terrible appearance causes a Fear Check.

• **Frenzy:** A Gora can make two melee attacks per round without any penalty.

• **Size +2:** Gora are between eight and ten feet tall.

RED BRINGER

The Red Plague is an age old malady diffused sparsely in the Dominions. Tricarnians think it was created by Hordana's foul magic (see page 223) but this is debatable. What is certain is that the plague periodically strikes and then disappears, sometimes for many years, letting people think it was finally defeated.

It hits people and, rarely, beasts. The luckiest ones die, suffering for a few days. Others instead contract it and survive after a fashion, slowly rotting and consumed by the malady. They are called Red-Touched, and are shunned in most of the Dominions. But the most unfortunate souls are those that contract it and, though not killed, are devoured,

mind before body, and become terrible monsters which, tormented by continuous pain, only find comfort in killing and eating the raw flesh of other persons, or, when this is not possible, infecting them with their tainted touch. These creatures, because they cannot be considered human anymore, are called the Red Bringers.

RED RAVAGER

A man or woman infected and maddened by the Red Plague. His body is more or less functional, even if horrible to see, but his mind is totally deranged and reduced to an animal state. Red Ravagers are surprisingly strong, a side effect of their illness.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Gear: Bronze sword or axe (Str+d8) or medium improvised weapon (Str+d6, -1 to Fighting rolls), rags.

Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str+d4.

• **Contagion:** A character Shaken by a wounding effect or actually wounded by a Red Ravager has a good chance of being infected by the Red Plague (see page 226). The Vigor roll to check contagion is made with +2 if the character was wounded by a weapon. It must also be made, without any modifier, if a character suffers a critical failure in a Fighting roll with a Red Ravager, this means he clumsily entered into contact with tainted bodily fluids.

• **Fear:** Seeing a Red Ravager is a nightmarish experience at best. It causes a Fear check.

• **Frenzy:** Red Ravagers make two attacks per round without any penalty, but one of them must be a Bite.

• **Pain Immunity:** Red Ravagers don't feel pain anymore and recover almost instantly from shock. They receive +2 to rolls to recover from Shaken.



RED LORD

Sometimes, a Red Bringer manages to temporarily overcome the malady somewhat, maintaining a certain intelligence, despite being completely mad. These individuals are usually very strong physically, and lead the groups of Ravagers.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8(1)

Gear: Bronze Sword or Axe (Str+d8), patches of armor (+1).

Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str+d4.

• **Contagion:** A character Shaken by a wounding effect or actually wounded by a Red Lord has a good chance of being infected by the Red Plague (see page 226). The Vigor roll to check contagion is made with +2 if the character was wounded by a weapon. It must also be made, without any modifier, if a character suffers a critical failure in a Fighting roll with a Red Lord, this means he clumsily entered into contact with tainted bodily fluids.

• **Fear -2:** Seeing a Red Lord is terrible. It causes a Fear (-2) check.

• **Frenzy:** Red Lords make two attacks per round without any penalty, but one of them must be a Bite.

• **Pain Immunity:** Red Lords don't feel pain anymore and recover almost instantly from shock. They receive +2 to rolls to recover from Shaken. In addition they can ignore up to two points of Wound penalties, as per the Improved Nerves of Steel Edge.

• **Pack Leader:** Red Ravagers instinctively obey Red Lords. A Red Lord has the Command Edge (with 10" of command radius), but only toward Red Bringers.

GM'S TIP:

RED BRINGER BEASTS

Red Plague sometimes infects animals, at least those of certain species. The Sages of Syranthia have so far noticed that the following beasts are affected, but probably there are others too: bears, dogs and wolves (canines in general), badgers and raccoons, boars and pigs, and wolverines.

Rules-wise, you can make an animal a Red Bringer with the following modifications.

- + Raise Strength and Vigor by one die step.
- + Drop Smarts by one die step (minimum d4).
- + Add the Contagion and Pain Immunity Monstrous Ability (see Red Ravager's stats).



DENIZENS

In this section are detailed a number of new NPCs typical of Tricarnia, but that can be found in other lands of the Dominions, too. As always, customization options are suggested for each of them.



BEAST RIDER

A beast rider is one of the most feared warriors of Tricarnia. Not only a skilled individual himself, he comes to battle riding a mighty monster, a remnant from a bygone era, to bring destruction and terror to his enemies. Sometimes Beast Riders are the heads of armies or, in other cases, they are used as scouts or shock troops.

Customization: Balkoth Warrior (replace Noble and Steady Hands Edges with Brawny, Loincloth Hero and Improved Sweep, replace all gear with bronze two handed sword and Balkoth), Nightrider (raise Shooting to d10, add the Blood of Hordaka Edge, replace Shadow Bat with Greater Yalaruka and composite bow), Turtle Rider (add the Improved Nerves of Steel Edge, replace Shadow Bat and ensorcelled bronze sword with War Turtle and bronze battle axe), Sorcerer Rider (drop Fighting and Riding to d8, add Sorcery d10, replace Beast Bond and Steady Hands with the Arcane Background (Sorcery), replace weapons with sorcerer staff, he has 20 Power Points and he can use the following Powers: *bolt* (lightning of darkness), *boost/lower trait* (ancient Keronian invocations), *deflection* (wall of strong will), *fear* (frightening apparitions), *obscure* (call darkness)).

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Riding d10, Shooting d8, Survival d8, Throwing d8.

Edges: Beast Bond, Beast Rider, Noble, Steady Hands.

Hindrances: Loyal (their beast).

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7/8;

Toughness: 8(2)

Gear: Ensorcelled bronze long sword (Str+d8), bronze tipped rider lance (Str+d10, AP 2, Reach 2, can only be used if riding a Large beast), medium bronze shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs ranged attacks), medium bronze armor (+2), Shadow Bat (see GE, page 151).

Special Abilities

- **Lord of the Beast:** Whenever in the saddle of his mighty mount, a Beast Master obtains +1 Charisma and to Intimidation rolls, due his position of obvious power.

DREAM FOLLOWER

The Followers of the Dream are a bunch of very different people; from nobles who “saw the truth” after being blessed (or infected) by the Dream, to ex-slaves, driven crazy by the sheer intensity of their visions. The following profiles should be enough to help you portray all of them.



ASAN

Asans are the priests of the Cult of the Dreamer, those who can enter directly in contact with the deity. Gifted with incredible powers, they can lift the mind of a person or drag him into a realm of perpetual nightmares. Some of them are pious and enlightened men, others fanatics ready to do anything for personal power and the glory of their master.

Customization: Charismatic Leader (add the Noble, Charismatic and Command

Edge and the Arrogant Hindrance), Dream Explorer (add the Danger Sense and Dream Traveler Edges, replace the *puppet* Power with *divination* (visions of the possible futures)), Gentle Healer (add the Pacifism Hindrance and the Healer Edge, raise Healing to d10, add healer's kit to Gear), Master of Nightmares (add the Nightmares Entrapping Edge, replace the *confusion* Power with *fear* (horrible visions)).

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

Skills: Dreaming d10, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Throwing d6.

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

Toughness: 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Dreaming), Dream Follower (Asan), New Power x3, Power Points.

Hindrances: Vow (tenets of the Cult).

Powers [15 PP]: *boost/lower trait* (lucid dreaming), *confusion* (daydream), *puppet* (in your mind!), *summon ally* (twisted servant, swarm, swamp shark).

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), iridescent robe, dream catcher.

Special Abilities

- **Master of the Flock:** Asans have a tremendous power over cultists. Every non-Asan cultist in the Command Radius of an Asan receives +1 to Spirit rolls.

FOLLOWER

The standard cultist, without any magical power, but led by a strong faith.

Customization: Fanatic (raise Strength and Vigor by one die step, add the Brawny and Berserk Edges, replace mace with bronze battle axe), Farmer (drop Spirit and Smarts by one die step, replace mace with farming tool (Str+d4, Improvised Weapon), add the Poor Hindrance), Cult

Hunter (raise Shooting to d8, add Survival d6, add bronze dagger and bow to Gear), Militia of the Cult (raise Fighting to d8, replace mace with bronze sword and add light cultist armor to Gear), Smuggler (raise Stealth to d8 and add Streetwise d6, add the Contacts (outlaws) Edge).

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

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

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

Edges: None.

Hindrances: Vow (tenets of the Cult).

Gear: Mace (Str+d6), cultist's robes, one dose of Lotus of Dreams.

Special Abilities

- **Living in Dreams:** A Dream Follower is never really awake, his mind is always at least partially drifting in the Dream or under the effect of some drug. On the positive side, few things can scare him, so he receives +2 to Fear Checks, on the bad side he is quite distracted, suffering -1 to any Notice roll.



TEMPLOMOS

Templomos are the armed branch of the Cult, the strongest warriors, also gifted in magic.

Customization: Infiltrator (raise Agility by one die step, drop Fighting by one die step and raise Shooting and Stealth to d8, replace the New Power and Power Points Edges with Thief and Woodsman, replace Powers with *invisibility*, replace gear with bronze sword, bow and light Templomos armor), Pacifist (add the Pacifist (minor) Edge, add Ambidexterity and Two-Fisted Edges, replace gear with staff and medium bronze Templomos armor), Tactician (raise Smarts by one die step, add Knowledge (Battle) d8, add the

Command, Hold the Line! and Tactician Edges), Trainer (raise Smarts by one die step, add the Trainer Special Ability: after training a recruit in a Skill for a month, if both the Trainer and recruit make a successful Smarts roll, the recruit permanently gains a die step in that Skill. The Trainer can train a number of recruits equal to double his Smarts die at the same time. He can only train a Skill he knows at least at d8 and no recruit can learn a Skill higher than d6).

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

Skills: Dreaming d8, Fighting d10, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Throwing d6.

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9(3)

Edges: Arcane Background (Dreaming), Dream Follower (Templomos), New Power, Power Points, Sweep.

Hindrances: Loyal, Vow (tenets of the Cult).

Powers [15 PP]: *boost/lower trait* (lucid dreaming), *warrior's gift* (dream vision).

Gear: Bronze two-handed sword (Str+d10, AP 1, 2 hands, -1 Parry, Reach 1), heavy bronze Templomos armor (+3).

Special Abilities

- **Sworn Defender:** Whenever a Templomos is defending his own people, his Wild Die for Spirit rolls is increased by one die step. In addition he receives +1 Charisma and the Command Edge toward the Followers of the Cult (this doesn't apply to other Templomos and Asans).

EUNUCHS OF NAL NOMANTOR

Eunuchs are a wide category in Tricarnia, usually occupying important positions in the society, but those of Nal Nomantor are quite different, because they are an entire

society by themselves, ruled by Jestiriel. Because there are no children born to them for obvious reasons, new members are acquired through selecting the most promising youths from the hundreds arriving in the pits each week. For this reason the Eunuchs of Nal Nomantor tend to be a very multiracial society, with members of any race, but the common use of Lotus and the habit of shaving their heads make them all look very similar to each other.

EUNUCH

This profile represents the standard Eunuch of Nal Nomantor, an overseer or guard of low level.

Customization: Archer Sentinel (raise Shooting to d8, add the Trained Thrower (Bow) Edge and replace small shield with bow), Black Eunuch Torturer (lower Strength to d6, add Healing d8, replace all Gear except robes and dagger with Scalpels (Str+d4, Improvised Weapon), healing kit), Bodyguard (add First Strike, Counterattack and the Fanatics Setting rule), Green Eunuch Greenhouse Watch (raise Notice and Stealth to d8, replace Intimidation with Survival, replace sword and shield with bronze-tipped spear), Pit Guardian (raise Vigor to d8 and lower Smarts to d4, add slaver

whip (Str+d4, Reach 3, can do Tricks at range) to Gear), Red Eunuch Trader (lower Intimidation to d6, add Persuasion d6).

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d6, Notice d6, Intimidation d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6.

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

Edges: Combat Reflexes.

Hindrances: Greedy or Loyal.

Gear: Curved bronze sword (Str+d8), bronze dagger (Str+d4), light leather armor (+1), small shield (+1 Parry), robe of the proper color.

Special Abilities

• **Call for Help:** In Nal Nomantor, Eunuchs are never very far away from each other, and a life of guarding slaves has made them very quick to answer calls from other Eunuchs, to avoid rebellions bursting out. While in the House of Pain, a Eunuch can shout for

help as a free action.

The GM rolls a d4-

1. This represents the number of Eunuchs arriving on the scene after

1d4 rounds. The

maximum number of

Eunuchs in a particular

area is usually 20, but the GM is free to alter this number as he sees fit.

• **Nomantor Caste Assets:** Every caste has specific assets typical of their group (see sidebar).



NAL NOMANTOR'S CASTE ASSETS

Each Eunuch Caste of Nal Nomantor has its secrets, special resources and so on, which usually they don't like to share with the others. By combining the Assets and the Customizations you should be able to create on the fly a number of different personalities of the dreaded House of Pain.

Black Eunuchs. *Black Eunuchs are creepy and deeply savvy in the knowledge of the human body. They gain the Iron Will Edge and the Healer Edge.*

Green Eunuchs. *Green Eunuchs have good access to Lotus reserves. They usually have one or more concoctions with them. If you need to generate the content of their pouches quickly, draw a card from the Action Deck and consider the suit: clubs – puppet (Yellow Lotus of Obedience – a dense syrup), diamonds – slumber (White Lotus of Sleep, a powder to be inhaled), hearts – healing concoction (Red Lotus of Soothing), spades – poison (Ivory Lotus of Widowmaking – coated on an dagger), joker (any two potions). All potions are made with arcane skill d8.*

Red Eunuchs. *Red Eunuchs are always found with full pockets, given the quantity of wealth they usually handle, and they use it to smooth situations and make friends. This is reflected in their free use of the Connections Edge (choose any) and +1 Charisma. In addition they tend to wear more impressive armor in battle. Upgrade their armor, if they wear any, to Medium Armor.*

Customization: Black Eunuch Master of Pain (add Lotusmastery d10, the Arcane Background (Lotusmastery), Power Points and Master of Shapes Edges, he knows the following Powers: armor (Bronze Lotus of Hardness), boost/lower trait (twist body), fear (Gray Lotus of Terror), he has a Twisted Servant Henchman at his service), Green Eunuch Lotusmaster (replace Shooting with Lotusmastery d8, add the Arcane Background (Lotusmastery) and Power Points x2 Edges, add Lotusmastery bag to Gear. He knows all the Powers found in the pouches of Green Eunuchs, see sidebar), Red Eunuch Master Merchant (add Persuasion d10 and the Connections (any two) and Rich Edges. He is always accompanied by a Red Lotus Bodyguard who is a Henchman).

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d6, Notice d6, Intimidation d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6.

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

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Level Headed, Noble.

Hindrances: Greedy or Loyal.

Gear: Curved bronze sword (Str+d8), bronze dagger (Str+d4), light leather armor (+1), small shield (+1 Parry), robe of the proper color.

Special Abilities

- **Call for Help:** In Nal Nomantor, Eunuchs are never very far away from each other, and a life of guarding slaves has made them very quick to answer calls from other Eunuchs, to avoid rebellions bursting out. While in the House of Pain, a Eunuch can shout for help as a free action. The GM rolls a d4-1. This represents the number of Eunuchs arriving on the scene after 1d4 rounds. The maximum number of Eunuchs in a particular area is usually



CHOSEN EUNUCH

This profile is used for the higher echelons of Nal Nomantor's hierarchy, like the master of a pit, a merchant leader or a skilled Lotusmaster.

20, but the GM is free to alter this number as he sees fit.

• **Nomantor Caste Assets:** Every caste has specific assets typical of their group (see sidebar).



SILENT HAND

The Silent Hands are a secret organization of spies, interlopers and occasionally assassins in the service of the High Prince of Tricarnia. The Hand Bringer, head of the sect, often uses unwitting agents, but when the mission is very difficult, he sends one of these specific individuals.

Customization: Contact Agent (remove Climbing and Shooting, raise Persuasion to d10, replace all the Edges apart from Connections with three other Connections of choice), remove all gear apart from death gems, add common garments and bronze sword), Marksman (raise Shooting to d10, add Marksman and Trained Thrower (bow) Edges, add composite bow to gear), Seducer (lower Fighting and Throwing to d6, raise Persuasion to d10 and add the Temptress and Attractive Edges).

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Lockpicking d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Throwing d8.

Edges: Assassin, Connections (Silent Hands), Lowlife, Thief.

Hindrances: Loyal.

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7(1)

Gear: Hand of Justice – Ensorcelled Bronze Dagger (Str+d4+1), Silent Hands (Str+d4, Range: 4/8/16, -1 Fighting rolls, +1 Throwing rolls, AP 1 per each success and raise in the Throwing roll), black suit (+1, +2 to stealth rolls in darkness),

death gems (soluble crystal imbued with a Very Fast poison concoction cast with Lotusmastery d12 and a Wild Die).

Special Abilities

• **Servant of the High Prince:** When the Silent Hand is working on a mission, he is extremely dedicated. He gains the Elan Edge till he accomplishes the task (or dies trying) and receives an extra Bennie at the beginning of each session.

SLAVES

Slaves are a precious commodity in the Dominions. In Tricarnia, they compose a good part of the population. Creating templates for all types of slaves is impossible, but the following profile will give you plenty of options to customize slaves for your purposes.

GENERIC SLAVE

This profile represents a generic slave, untouched by Lotus. You can find them in all parts of the Dominions, not just in Tricarnia.

Note that in this case customization refers to the cost of the slave (see page 130).

Customization: Very Low Value (drop one Attribute and one Skill to d4), Low Value (use stats as they are), Average (choose two from: raise one Attribute to d8, gain one Edge, raise two skills by one die step), High (raise one Attribute to d8, gain one Edge, raise two skills by one die step).

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (any trade) d6, Notice d6.

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: None.

Hindrances: Habit (Slavemush).

Gear: Clothing (depending on their role and importance).

Special Abilities

• **Drugged Mind:** A slave's daily diet consists of a mix of rice and meat or fish, the slavemush, spiced with Khav and other particular types of Lotus that make him very obedient. However, if he can't get any drugged food for a week, he becomes very jumpy, receiving -2 to Fear checks, as per the Yellow Hindrance.

CASTE SLAVE

This slave belongs to one of the Lotus Castes of Tricarnia, and both his body and his mind were twisted by Lotus. Usually these slaves are of Average or higher cost.

Customization: Apply the slave caste templates found on page 86.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (any trade) d8, Notice d6, any two other skills at d6.

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

Toughness: 5

Edges: Any one.

Hindrances: Habit (Slavemush), Loyal.

Gear: Clothing (depending on their role and importance).

Special Abilities

• **Drugged Mind:** A slave's daily diet consists of a mix of rice and meat or fish, the slavemush, spiced with Khav and other particular types of Lotus that make him very obedient. However, if he can't get any drugged food for a week, he becomes very jumpy, receiving -2 to Fear checks, as per the Yellow Hindrance.

GM'S TIP: MORE ON SLAVES

Slaves for the most part will be common, faceless characters in your game, but some of them, for example your trusted bodyguard, the preceptor of your son or the skilled cook, master of the palaces' kitchens, are more than this. As always, the character type must be decided by the GM according to the needs of the plot, but below you'll find some suggestions on the typical types of the various slaves, by value.

SLAVES' CHARACTER TYPE

Slave Value	Character Type	Example
Average or worse	Extra	Common slave
High	Right Hand or Henchman	Chosen slave soldier, talented artisan
Very High	Henchman or Wild Card	Artist, sage, or preceptor
Unique	Wild Card	Genius artist or sorcerer



SWAMPMAN

The Swamp People are a race of amphibian humanoids dwelling in the Xalarya, or, to be more precise, under it. Covered in scales, they have webbed hands and feet, and a horrible head with a mouth full of

teeth. They dwell in underwater lairs, and, if the legends are true, in the fabled City of the Swamp People. They are voracious, and love human meat. They are also notorious for stalking and kidnapping women, which they drag underwater for unknown purposes, probably reproduction.

Customization: Albino Swampman (raise Spirit to d10, he has 10 Power Points and can cast the *confusion* (blue-glowing eyes) and *slumber* (yellow-glowing eyes) Powers using Spirit as the arcane skill, he is at least a Right Hand), Hunter (raise Survival to d8 and add the Woodsman Edge), Warrior (raise Fighting to d8 and add a stone axe (Str+d6) to gear), Chief (raise all Traits by one die step, add the Command and Improved Frenzy Edges, add precious jewelry (d6x100 Moons worth) and jade dagger (Str+d4+1, AP 1) to Gear, he is a Wild Card).

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6.

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7(1)

Edges: Combat Reflexes.

Hindrances: Ugly.

Gear: Jade amulet or jewelry (d6-1x10 Moons worth).

Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Scaly hide.
- **Aquatic:** Swampmen are amphibious, they can stay underwater as long as they want and don't need to roll for Swimming. In water they have Pace 8.
- **Bite or Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fear:** Seeing a Swampman for the first time is nerve-wracking experience, which causes a Fear Check.

• **Low Light Vision:** Swampmen see very well in darkness and ignore any penalty for Dim or Dark lighting conditions.

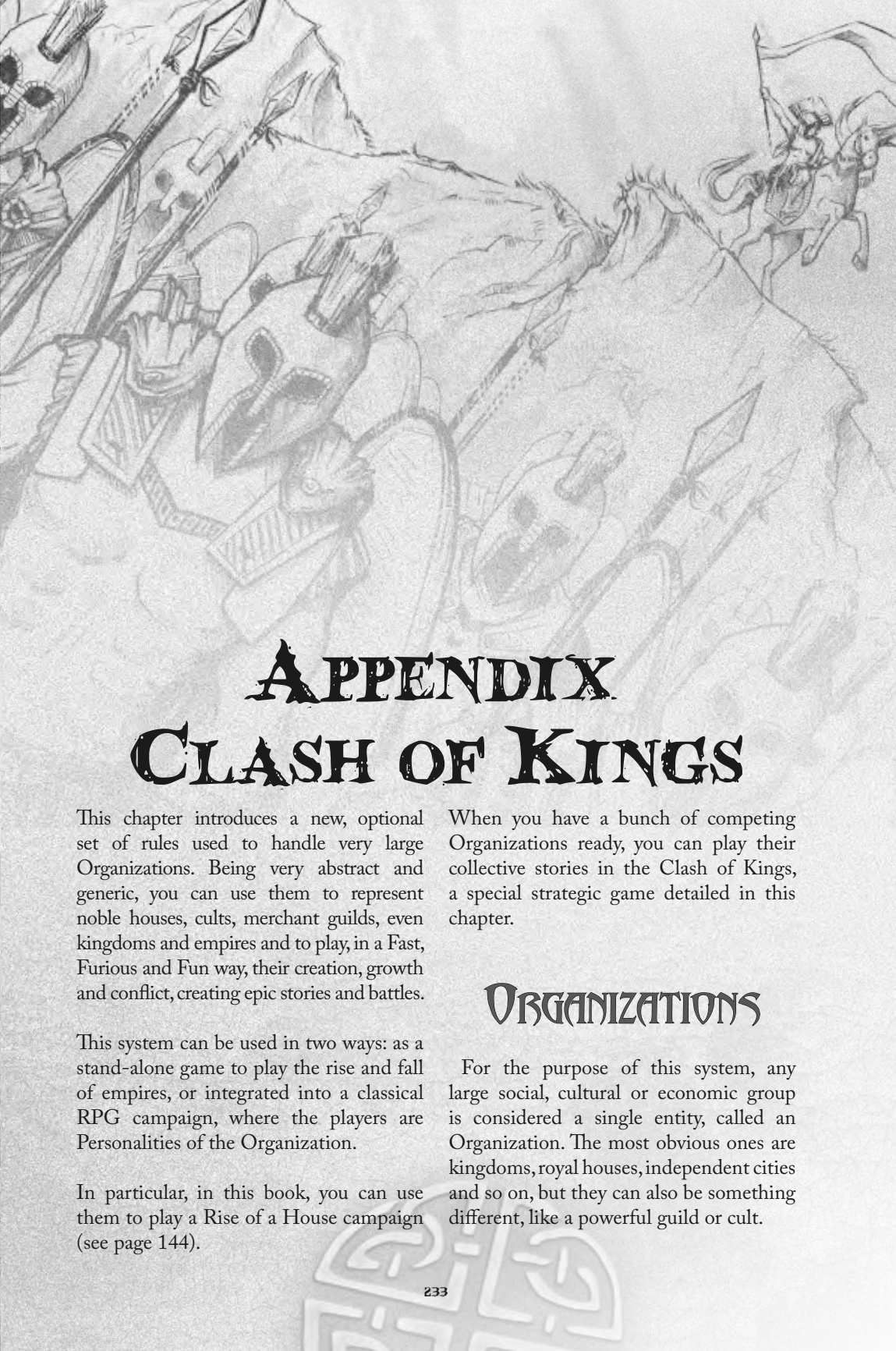
• **Paralyzing Sting:** Str+d4. Swampmen have a peculiarity in their anatomy: a retractable sting, under the skin of the right forearm, which they can extend to puncture victims. The sting itself is a sort of pointed dagger, but contains a dose of a Paralyzing (0) poison. The sting can be used only once every four hours, because the body of a Swampman requires that much time to regenerate it.

GM's TIP:

SWAMP PEOPLE'S PEARLS

Sometimes really big Swampmen (Wild Cards) have a strange sac in the neck: this contains a pearl, big as a baby's fist, of great value (500 Moons at least); the pearl is also gifted with magical powers: whoever has it can see perfectly in darkness. The effect lasts till the pearl exhaust its powers, usually after 3d6 days (the dice can ace).

These pearls are also highly sought by Lotumasters, because they can be used to triple the duration of any concoction with a shapeshifting trapping or grant +4 to a single Lotus Twisting roll. Obviously both uses consume the gem.



APPENDIX

CLASH OF KINGS

This chapter introduces a new, optional set of rules used to handle very large Organizations. Being very abstract and generic, you can use them to represent noble houses, cults, merchant guilds, even kingdoms and empires and to play, in a Fast, Furious and Fun way, their creation, growth and conflict, creating epic stories and battles.

This system can be used in two ways: as a stand-alone game to play the rise and fall of empires, or integrated into a classical RPG campaign, where the players are Personalities of the Organization.

In particular, in this book, you can use them to play a Rise of a House campaign (see page 144).

When you have a bunch of competing Organizations ready, you can play their collective stories in the Clash of Kings, a special strategic game detailed in this chapter.

ORGANIZATIONS

For the purpose of this system, any large social, cultural or economic group is considered a single entity, called an Organization. The most obvious ones are kingdoms, royal houses, independent cities and so on, but they can also be something different, like a powerful guild or cult.

Organizations, like player characters and to Bands (see *TB*), are defined by some key elements: Attributes, Edges, Hindrances and Personalities.

CREATING ORGANIZATIONS

Creating an Organization is a lot of fun, because it gives the players a great creative power, usually reserved to the GM. It should be a collective process, where everyone expresses his ideas. In case of divergence, the players cast a vote. In the case of a tie the GM acts as tie-breaker.

A starting, player-driven Organization begins at Novice Rank, with 5 Attribute Points, one free Organization Edge, one Organization Personality (which must be a Ruler) and up to two Minor and one Major Organization Hindrances.

Minor Organization Hindrances give one point, while Major Organization Hindrances give two points.

For two points you can:

Obtain another Attribute Point, gain an Organization Edge or Personality.

For one point you can:

Start with 3 Wealth Points.

All the above values are described below.

ORGANIZATION CONCEPT, BACKGROUND AND NAME

The first step to create an Organization is working on its Concept and Background, including everything that can give color and depth to it. For example, if you are creating a guild you can add the tenets of it, or the names of the various ranks, while if you are creating a noble house or a kingdom, you can design the coat of arms or the banner.

Finally, you must find a suitable name for your organization.

BATTLE VALUE?

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

During mass battles you calculate the number of Battle Tokens of two armies using Battle Values in this way:

- 1) The army with the highest Battle Value receives 10 Battle Tokens*
- 2) The army with the lower Battle Value receives a number of Tokens equal to $(10 \times \text{Lowest Battle Value}) / \text{Highest Battle Value}$. The result is rounded down.*
- 3) Losses influence Battle Value in the same way. If for example an army lost one Battle Token of six, its Battle Value is reduced by 1/6.*

ORGANIZATION ATTRIBUTES

An Organization has three Attributes: Economy, Military and Politics.

Economy represents the resources, agriculture, infrastructures and general wealth of the organization. A strong economy is necessary to make an Organization grow.

Military represents the raw military force of the Organization, the average training of soldiers, the law level and even the presence of natural defenses. A kingdom should have a high level of Military to be sure nobody conquers it, while probably a merchant guild won't have such a strong military force.

Politics represents the influence, social and cultural standing of an organization. It includes the permeability of the Organization to other cultures, its moral richness but also the strength and capacity of its diplomats, and last but not least, its intelligence. An Organization like a powerful cult should have a high value in this Attribute.

Organizations' Attributes are expressed in die steps, exactly like characters, from d4 to d12.

Organizations' Attributes can have the Wild Die, but unlike those for characters, it must be bought separately for each Attribute and isn't fixed: it starts at d4 and goes to d12, but cannot exceed the corresponding Attribute die.

The presence of a Wild Die is expressed with the following notation: Military d8 (d6). This means the Organization rolls d8 for Military plus a d6 Wild Die.

If, for any reason, during the game your Attribute die is reduced to lower than the Wild Die, when you roll the Attribute Die, reduce the Wild Die accordingly. If you manage to restore the Attribute die, you'll roll again with the full Wild Die.

So if you have Military d8 (d8) and you are reduced to d6 (d8), you roll two d6 till you restore the Attribute dice to d8.

A starting, player managed, Organization has d4 in each Attribute, plus 5 points to spend as the players want. Each spent point raises the Attribute by one die step or can be used to acquire a Wild Die in a chosen Attribute or to increase an existing Wild Die by one die step.

ORGANIZATION DERIVED STATISTICS

An Organization has three derived Statistics: Battle Value, Wealth Points and Experience.

The **Battle Value (BV)** of an Organization represents the maximum military strength it can muster on the battlefield, without resorting to mercenary forces. This value depends on the Military die, as expressed in the table below, plus the Military Wild Die, which is calculated on the same table and summed up.

At the beginning of the game, the Battle Value of an Organization is set at the maximum possible. From this moment on, it will fluctuate, depending on wars, events and so on, but in no case can it be higher than the cap set by the Military Die (and Wild Die). In addition, if, for any cause, the Military Die of an Organization is

reduced, the BV must immediately be dropped to the new maximum value.

Example. House Norakor has Military d8 (d4), meaning its starting BV is $1500+500=2000$. During the Clash of Kings, the Organization Military is reduced to d6 (d4). This means that the maximum Battle Value is $1000+500=1500$. The actual BV of the Organization is immediately reduced to the new cap.

Wealth represents the expendable resources generated by an Organization during Strategic Rounds. They can be used for several things, and can also be converted into Experience.

Experience as per player characters represents the increasing skill and capability of an Organization. See page 253 for further details.

Organization Bennies. Organizations have no Bennies by default, but they can acquire some through Edges and Personalities. If you are playing an RPG campaign, remember that, even if a player character is a Personality, he cannot spend his own bennies to influence the Organization's Attribute rolls.

MAXIMUM BATTLE VALUE BY MILITARY DICE TABLE

Military dice (or Wild Dice)	Battle Value
d4	500
d6	1000
d8	1500
d10	2000
d12	2500
d12+1*	5000
d12+2*	10000

(*) This level can be attained through the Professional and Expert Organization Edges.

ORGANIZATION HINDRANCES

As player characters, Organizations can have Hindrances, detailed below, which can be Minor or Major.

BARREN LAND

This land is poor in resources, even if the men are strong and hard. The maximum BV you can Train each Turn is reduced by 100 (usually it is 200).

BUREAUCRACY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

This Organization is very slow to act. In the Minor form, you are forbidden to take any Edge giving you extra Action Cards. In the Major form, in addition, if you are dealt a face card you must discard it and draw again (you can keep the second card, even if it is higher than the first one).

HAUGHTY

Your Organization isn't made for the subtleties of politics: it suffers -4 to Politics rolls to make Alliances.

LAVISH

These people build palaces as if they would live forever and eat like they would die tomorrow, so they don't have a lot of money. You cannot have more than three Wealth Points at any given time.

LOW SECURITY

The generic security level of this Organization is quite low. You suffer

-2 to any Politics roll to defend against Intelligence.

LUST FOR LOOT (MAJOR)

This people are born to raid, and won't easily cease this ancestral custom. Unless you pay two Wealth Points or reduce your Politics die by one die step, you must perform a Raze action each Turn (this isn't a bonus action, you must actually do it), spending at least one third (rounded down) of your BV.

MOUTHS TO FEED

This Organization has too many people to feed. Whenever your Economy dice is d8 or higher (regardless of the Wild Die), you must pay 1 Wealth during the End Phase or reduce your Economy die by one die step.

OPEN DOORS

This Organization doesn't believe someone could try to kill their leaders, or maybe it only has very low security standards. You receive -2 to opposed rolls against Assassination attempts.

PACIFIST (MAJOR)

This Organization isn't made for violence. You must pay two Wealth Points to initiate any Military Action, with a single exception: if you are in Hostility with another Organization, and you aren't the cause of the Hostility, you can perform a free War action.

PRIMITIVE

This Organization is, or maybe only feels, inferior to more civilized ones. If you are making an opposed roll against an opponent with a Politics Wild Die equal to or higher than yours, you suffer

-1 to your roll. The penalty applies to any Attribute roll, not only on Politics ones.

POLITICAL INSTABILITY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

This Organization is suffering from an internal struggle: in the Minor form, whenever you are dealt a club card as your first Action Card in a turn, you are considered as being without a Ruler. In the Major form you lose an action each turn to quell internal disorder. In other words, you cannot take any action if you don't have a bonus one.

SLOW ECONOMY (MAJOR)

Probably this Organization is very backward in the economic field, or maybe the rulers have been leeching the people for centuries. Whatever the reason, the Wealth Production action produces one Wealth Point less for them.

RACIAL FEAR

This Organization can stand any danger apart from... THEM! Choose another Organization of your choice: you deeply fear them, and suffer -2 to any Battle rolls made against them.

TYBANNY (MAJOR)

This Organization is ruled by a single, egomaniac, Personality. It can only have up to three Personalities, one of which must be the Ruler.

WARMONGER (MINOR OR MAJOR)

This culture is made for war: peace is seen as stagnation and decay. In the Minor form, if at the End Phase you aren't in

Hostility or Friction with anyone, you must pay three Wealth Points. If the Major form, you must also reduce one Attribute of your choice by one die step.

WEAK POINT (MAJOR)

Everyone has a soft spot, even your Organization. Choose an Attribute. You suffer -1 to any roll on that Attribute.

ORGANIZATION EDGES

Organizations' Edges are divided into groups, like characters' ones, and have Rank requirements too. They are Background, Economic, Military, Political and Legendary.

Edges and Requirements. Unlike characters, Organizations' Attributes could vary a lot in the game; if, for any reason, you don't meet the requirements for an Edge, you keep it, but cannot use it again till the requirement is met again.

(dx+) Means that the Wild Die must be with a value of dx or more.

BACKGROUND EDGES FORTIFICATIONS

Requirements: Novice, Economy (d4+), Military (d6+)

You have a very powerful stronghold somewhere in your kingdom. When you are the defender in a Strategic Battle, you can choose to suffer up to -2 to your Battle roll. If you do so, your opponent suffers double your penalty to his Battle roll (so -2 if you choose -1 and -4 if you choose -2).

GODS CHOSEN

Requirements: Novice, Religious Figure Personality

Your Organization thinks it was chosen directly by the gods. While you have a Religious Figure Personality, at the beginning of each Turn you gain +1 to Military and Politics rolls. If the Religious Figure dies you immediately lose a Bennie.

GOOD COMMUNICATIONS

Requirements: Seasoned, Military d8+

You enjoy a very good communication system, like imperial roads, fast couriers and so on or maybe the command chain of your Organization is well-oiled and smooth. Draw an additional Action Card and can keep the best one.

If you are playing with Events, Good Communications prevents the effects of Flood.

EXCELLENT COMMUNICATIONS

Requirements: Seasoned, Good Communications

Your communication systems are over the top, giving you a decisive advantage over the others. You draw two additional Action Cards and can keep the best one.

GUARDIANS

Requirements: Novice

You employ a corps of rangers, sentinels or maybe you have a strong city watch. You gain +2 to defend from any Intelligence roll. In addition, if you are dealt a Deuce as your final Action Card, you obtain an Organization Bennie at the beginning of your Turn.

HEROES LAND

Requirements: Veteran

Your Organization has always had a great respect for heroes, both past and present. You can use a single Personality twice per Turn.

MEDICINE

Requirements: Novice, Economy (d6+), Politic (d6+)

Your Organization has a great tradition of healers and medics, plus strong sanitary regulations. At the end of any battle where you lost at least one Battle Token, make a Politics (-2) roll: with a success or better you immediately recover 100 BV. In addition, this Edge halves the effects of Pestilence on troops and gives +1 to Personality's Vigor rolls to resist the malady (see Events).

NATURAL DEFENSES

Requirements: Novice, at least two Attributes at (d4+)

This Organization has a special natural defense: it could be a range of mountains, a sea, or simply the climate. Whenever you are the defender in a Strategic Battle, your opponent suffers -2 to Military rolls against you. This Edge counts as two Edges for the purpose of Stealing Edges.

QUICK

Requirements: Novice, Military (d6+)

Your Organization can act very quickly. You can discard any Action Card drawn below 5 and draw a new one.

ECONOMIC EDGES

ECONOMIC WARFARE

Requirements: Seasoned, Economy d10+ (d6+)

Merchants will avoid selling wares to your opponents, if you pay them well enough. And you can decide to lose some money if they are worth the cost. During your Turn you can spend two Wealth Points to make another Organization lose a Wealth Point. You can spend up to four Wealth Points in this manner each turn.

FORCE OF MONEY

Requirements: Veteran, Economy d10+ (d6+)

Your warriors might not be the best ones, but they are better fed and equipped than the others. In the end the weight of your wealth will win any war.

While at War (this doesn't apply to Raze), you can make Battle rolls using Economy in place of Military.

MERCANTILISM

Requirements: Novice, Economy d10+

Your economic system is based on currency and on the constant flow of wares. During the Start Phase of the Clash of Kings (see below), if you have 5 or more unspent Wealth Points, you automatically receive 1 Experience Point.

MERCHANT PRINCES

Requirements: Seasoned, Economy d6+ (d8+), Politics d6 (d6+)

At the beginning of your turn, if your Economy Wild Die is higher than those of all other Organizations, you receive 1 Experience Point.

PRODUCTIVE

Requirements: Novice, Economy d8+

This Organization has a very strong economy or is made up of productive workers. So long as you aren't in Hostility

with any other Organization, you receive +2 to your Economy rolls to Produce Wealth.

SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMY

Requirements: Novice, Economy d6+

At the beginning of your Turn, if you don't have any Wealth Points, you gain one.

WELL-STOCKED

Requirements: Seasoned, Economy d8+ (d6+)

Your warehouses are literally overflowing with food, weapons and other useful stuff. You can arm even graybeards and women, if you want. During the End Phase, you can Train up to 600 BV of Troops instead of the customary 300. This Edge grants immunity to Famine.

MILITARY EDGES

BLITZKRIEG!

Requirements: Novice, Military d8+

"Surprise is the key to victory," Generals say. Your Organization is a master of lightning-fast military Operations. If you attack (either with a War or a Raze Action) an Organization which is Neutral or better, you receive +2 to the Battle roll during the first round of battle, which drops to +1 on the second one.

LEVY

Requirements: Novice, Military d6+

Your recruiters constantly wander the farmlands, picking up the best farmers and youths to reinforce the ranks of your army.

During the End Phase, you recover 100 BV for free, up to the maximum BV allowed.

FORCE OF ARMS

Requirements: Seasoned, Military d8+

The might of your armies is legendary, only second to your greed!

At the beginning of your turn, any other Organization which hasn't already acted and which has a Military die inferior to your own (regardless of the Wild Die) must pay you one Wealth Point, if it has one.

PILLAGER

Requirements: Novice

Your Organization is infamously good at razing! You gain +2 to any roll of the Raze Die.

SUPERIOR EQUIPMENT

Requirements: Novice, Economic d6+, Military d6+

The armies of your Organization are fitted with weapons of a technological level higher than the average of the game world. When fighting against another Organization without this Edge or the Improved Version, you gain +1 to Military rolls.

IMPROVED SUPERIOR EQUIPMENT

Requirements: Veteran, Superior Equipment

The gear of your troops is top-notch. When fighting against another Organization without this Edge, you gain +1 to Military rolls, while opponents suffer -1 to their Military rolls. Against an Organization with Superior Equipment, you only gain +1 to Military rolls (but the opponent gains no bonus from Superior Equipment).

STRATEGIC RETREAT!

Requirements: Seasoned, Military d6+, Politic d6+

Your generals know that sometimes is better escape from the battlefield to fight another day than stand firm and die meaninglessly. At the end of a Strategic Battle where you lost a Battle Token, if you aren't reduced to zero Battle Tokens, you recover one Battle Token or 200 BV (whatever is less).

POLITICAL EDGES

ASSASSINS GUILD

Requirements: Novice, Economy (d6+), Politics (d6+), you must have a Spymaster Personality

You have a closely-guarded secret facility somewhere training professional assassins, or a cultural tradition in the stealthy arts of murder. You receive +2 to all Assassination attempts (see Assassin Personality).

CUSTOM TAXES

Requirements: Novice, Economy d6+, Politics d6+

At the beginning of your Turn choose an Organization which isn't in Hostility with you. You steal a Wealth Point from it. This doesn't alter the diplomatic relationship between the two Organizations.

MERCHANT PACTS

Requirements: Novice, Economy d8+, Politics d8+

At the beginning of your Turn you gain one Wealth Point per Alliance you have at the moment.

SMOOTH THE EDGES

Requirements: Seasoned, Politics d8+

Your diplomats are very good at keeping the situation civil. Once per turn, if you are in Friction with an Organization, you can become Neutral. Every time you use this Edge you also gain a Wealth Point.

SPY NETWORK

Requirements: Novice, Politics d8+

You have a very good intelligence network. By spending one Wealth Point, you gain +2 to any Politics roll.

STEEL PACT

Requirements: Seasoned, Politics (d8+)

Breaking an Alliance with you isn't a good idea: the breaker must pay you three Wealth Points. If he can't, you can steal from him a die step in an Attribute of your choice.

SUPERPOWER

Requirements: Novice, Politics d6+

Whenever two Organizations are dealing an Alliance or signing a Truce or a Peace and you aren't involved, you can spend a Bennie to add +2 or -2 to the roll of one of them. The Organization which is affected the modifier can pay you two Wealth Points to negate the modifier.

THE END JUSTIFIES

THE MEANS

Requirements: Seasoned, Politics d6+ (d6+)

No trick or political maneuver is too low for your Organization to use to achieve power. Once per Turn you can ignore the cost for breaking a Truce, Peace or Alliance.

LEGENDARY EDGES

PROFESSIONAL (ATTRIBUTE)

Requirements: Legendary, Attribute d12

This Organization is extremely skilled in one field. Choose an Attribute at d12: it rises to d12+1. From this moment on, even when reduced, this Attribute can be raised up to d12+1.

The Edge gives you one additional Victory Point at the end of the game.

EXPERT (ATTRIBUTE)

Requirements: Legendary, Professional (Attribute)

This Organization is incredibly skilled in one field. The chosen Attribute level goes to d12+2. From this moment on, even when reduced, this Attribute can be raised up to d12+1.

The Edge gives you one additional Victory Point at the end of the game, in addition to the one granted by Professional.

PERSONALITIES

Personalities hold specific powerful roles, covered by gifted individuals that an Organization has. In the Clash of Kings, they work exactly like Edges, but remember they are actually people; if they are killed they can be replaced, sometimes for free, other times they must be bought again. If you are playing in an RPG campaign, probably Personalities are player characters. Unless otherwise noted, you can take the same Personality multiple times.

Unique: You can only have a single Personality of this type at a time.

Requirements: These requirements are for player characters (or NPCs) to be that specific Personality. Ignore them for a standard Clash of Kings game.

Replacement: Personalities can be killed in battle or even assassinated, but in certain cases they are replaced without the need to buy them again. Note that a stolen Personality cannot be replaced: to all intents and purposes his “slot” has passed to the enemy.

ASSASSIN

Requirements: Novice, Stealth d8+

Some wars are won by sending thousands of soldiers to die, others are won by a single man poisoning a cup of wine or flashing a dagger in the dark. An Assassin can be sent to kill any other Personality in the game. First, you must make a Politics roll to check if you manage to get close your target. If you fail, no assassination attempt is possible this Turn. If you succeed, then you can attempt an assassination, by making an opposed roll between the Assassin's Stealth (d8 for an NPC, plus the Organization's Politics Wild Die) and the victim's Notice (d6 for an NPC, plus the Organization's Politics Wild Die). If the Assassin wins the roll the target Personality is dead. If the victim wins the roll, the assassination fails. If the victim wins the roll with a raise the assassination fails and the Assassin is caught and executed.

Replacement: None. Once lost he must be bought again.

FREEBOOTER

Requirements: Novice, Knowledge (Battle) d6+, Survival d8+

Razing a neighbor is a lucrative but potentially embarrassing activity. For this



reason many Organizations hire third parties, freebooters or corsairs, to do it “independently”, even though this is only a political façade. If you have a freebooter, you can perform an additional Raze each Turn, which doesn’t count as an action. This Raze doesn’t cause Friction, but you receive one less Raze Point (because the Freebooter takes his share).

Killing a Freebooter is often seen as a relief by civilised people: the Organization dispatching him receives three Wealth Points.

Replacement: None. Once lost he must be bought again.

GENERAL

Requirements: Novice, Knowledge (Battle) d8+

A good General can win you wars! If you send him into a Strategic Battle you can use him in two ways: first he gives you an Organization Bennie, which can be used

only during the battle, *or* you can add +2 to your Battle roll. Each General can be used only once per Turn (during yours or an opponent’s action) and only one General can be used per Battle roll.

Replacement: None. Once lost he must be bought again.

MASTER OF COIN (UNIQUE)

Requirements: Seasoned, Smarts d10+

The treasurer of the Organization or a financial genius of some type, the Master of Coin knows how money talks, mates and grows up. In game terms the Master of Coin can be used, once per Turn, to do one of the following things:

First, you can use him to immediately receive three Wealth Points.

Second, you can spend up to four Wealth Points to add the same amount to any Economic, Politics or Military roll you make.

When the Master of Coin dies, this is a problem: you immediately lose half your Wealth Points (rounded up).

Replacement: None. Once lost he must be bought again.

MINISTER (UNIQUE PER TYPE)

Requirements: Seasoned, Smarts d10+

The Ruler represents an Organization, but his most trusted counselors and ministers actually run it. When you take this Personality, you must choose a Type of Minister: Military, Economic or Political. Every turn you can perform an additional Action of the type corresponding to the Minister. This action is free and doesn't cause any multi-action penalty.

This Personality cannot be stolen and you can only have one Minister per Rank of the Organization (so one at Novice, two at Seasoned and three at Veteran).

Replacement: During the Starting Phase, you can pay 4 Wealth Points to replace a dead Minister with another one of the same type.

MONSTER (UNIQUE)

Requirements: None

The Organization employs a terrible beast in its service, like a dragon, or uses awe-inspiring troops, like undead or demons. Before each Battle Round, if you have a monster, make an Intimidation (-2) roll (d8 plus the Military Wild Die of the Organization). In the case of success the opponent loses one Battle Token. Monsters sometimes go wild and rampage among your own troops: if a 1 is rolled on the Intimidation die, regardless of the Wild

Die, the monster attacks its allies (which lose one Battle Token). Monsters can be killed in this manner: instead of making the customary Battle roll, an Organization opposing a Monster announces it is making a Called Shot to the Monster. This is a Military (-4) roll, with a success or better the Monster is killed and the slayer obtains three Experience Points.

Replacement: None. Once lost it must be bought again. Since Monsters are very rare, every additional time you buy this Personality you must also pay two Wealth Points (the effect is cumulative: two the second time, four the third and so on).

RELIC (UNIQUE)

Requirements: None

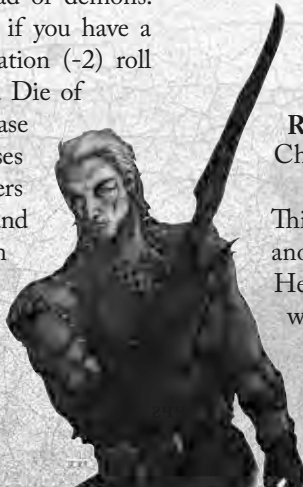
A staple of fantasy and sword and sorcery, a powerful relic can alter the fate of men and kingdoms. A relic grants +4 to any one roll you make, but its power is so great that it cannot be controlled. After using it, draw a card from the Action Deck. If it is a Heart (or a red Joker) you keep the Relic and can use it again, if it is a Diamond, the Relic passes to a randomly selected player (which cannot be you), with any other card the relic simply disappears in the mists of history and becomes the stuff of legends.

Replacement: None. Once lost it must be bought again.

RELIGIOUS FIGURE (UNIQUE)

Requirements: Seasoned, Charisma 2+, Priest

This man is a priest, a prophet or another important figure of a cult. He can win hearts and minds with the force of his words or by his example. While you



have a Religious Figure, you gain an extra Organization Bennie during the Start Phase.

This Personality, being in frequent contact with the public, is easy to assassinate (+2 to Assassination roll), but if killed he becomes a martyr. When this happens you gain three Martyrdom Bennies which are normal Organization Bennies that aren't discarded during the End Phase and can each be used once.

Replacement: None. Once lost he must be bought again.

RULER (UNIQUE)

Requirements: Novice, Noble *or* Charisma 2+

The Ruler is the head of the Organization. He can be the king, guild master and so on. He receives one Tactical Bennie per Tactical Round. If, for any reason an Organization is without a Ruler, all its Attribute rolls suffer a -2 penalty.

This Personality cannot be stolen and assassination rolls against him are at -2.

Replacement: During the Start Phase, if an Organization has no Ruler, it can make a Politics (-2) roll (without any other modifier) to gain a new Ruler.

SORCERER (UNIQUE)

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background, Any Arcane skill 10+

A practitioner of arcane arts, a sorcerer has very subtle ways to influence the world. If you have a Sorcerer you can use him once per Turn, to perform one of the following actions:

First, you can use him during Strategic Battles. Before the first round of Battle,

you can make an Arcane roll (d10 for an NPC, plus the Organization's Politics Wild Die). For each success and raise your opponent loses a Battle Token.

Second, you can use it to influence the future: choose an Organization, and it immediately loses an Organization Bennie.

Killing a Sorcerer is an important act: the opponent immediately gains an Organization Bennie.

Replacement: Sorcerers are notoriously hard to kill permanently, and some of them are known to crawl back from the grave. During the Start Phase, you can make a Politics (-4) roll (without any other modifier) to recover a dead Sorcerer.

SPYMASTER (UNIQUE)

Requirements: Veteran, Streetwise d10+, at least two Connections (any)

The head of the secret service, or simply a thug with a lot of shady contacts, a Spymaster is the key figure in any tyrannical state, and even in some enlightened ones. Each Turn, this personality can be used in either of these two ways.

First, whenever you are dealt an Action Card, before the countdown begins, you can exchange your Action Card with that of another player who doesn't have a Spymaster Personality.

Second, you can use a Spymaster to add +2 to *any* Politics roll, even those of another player (you don't need to be on Hold and can use this ability even if you have already acted).

Spymasters are notoriously devious and hard to kill, so Assassination rolls against them are made at -2.

Replacement: None. Once lost he must be bought again.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER HOUSE NARAKOR

Here follows an example of creating an Organization.

Example: The player group, Paul, Mark and Martha, who are going to play a Rise of a House campaign, must create a Tricarnian noble house. The players discuss this a bit and decide that their house is going to be a minor house of the Xalaryka, loosely related to Ral Hordaka (they have a common ancestor, centuries ago), but which recently fell under the shadow of Nal Askerion, which wants to subdue them. The name of the house is Narakor, and Martha, one of players, draws a coat of arms for it: a stylized bat on a purple field, which is the heraldic beast of the House.

At this point the players decide that it is a noble house with a great past of epic deeds in war, but which fell into poverty in the last century. So they spend 2 points to raise Military by two die steps, one to increase Politics, plus other two to obtain the d4 Wild Die both in Military and Politics.

The final Attributes of House Narakor are Economy d4, Military d8 (d4), Politics d6 (d4).

Now they have to choose up to two Minor and one Major Hindrance, and they select Tyranny, Haughty and Lavish. At this point they pick their free Edge: Natural

Defenses (because House Narakor is surrounded by a labyrinthine swamp). Next they decide to pick one Personality, the Ruler: Priest Prince Narakor (Paul's character) plus another two granted by the Hindrances: a General (Mark's character) and a Sorcerer (Martha's character). Now House Narakor is ready to start its rise to power...

CLASH OF KINGS

Once all the Organizations are ready, you can play the Clash of Kings. It is an abstract strategic game where the various organizations compete to obtain supremacy. You can play it without a GM, with each player having an organization under his command and competing against the others, or seamlessly integrate it into your RPG campaign, with the players being powerful members (possibly Personalities) of one Organization (like a single Noble House).

The game is played in Tactical Rounds.

Each of them has a variable duration, decided by the GM if present, otherwise it defaults to two months of game time.

As an alternative, if you are playing in an ancient world, where weather and seasons are important, you can decide that each year is composed of six Tactical Rounds: one each for winter and autumn, two each for spring and summer.

In a GM-less campaign, you should decide beforehand the duration of the game in Tactical Rounds. At the end of the game you can calculate victory (see Winning the Game below). If you are playing in an RPG campaign, only the GM knows when the game will end.

As an alternative you can play with Objectives (see Sidebar).

Every Round is divided into three Phases.

They are the Starting Phase, Main Phase and Closing Phase.

GAME TURNS LENGTH TABLE

Game Length	Suggested Tactical Rounds Number
Short	15
Average	30
Long	45

OBJECTIVES TABLE

D6	Objectives
1	Fat Merchant. The player must gain 20 unspent Wealth Points.
2	Conqueror. The player must conquer two other Organizations.
3	High Lord. The player must acquire at least 8 Organization Edges.
4	Companionship. The player must acquire at least 8 Personalities.
5	Avenger. Secretly choose another Organization at random. The player wins if this organization is destroyed (if it surrenders or is conquered).
6	King of Kings. The player must have at least three Attributes and/or Wild Dice at d12 at the same time.

PLAYING WITH OBJECTIVES

Instead of playing a fixed number of Turns, you can play with objectives. They can be common (the same for every player) and public (players know what the objective of the other players is) or different (every player has a different one) and secret (players don't know the objectives of the other players).

Below are listed a number of Objectives, which you can choose or pick at random, rolling a d6. If you are playing with secret objectives, every player must roll secretly and write on the back of his Organization's Sheet his Objectives.

The game ends the moment a player reaches his Objective. In case two players reach their Objective at the same time, calculate Victory Points as normal (see page 254) as a tie breaker between them.

STARTING PHASE

During the Starting Phase all Organizations draw one Action Card (or more if they have Edges/Personalities which grant more).

After this, before the Main Phase begins, they can do one of the following things. The action can be announced publicly or written down in secret on a piece of paper.

Starting Phase Actions. Certain Personalities and Edges have an effect which is resolved in this phase. Remember, *every Organization with a Ruler obtains an Organization Bennie in this Phase.*

Events (Optional). If you want to add a level of randomness to the game, you can decide to use Events. This decision must be taken before the game starts. See page 254 for Events Rules.

MAIN PHASE

The Phase starts with an Action Cards count-down to decide initiative, as normal. Being dealt a Joker grants +2 to all rolls in the round, as usual.

During its turn, an Organization can initiate one Action, chosen from the ones detailed below. Actions are of four Types: Economic, Military, Political and Preparation.

Multi-Action Penalty. Note that some Actions, when initiated, continue till they end (for example War).

For each Action after the first that an Organization has in play during the Round, it suffers the standard multi-action penalty (-2).

Staying On Hold. Exactly as for player characters, an Organization can stay On Hold and then try to interrupt the action of another Organization. The difference is that the interruption is done *after* the acting player declares the Type of action he is going to attempt, and then the interrupting player must say with what Type of action he is going to interrupt. At this point the two players make an opposed roll, rolling on the relevant Attributes. The winner acts before the loser. Note that the loser, playing after the winner, can then decide to change his action. Preparation Actions, which aren't linked to a specific Attribute, roll d4 for purposes of interrupting actions.

Example: During its turn, House Norakor declares a Military Action. House Kardakan, On Hold, decides to interrupt it with a Politics Action. Norakor's player rolls on Military d8

(d4) opposed by Kardakan's Politics d6 (d6), the winner acts first.

STEALING DIE STEPS AND EDGES

Several times, in these rules, you'll find the possibility of an Organization "stealing" an Attribute die step from another Organization.

+The die step stolen can be either the Attribute die or the Wild die (remember that Wild Dice cannot be higher than the Attribute Dice, for Organizations)

+You cannot gain a die higher than d12 through stealing.

+An Organization with d4, if this is stolen, is reduced to d4-2 (for Attribute Dice) or the Wild Die is lost (for Wild Dice). An Organization with d4-2 cannot suffer from stealing.

+You cannot gain a die step if the opponent is too feeble compared to you: its die, before the theft, must be no more than one die step lower than your own. So if you have d10 in an Attribute, you cannot steal from an opponent with d6 or less. The resources stolen simply aren't enough to increase your own significantly.

+You can steal an Edge only if you have its prerequisites.

ECONOMIC ACTIONS

There is only one possible Economic Action.

WEALTH PRODUCTION

The Organization basically uses its assets to grow and produce wealth. Make an Economy roll. With a failure you obtain one Wealth Point, two with a success and

three with a raise or more. Only with a critical failure do you obtain no Wealth.

MILITARY ACTIONS

These Actions inflict damage on other Organizations. When a player declares one of these Actions he must say how many BV of his total he devotes to them. Till the Action ends, this Battle Value isn't be available for other uses, including defense.

There are two possible Military Actions: Raze and War.

RAZE

A Raze is an assault made to harass an opponent Organization without declaring open war. A Raze causes the Diplomatic Relationships between the two Organizations to drop to Friction, and it breaks Alliances.

Play a Strategic Battle (see sidebar) two rounds long against the target Organization. At the end, for each Battle Token the defender loses from your attack, roll a Raze dice (d6): any die rolling 4 or more gives you one Raze Point.

You can spend one Raze Point to make the opponent lose one Wealth Point.

You can spend two Raze Points to make the opponent give you a Wealth Point.

You can spend two Raze Points to reduce one of opponent's Attributes by one die step (maximum one).

You can spend three Raze Points to steal one of your opponent's Attribute die steps, but only till the end of your next turn.

Example: House Narakor Razes House Kardakan. The outcome of the Raze is four Raze Points for House Narakor. It decides to spend one to make the hated Kardakans lose one Wealth Point. Then it spends three of them to steal one Politics die step from the Kardakans till the end of its next turn.

WAR

War is the most serious action an Organization can take against another one. When this happens, the Diplomatic Relationships between the two entities immediately drop to Hostility.

Play a Strategic Battle up to three rounds long. If at the end of the Battle one of the sides loses all its Battle Tokens (Total Victory) or loses at least five of them (Marginal Victory), it is considered the loser of the war and the war ends. Otherwise, the two Organizations are considered entangled in war, and the next Turn, when the first of them acts, another War is automatically fought, with the Organization acting on the higher card being the attacker.

Note that an ongoing war is considered an Action (so taking another one will cause a multi-action penalty to the rolls). A War can be ended with a Diplomatic Action of Negotiate (see below).

If the war ends in a victory, the winner can choose to inflict one of the following conditions on the loser (or two with a Total Victory).

- 1) The loser pays the winner all his Wealth Points.
- 2) The winner steals an Attribute die step from the loser.
- 3) The winner steals an Edge from the loser.
- 4) The loser receives a Hindrance chosen by the winner.

Conquest. Winning a war doesn't mean the other Organization is totally wiped out. This happens only when the loser's BV is reduced to zero and at least two of its Attribute Dice are reduced to d4-2. In this case consider the losing Organization as conquered by the winner. Conquering an enemy immediately awards two Experience Points to the Organization.

Surrender. Before (or even after) a Battle, one side can decide to surrender to the other. In this case all the Edges, Battle Value and Hindrances of the loser pass

to the winner, which also steals one die step from each Attribute of the Loser (if possible). For Personalities, things are trickier: for each Personality of the loser, pick a card from the Action deck. If it is a face card, the Personality is acquired by the winner, otherwise it is lost. If a Joker is dealt, the Personality escapes and joins another, randomly selected, Organization in play. The winning organization also receives one Experience Point.

STRATEGIC BATTLES

Strategic battles are very large scale conflicts between Organizations. They can represent a series of raids, or an entire campaign of conquest.

They are handled with a simplified version of the Mass Battles rules, as described below.

- + *First the attacker declares how much Battle Value he is using in the attack. This amount cannot be used for other attacks or to defend against other attacks in the current Turn. He also declares what Personalities he is using in the battle.*
- + *Then the defender decides how much Battle Value he uses in defense. Defensive Battle Value can be used as many times as you want in the Turn, but it cannot be used to attack till the next Turn. He also declares what Personalities he is using in the battle.*
- + *Battle Tokens are calculated in proportion to the Battle Values of the two sides with this simple formula: $10: \text{Highest BV} = x: \text{Lowest BV}$. Round up the result.*
- + *Both Organizations make a Military roll, the side with more Tokens adds +1 for each token he has more than the adversary, and for each success and raise they score, the opponent loses one Battle Token.*
- + *Lost Battle Tokens are converted proportionately to Battle Value loss (so if an Organization had 10 Battle Tokens and lost 3, it loses 30% of its Battle Value). When you calculate the actual Battle Value lost, round to the closest hundred. So if your BV is 170, it is rounded to 200. If it is 45, it is rounded to zero.*
- + *At the end of the battle, for each Personality involved in the battle, roll a d8 if she is on the losing side or a d12 if she is on the winning side. If the battle ended in a tie, both sides roll d10. If a 1 is rolled on the die, the Personality is killed, if 2 is rolled, she is captured (and cannot be used until she is ransomed). Captured Personalities can be ransomed in the Closing Phase.*

DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS

Often the cunning words of a politician or the shadowy work of spies and assassins can achieve more than the thundering of swords and shields.

There are three possible diplomatic actions. They are:

INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence can represent saboteurs, spies, traitors in the opponent's camp, even political propaganda against another Organization. Unlike military actions, Intelligence is more subtle, because it doesn't cause open war between the Organizations (unless the spies are caught, of course).

Rules-wise, it is an opposed roll between the attacker's and the defender's Politics Attributes, with a penalty of -2 to the attacker's roll if he is currently in Hostility with the defender (security is generally higher during wartime).

If the defender wins, the intelligence fails, if he rolls a 1 on the Intelligence die, regardless of the Wild Die, the spies are caught; this breaks an Alliance and causes Friction. If the attacker wins, he gains one Intelligence Point per success and raise. Intelligence Points can be spent in this manner:

You can spend one Intelligence Point to steal one Wealth Point from the defender.

You can spend one Intelligence Point to prevent the defender from using a specific Edge or Role till the next Turn.

You can spend two Intelligence Points to assassinate a Personality (three points are required to kill a Ruler).

You can spend three Intelligence Points to steal one Personality or Edge from the defender. This action causes Hostility!

NEGOTIATE

War and belligerence between two Organizations cannot last forever: sooner or later peace must be made, but this isn't as simple as it seems. To make peace (or at least a truce) one of the two sides must conduct a Negotiate action. The other Organization can refuse to negotiate, in this case the action is wasted, but it should at least hear the proposal of the other side. During negotiations the two parties can offer things: Wealth Points, troops (in batches of 100 BV), even Edges and Personalities. Note that this is only a proposal, no real exchange happens at this point.

At this point both parties make a Politics (-2) roll. If both rolls are successful, the two Organizations are now at Peace (see Organization Relationships sidebar). If only one succeeds, the two Organizations are in a Truce (if they were already in a Truce, they are at Peace). If both fail, negotiations failed.

PROPOSE ALLIANCE

Two Organizations which are Neutral or at Peace can try to make an Alliance. One of the two Organizations must perform a Propose Alliance action, specifying the type: Economic, Military or Political. Multiple Alliances of different types can be sealed between the same Organizations.

If the other Organization agrees, both Organizations make an opposed Politics roll (they add +2 to the roll for each other Alliance they already have between them).

If both fail the roll, the proposal fails and no Alliance can be made this turn.

If both succeed, but neither wins with a raise, the Alliance is made and is Equal. If one of the two wins with a raise, the Alliance is Unbalanced, with a Major Partner (the winner) and a Minor Partner (the loser).

Equal Alliance. In an Equal Alliance each side, once per turn, can freely use one Edge of their ally as if they owned it *or* receive +2 to one Attribute roll of the same type as the Alliance (so a Military roll for a Military Alliance and so on). In addition, for a Military Alliance, anytime an Organization enters Hostility (or Peace) with one member of the Alliance, it automatically enters the same state for the other ally.

Unbalanced Alliance. In an Unbalanced Alliance, the Major Partner can use both

the Edge *and* the Attribute Bonus as per the Equal Alliance. The Minor Partner has the same benefits as for the Equal Alliance, but must pay 1 Wealth Point to the Major Partner every time he uses one of them.

Renegotiating an Alliance. With a Propose Alliance Action, an Organization can try to renegotiate a disadvantageous Alliance. Simply re-do the opposed roll, but if there is a Major Partner in the current Alliance, he rolls at +2.

Breaking an Alliance. If both sides agree, an Alliance can be broken at any time without penalty. If the break is unilateral, the breaker must pay the other side two Wealth Points or reduce his Politics by one die step.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIPS

The dispositions of the various Organizations to each other are of five types, described below. In certain cases, breaking a relationship (for example attacking an ally) has consequences.

HOSTILITY

Open belligerence between Organizations.

Notes: *This state lasts till the Organizations make Peace or sign a Truce.*

FRICTION

There is tension between the Organizations, but not open war. Friction lasts for the current and the next Turn, then it automatically cools down to Neutral. If two Organizations are already in Friction and one of the two causes more Friction, then this escalates to Hostility.

Notes: *Organizations in Friction suffer -2 to Politics rolls involving both of them.*

NEUTRAL

This is the default relationship between Organizations.

Breaking: *No consequence.*

TRUCE

Truce is a temporary status of peace between two Organizations which were previously in Hostility. Truces last for the Turn of stipulation and the next one. Then, if the Truce isn't transformed into Peace, it turns back to Hostility.

Breaking: *Breaking a Truce causes the breaker to lose one die step in Politics, but only for the current Turn.*

PEACE

Peace indicates the existence of an express peace treaty between two Organizations.

Breaking: *Breaking a Peace causes the breaker to lose one die step in Politics.*

ALLIANCE

Organizations in Alliance are effectively working together for the communal good.

Breaking: *Breaking an Alliance causes the breaker to lose two die steps in Politics.*

CLOSING PHASE

During this Phase the Organizations lick their wounds and settle accounts. *Any Organization Bennie not used during the Turn is now discarded.*

- 1) Raise one Attribute Die *or* Wild Die by one die step. Unlike player characters, you can raise attributes however many times you want every Rank.
- 2) Gain a new Edge.
- 3) Gain a new Personality.
- 4) Remove a Hindrance.

RANSOMING PRISONERS

If a Personality was captured, if the players want, they can agree a ransom to get them back. A Personality which isn't ransomed at the end of the Turn after his capture is considered dead.

TRAINING NEW TROOPS

Organizations, by spending one Wealth Point, can buy 100 BV of new troops or replace lost ones. Up to 300 BV of troops can be acquired in this manner.

ACQUIRING EXPERIENCE

Organizations can trade two Wealth Points for one Experience Point. There is no limit on how many Experience Points they can acquire in this manner.

ADVANCING

Organizations advance exactly like player characters: they can choose an Advance for each 5 Experience Points they gain. Every 20 Experience Points they gain a new Rank, from Novice to Legendary (higher Ranks allow taking particularly powerful Edges).

Every time an Organization advances it can choose one of the following improvements:

OPTIONAL RULE:

ABSTRACT GEOGRAPHY

Clash of Kings, as designed, can be used to simulate various types of conflicting Organizations, from border kingdoms in an ancient world struggling for land to mega-corporations in the far future fighting for economic dominance.

For this reason the game is absolutely map-less, and each Organization can interact with whatever other Organization it wants.

But, in real life, geography is a strong factor in such conflicts, so you can use the following additional rule.

Every Organization can only freely interact with the Organizations of the players sitting to his immediate left and right (assuming you are playing the game sitting at a table). If it wants to interact with other Organizations it must:

- a) Defeat its neighbors.
- b) Ask its neighbors permission to pass (they can ask a toll).
- c) Ignore its neighbors if they are in Alliance with it or if they have less than half its total BV.

WINNING THE GAME

If you aren't playing with Objectives, during the Closing Phase of the last turn, the Clash of Kings ends and Victory Points are assessed in the following manner.

- 1 point per Attribute Die Step
- 1 point per Attribute Wild Die Step
- 1 point per Edge or Personality
- 1 additional point for each Professional (Attribute) Edge
- 1 additional point for each Expert (Attribute) Edge
- 1 point per every 10 Wealth Points currently owned by a player

OPTIONAL RULE: STRATEGIC EVENTS

If you want to add an element of uncertainty to the game, you can decide to add Strategic Events. After players are dealt Action Cards, but before the countdown starts, draw another card from the Action Deck. Ignore it unless it is a Club or a Joker. In these cases a special event happens, as per the table below.

STRATEGIC EVENTS TABLE

Deuce – Pestilence! A terrible pestilence is sweeping the country! Each Organization must roll $(2d6-2) \times 100$. This is the Battle Value they lose. In addition make a Vigor roll (d6 for an NPC) for each Personality in play (except Relics): on a failure the Personality dies. If you have the Medicine

Edge you halve (rounding up) the BV lost and add +1 to the Vigor roll of the Personality.

Three – Barbarians! A band of marauders razes the land! Roll $(1d4 + \text{half the number of Organizations in play}) \times 100$. This is the BV of the Barbarians. Barbarians get an Action Card and every Turn Raze a randomly selected Organization (they have Military d8 (d4)). The Raze Points they receive are used to get Wealth Points to Train Troops during the End Phase. Barbarians stay in play till destroyed. The Organization destroying the Barbarians gets three Experience Points.

Four – Flood! Roads are a quagmire, due to intense rains, making it very difficult for troops to move. During this Turn, performing a Military Action costs one Wealth Point. An Organization can ignore this effect if it has the Good Communications Edge.

Five – Famine! Crops are scarce, women and children are in the streets, begging for food. During this Turn all Economy rolls suffer -4. In addition, costs for Training Troops are doubled. An Organization can ignore this Event with the Well Stocked Edge.

Six – Cold War! During this Turn no Military action is possible. In addition, any Intelligence roll is made with +2 by the Attacker.

Seven – Forced Pact! Choose two random Organizations. If they are in Hostility, they are now automatically at Peace. If they are neutral or better they are automatically in an Equal Alliance (roll a d6 to check the type of Alliance: 1-2 – Economic; 3-4 – Military; 5-6 – Political).

Eight – Raiders' Moon! Pillaging is good this year. During this Turn all rolls to the Raze Dice are made at +1. In addition, note which Organization obtains the most Raze Points during this Turn; it gains three Experience Points during the End Phase (this award is ignored in case of parity between Organizations).

Nine – Gods of War! The gods of war want blood! At the end of any Battle, each force loses an additional 100 BV, but any Organization involved in a War gets one Experience Point during the End Phase.

Ten – Peace Festivities! This is a period of general peace and friendship, something in the air which makes men stay at peace with their brothers. Organizations gain one Experience Point for each Alliance they have at the moment.

Jack– Trade Fair! A great trade fair occurs, with people of every race and place presenting their wares. It is a time of bustling activity. All Organizations make an Economy roll; the Organization scoring the highest roll is paid two Wealth Points by any other Organization in play.

Queen – Great Harvest! This year crops were bountiful or, in general, the economy is running well. This Turn the Produce Wealth Action grants an additional Wealth Point.

King – A Hero is Born! The greatest men can be found in the humblest places. Randomly select an Organization: it gains one Personality of its choice (except a Relic).

Ace – The Finding! After many centuries of absence, an item of power makes its appearance in the world again! Randomly select an Organization: it gains the Relic Personality for free.

Joker – Good Omens! The signs in the skies are good: every Organization gets an additional Organization Bennie.

CLASH OF KINGS IN A ROLE PLAYING CAMPAIGN

The rules above are an integrated system which allows you to play out the destinies of feuds, kingdoms, even realms. But how can all that mix with a traditional RPG campaign and your gaming group?

In a number of ways, described below.

Clash of Kings as the Big Picture. You, the GM, can use this ruleset as a way to see what happens in the world, without being forced to script the story. At this level, the heroes are only spectators, or maybe pawns ignorant of what is happening.

Players as Personalities. The best way to integrate the heroes into the Clash of Kings is making them take on the roles of important Personalities in an Organization. In the descriptions of the various Personalities you find the prerequisites for a PC to become one of them. One of the players can be the Ruler, and the others can cover important roles (see sidebar). Now they have in their hands the destiny of many lives...

Adventures in place of Rolls and the Opposite. The presence of a double set of rules, the standard, character-level ones and the strategic-level ones allow you, the GM, to do at least two very interesting things. First, on the character-level, you can play entire adventures in place of an Organization's Attribute roll. The heroes'

Organization is under an Intelligence attack? Instead of rolling you can play a whole scenario about tracking down the spy. If the heroes complete it successfully, you can rule they won the opposed Politics roll (maybe with a raise), if the spy wasn't caught, this effect will have tangible effects on the gaming world.

The same principle can be applied in the opposite way: are your players not very interested in playing the military conquest of a foreign kingdom because they prefer social interaction? You can skip a lot of fights, battles and so on with a simple War action, and, according to the outcome, play out on the characters' scale the effect on their lives.

Killing Personalities. In the Clash of Kings, Personalities are only pawns, even if important ones, on the great chessboard of life, but in a role-playing campaign they are much more: they are the heroes. Anytime there is a real chance for the player characters to be eliminated, instead play a particularly tough and challenging scene or mini-adventure. Remember, they are heroes, they can change the world!

Clash of Kings in the After the Adventure Phase. As an alternative to what's said above you can decide that the heroes are the movers and shakers of an Organization, but that the management of their kingdom happens during the "downtime" in the After the Adventure phase. So during the game the heroes play normal small-scale adventures, and between adventures they influence the big picture around them. If you prefer, it isn't even necessary for the players to use their heroes as Personalities: they can have another character in play, which is a Personality, and which they use only during the Clash of Kings. In this way

every player can rule a different (and competing) Organization...

Keeping in mind all the considerations before, the possibilities for adventures are endless!

GM's TIP:

PERSONALITIES AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Personalities are very generic, but player characters are very specific. Below you'll find a list of Personalities and corresponding character concepts.

Assassin: *Poisoner, king's justice, hired thug, silent servant, suicidal killer.*

General: *Grizzled soldier, gallant knight, cunning tactician, baughty noble.*

Freebooter: *Pirate, robber baron, outlaw lord, corsair.*

Master of Coin: *Trusty (or untrusted) banker, money launderer, merchant lord.*

Minister: *Counselor, king's wife, old uncle, archbishop.*

Religious Figure: *Hermit, holy man, prophet, fanatic, bard.*

Ruler: *King, prince, guild master, crime lord, high priest.*

Sorcerer: *Warlock, wizard, seer, Lotusmaster, monk.*

Spymaster: *Head of the secret service, pardoned criminal, innocent-looking lady.*

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B&B ORGANIZATION SHEET

.....
NAME

.....
CONCEPT

.....
EXPERIENCE

.....
RANK

.....
PICTURE/COAT OF ARMS

ECONOMICS

MILITARY

POLITICS

BATLE VALUE: WEALTH POINTS:

HINDARANCES

EDGES

PERSONALITIES

BACKGROUND, DESCRIPTION AND NOTES