

BLOOD LEGACY OF MARS



BY H.M. 'DAIN' LYBARGER

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Guard Captain Rodel looked over the balcony at the red banners waving in the plaza below. They were being held aloft by rabble; a disaffected and disloyal mob tearing up paving stones and lobbing them at the palace windows. They were armed only with farm implements and tradesman's tools – but they're numbers were growing...

In the royal family's quarters, a nursemaid held a squalling infant to her breast, trying to soothe it. Fearfully, she watched out the window as the mob tore down the gates and forced their way into the palace. "It will be all right, little one. Your father will make sure of that..." she murmured, shuddering to think what the King would do to the mob's leaders once they were captured. Then she heard the sounds of fighting, coming closer. Luria swaddled the infant in her gray spiderweave cloak, and fled.

As the palace gates cracked and fell, Rodel led two of the Royal Guard down the marble-pillared hall toward the Throne Room. His Majesty must be protected! The crack of radium rifles sounded as he turned the corner, and both his companions were cut down by sizzling bolts! Rodel dived forward, naked blade in his hand – then his mouth dropped open in shock! The Royal Guards at the Throne Room door had fired on their brethren – and now their rifles were leveled at him!

"Turn and go, Captain. Your duty to the tyrant is discharged -- his blood is already drying on the throne." The trembling Guardsman looked over his gunsights into Rodel's eyes, and saw the resolve there. "The Citizen's Council has issued a warrant for your head as well as his – but you trained me. Don't die trying to avenge a man who wasn't fit to lace your sandals."



Rodel cursed the faithless soldier, but turn he did – toward the royal apartments. The King may be slain, but his blood was not all spilled; and Rodel's duty to him did not end with his personal death.

The mob below had cut off all hope of escape, and driven Luria upward into one of the palace spires as she tried to hide. Suddenly, there were six of the Red Banner swordsmen blocking the ramp before her! Luria screamed, and turned to run back – but a broad-shouldered man in the bronze wireweave of a Royal Guard Officer leapt from the balcony above, and into the clot of swordsmen! "Run, girl! Run!" he cried, pointing upward with his free hand as he cut the first of them down.

Luria stumbled, but ran upward, protecting the infant with her body. The ramp led to an airship dock at the top of the spire. Pleasure-craft belonging to the royal family were tied there. One bobbed invitingly against the padded dock-bumpers, but it was a dead end for the nursemaid – she had no knowledge of how to fly an airship!

Luria heard footsteps on the ramp behind her, and turned in fear – but it was the Guard Captain who struggled into view. His armor was slashed, his cloak was gone, and blood, thick and red, poured from beneath his weapon harness. "Hurry," he urged, forcing a smile. "those rascals won't bother you again – but they have plenty of friends."

Rodel hustled the girl and her infant charge into the air-skiff. Thumbing a contact on the console, he released the vessel's gleamingly transparent wingsails. Before strapping in, Rodel slashed his blade across the skiff's mooring line, severing it cleanly. He had no need of it – there would be no returning to Maran – if they could even escape.

The sky above the city was full of ships, as the Navy fought against the rebelling populace. An aerial cruiser, fallen to rebels within its own crew, was picking off any flyers escaping the palace. Two were already smoking wrecks in the plaza below. A deck-mounted radium gun pivoted toward the unarmed flyer. Rodel gripped the yoke tight, and slammed it forward into the console. Wingsails folded, he dived straight at the cruiser. The deck-gunner, fearing a suicidal crash from the tiny skiff, flinched. His shot went wide!

Rodel hauled back on the yoke, the muscles in his arms straining -- and felt hot pain in his side as something tore within his wound. Warm blood gushed, but he ignored it as he fought his tiny ship's stabilizers. Swooping low under the warship's keel, Rodel broke through to clear sky!

The air-skiff was a silver streak against the pink sunset. Westward it sailed, across pale red desert and purple-tinged savannah. Luria huddled in the back with

the baby, singing softly to calm his cries. Rodel held the yoke lightly now, drifting in and out of sleep, listening to the girl's sweet voice. His limbs felt cold, but her voice warmed him somehow.

Discharging his duty, Captain Rodel breathed his last as the air-skiff skidded to a halt beneath the looming spires of a distant city.

Alone in a strange city, caring for an infant not her own, Luria did the best that she could. She scrounged in the gutters for food; she begged. Perhaps if they had fled to Callor Maralin it would have been different, but in Darisheel, like all Baltan cities, there are few who act for charitable reasons. Before her beauty had time to become haggard, Luria attracted the attention of a whoremonger. There were Baltanese men who preferred to lay with free women, not slaves, even when they were paying for their pleasures. That life was less hard than living on the streets, and selling her body meant little to Luria now; she knew that she could never fall in love with another man. The Guard Officer who had died to save her and her infant charge had captured her heart, even though she had never known his name.

So Taso Anas grew up a whoreson, doted on and spoiled by the girls of the house until he was old enough to notice them as girls – then he was on the streets on his own more often than not. That was but the first taste of rejection for young Taso Anas.

His mother's life had not been easy, but she had saved her earnings and spent them to purchase a gentleman's education for her 'son'. His fencing academy taught more than swordplay and dance; he was taught letters and manners, and given the rudiments of science and mathematics. She never spoke to him of his father, but when in her cups she would spin tales of a heroic swordsman who was fair of face and form, and noble and pure of heart. Taso Anas could never compete with that image of manly perfection, and hardly tried. Whatever his mother might have wanted him to believe, he was certain he was some canal-trader's by-blow. Still, her tall tales sparked in him a love of literature and language. He drifted into writing -- first poetry, and then plays.

The pen may be mightier than the sword, but living by the pen pays poorly in the stews of Darisheel. Every artiste needs a patron, and patronage is hard to come by when one has no family or lineage upon which to base an introduction...

Living the life of a wastrel poet in the theater districts of the Baltan Confederation, Taso Anas has little ambition beyond drinking and following his muse.

When an impoverished noble discovers Taso's royal birthmark, he immediately knows what it means: It means that he has a way back into Baltan high society, coat-tailing on the mysterious Prince's fame as deposed Royalty!

Unfortunately for this patron of the arts, there are political forces who would see his protégé dead -- and other political forces who would use him as a figurehead for a Royalist Counter-revolution!

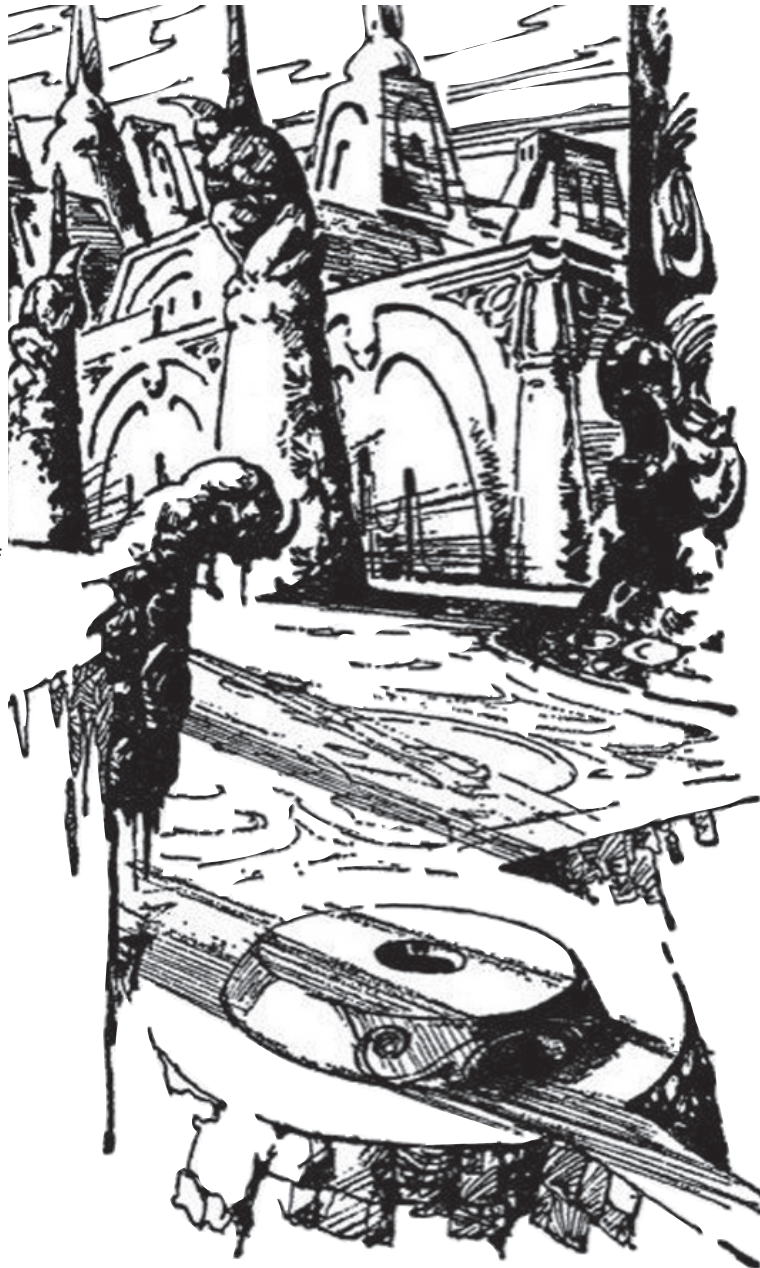
Enter the PCs, as friends or associates of the poet or his patron, caught in a web of intrigue, assassination, and violence!

ADVICE FOR THE GAME MASTER

This adventure is organized differently from most Savage Worlds adventures. The plot is convoluted, and has several potential branches. Because of this, the main NPCs are given extensive write-ups in the *Dramatis Personae* section in the last chapter, along with a list of their personal plots, plans, and goals. Locations which will be visited more than once during the course of the adventure are detailed in the last chapter as well, for convenience. Refer frequently to that section as you read through the adventure. In addition, a relationship diagram has been provided, showing the main NPCs and their conflicting intentions, to help you keep it all straight.

Each Chapter has both Plot Point scenes which must occur, and additional scenes which may or may not play out, depending upon the PCs reactions to events. It is also expected that the PCs will generate scenes on their own, as they pursue their various courses of action within Darisheel. In particular, uses of the skills Investigate and Streetwise should be played out as full scenes, as the PCs interact with the adventure's NPCs.

Between certain Chapters, a significant amount of time is expected to pass. Several weeks may go by between the events of Chapter One and Chapter Two, and perhaps as much as a month may go by between Chapter Two and Chapter Three. From there, things pick up speed. The events of the last two Chapters of the adventure take place over the course of a few



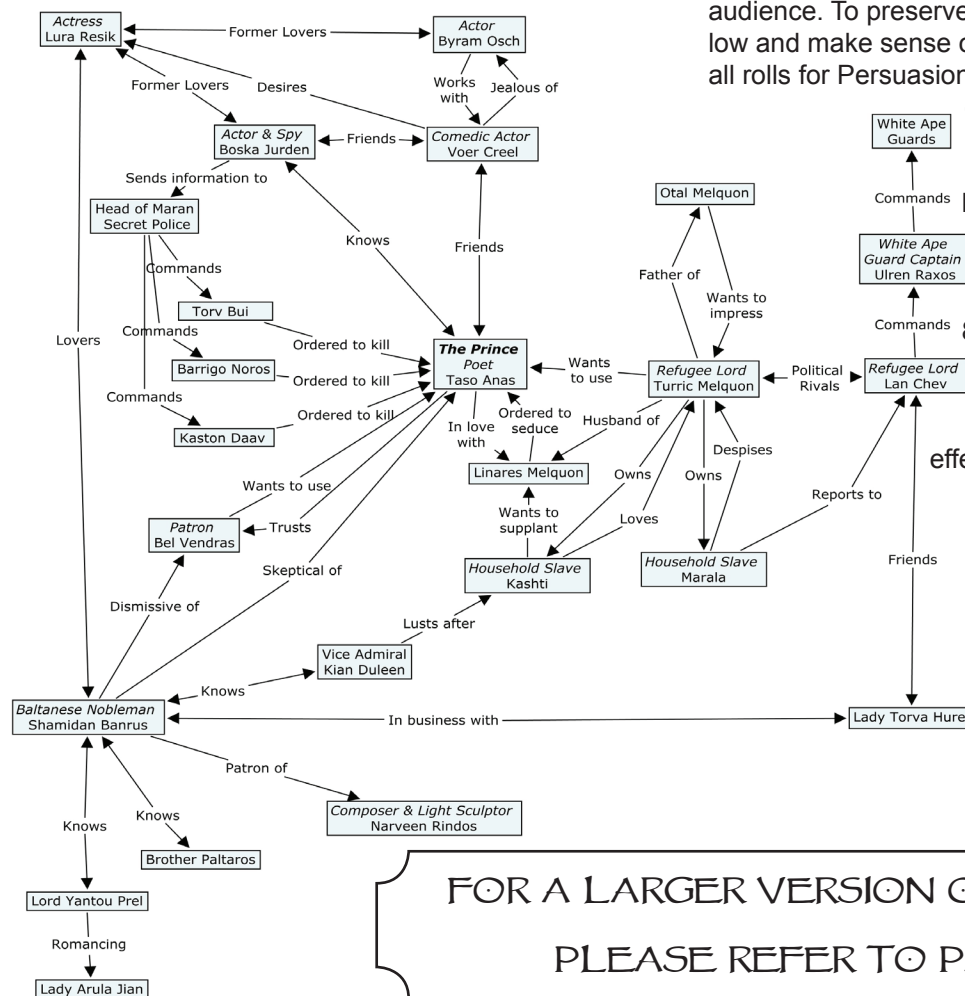
days at most. Feel free to insert other, shorter adventures or encounters in and around Darisheel to occupy the PCs time as the main plot line develops.

The PCs can enter into this adventure in several ways. Unusually for a Savage Worlds adventure, it is entirely possible for the PCs to come into it at separate points and at cross-purposes to one another, if you wish and if your players are willing. When PCs are not all in the same scene together, you must pay special attention to cutting between their locations so as to keep everyone playing involved in events as they unfold. At many points in the text, individual PCs will be referred to by their relationship to the Prince. These relationships are Friend, Rescuer, Agent, Minder, and Celebrity. The entry-points for PCs who will fall into these rolls are called out in the text. Assign any PC who are Lowborn Baltanese to the Friend role, and any PCs with signifi-

FRAMING DEVICE

If in your campaign you have established that the Maran Revolution occurred more than a generation ago, this adventure can still be incorporated as a sort of 'historical flashback'. Find an excuse for your PCs to attend a play – a production of "Blood Legacy" by the infamous Baltan playwright Taso Anas. As the curtain goes up, have the players create temporary characters for use in this adventure, fulfilling the roles listed above... Afterward, the groundwork will be laid for the framing adventure described on page xx, which can easily take place in the current-day of your campaign.

cant combat abilities to the Rescuer (and later Minder) roles. A PC with skill in Investigation should of course be put into the Agent role. Any PC who is not a Red Martian should fill the Celebrity role, since he or she will be a novelty in Baltan society. Although there are five different roles, there is no need to fill all of them, nor is there a requirement that there be only one PC in each role. You can run the adventure successfully with as few as three players (Friend, Rescuer/Minder, and Agent), two players (Friend or Rescuer and Agent), or even one player (Friend who becomes Minder and Agent as the story progresses).



INTOXICATION

There are several scenes where one or more of the NPC – and possibly the PCs – will be intoxicated. When characters consume alcohol or other intoxicants, they must make a Vigor roll. Success means that they are merely tipsy, with no mechanical effect. Failure on the Vigor roll indicates that the character becomes drunk. Drunken characters are at -2 to skills linked to Agility or Smarts.

Failure on a second Vigor roll means that the character is very drunk: -4 to skills linked to Agility or Smarts. Additional alcohol or other intoxicants at that point will lead to 1 level of Fatigue per failed Vigor roll. This can lead to Death if someone 'helps' the character drink even when he or she is Incapacitated and incapable of voluntary action.

During the adventure, NPCs will frequently lie to the PCs – as the GM, you must handle this very carefully. Although the NPCs may desperately wish to keep their secrets, it is in the best interest of the game for those secrets to be revealed. In fiction of this type, particularly as portrayed in movies and TV shows, when a protagonist is lied to, even if the protagonist believes what is said, the audience knows that the other party is lying. RPGs blur the line between protagonist and audience. To preserve the ability of the players to follow and make sense of the story, the GM should make all rolls for Persuasion and Notice publicly. That way,

even if the character is conned into believing the lie, the player is aware of the failed roll, and knows that his character has been deceived. GMs should encourage the use of the Story Declarations rules from page 88 of the MARS book to allow players to manufacture fortuitous circumstances to protect their characters from the side effects of deceit.

FOR A LARGER VERSION OF THIS MAP
PLEASE REFER TO PAGE 31

CHAPTER ONE: MARKED AT BIRTH

In this chapter, the PCs will meet Taso Anas for the first time, in ignominious circumstances. They will also encounter the impoverished Baltan nobleman Bel Vendra, who has financial ills – and who makes a discovery that could cure those ills, and more...

DARISHEEL BY NIGHT

The theatre district of Darisheel is within the same rectangular plot of land that contains the city's main docks. The theatres, taverns, bordellos, and gambling dens of the area face the smaller feeder canals and streets. It is here that Taso Anas is usually found, and on this particular night, Bel Vendra and at least one or two of the PCs will be found here as well.

The streets here are dark, with only occasional radium lamps casting brighter circles of illumination. The colorful, glowing squiggles of radium-powered advertising signs mark the entrances of the districts assorted dens of iniquity – in particular the Twin Moons brothel and Grazz's Pit, an underground gambling establishment hidden beneath a ramshackle warehouse.

Taso Anas has been whoring and drinking throughout the evening, perhaps in the company of a PC who is a Friend of his. One or more PCs who are destined to be his Rescuers might also be enjoying their evening in the area.

At this time of year, the water level in the canals is still quite low – some of the tertiary canals are altogether dry, awaiting the spring floods. As the assorted protagonists reach a point where a bridge arches over the feeder canal, they are set upon by footpads! There are two footpads for each PC, plus one each for Taso Anas and Bel Vendra. The attackers are armed with a mix of daggers, short swords, and cudgels. Half of the gang will engage their victims in melee, and the other half will pick their pockets, cut their purses, and in any other way relieve them of their valuables. As soon as this is done, or as soon as three of the footpads are down, the entire group will flee. They will split up, taking to the alleys and shadows in order to elude pursuit.

Taso Anas (and his Friend, if a PC fulfils that role) will be seriously impaired during this fight, due to intoxication. After a night of heavy drinking, they will begin the encounter at -4 to skills linked to Agility or Smarts. Bel Vendra is less impaired, due to having less money with which to buy drinks – he is at -2 to the appropriate skills. Allow PC Rescuers a Vigor roll as described above to determine their levels of intoxication at the start of the encounter.

During the fight Taso Anas, who is not much of a combatant, will wind up hit on the head and dumped over the balustrade into the canal! When the footpads run, he will be spotted by Bel Vendra (and by any PC who makes a Notice roll) floating face down.

Hauling Taso Anas out of the canal will not require a

Swimming roll since the water is only chest deep, but it will take a Climbing roll at -2 due to the slippery sides of the canal. Still, it is fortunate for Taso Anas that he did not land in a dry canal and wind up with a broken neck!

If none of the PCs see him, or if they un-heroically decline to aid the poet, Bel Vendra will attempt to shame them into it. Once the PCs have brought Taso Anas to dry ground, Bel Vendra will render first aid. He will examine the poet's head wound, and in the process he will discover a small royal blue birthmark, in a shape reminiscent of a winged sword. The mark is on the nape of Anas' neck, just beneath his hair.

Vendra will immediately notice the birthmark. Any PC who makes a Notice roll will observe both the birthmark and Vendra's startled reaction to it. A PC who also makes a Knowledge(Politics) roll will recognize the sign for what it is – the royal birthmark of the now-extinct ruling family of Maran – and probably have a startled reaction of his own!

Vendra will immediately become very solicitous of Taso Anas, and invite him to his residence to dry off and take refuge until daylight. Any PCs in the scene (Friends or Rescuers of Taso Anas) will be included in the invitation – Vendra wants to have an escort of his own, in case the footpads come back.

IN THE PITS

At his residence, as the companions are recovering their composure, Vendra will broach the subject of Taso Anas' birthmark, and ask if the youth knows its significance. Since his 'mother' was keeping the secret of his parentage from everyone, including him, Anas is unaware of the mark. He will initially be skeptical of the nobleman's story.

Bel Vendra will suggest that Taso Anas is in fact Prince Anattio of Maran – his age would be about right, and Anas can't point to any living family who could claim otherwise. The infant Prince was thought to have been slain with the rest of the royal family, when the Citizen's Council threw down the Maran monarchy years ago.

"You, young man, were born to better things than living in some garret! Oh, to be sure, your talents will take you far in life – but they would take you much farther if you started a bit... higher, shall we say... on the rungs of success!"

Before the discussion of the young poet's future can get much further along, there will be a brief interruption: Bel Vendra owes considerable money to someone, due to a long losing streak at lavkal. His debtor has sold Vendra's note to a person who specializes in the 'difficult collection' of gambling debts – a former gladiator named Grazz, who runs a fighting pit in the warehouse district.

Two of Grazz's enforcers will show up at Vendra's residence in the middle of the night, hammering on his door with meaty fists. Their arms and chests are aswirl with black and violet tattoos, and daggers and axes hang from their broad belts. They will force their way into the room and insist that Vendra accompany them. They will escort him to Grazz' Pit for an 'interview' with the ex-gladiator, during which the change in ownership of Bel Vendra's debt and its new terms of repayment will be 'explained' to him.

If any PCs present attempt to stop the enforcers from taking Vendra, they will fight. Use the Thug stats on page 170 of the MARS book for these two, beefed up as indicated in the MARS book if the PCs are particularly combat-capable. Once the fight starts, if the enforcers are overmatched by the PCs, they will attempt to flee. If the PCs permit the enforcers to escape they will return later with help; a pair of caged hagadans borrowed from Grazz' underground arena. They will wait in the maze of walls and subsidiary buildings outside the tower in which Vendra lives until morning, waiting for the moment when he comes out. Once they spot Bel Vendra, they will release their hagadans on anyone accompanying him, and seize Vendra bodily to drag him away.

Either after he returns from Grazz' Pit (with a black eye for his trouble), or after the PCs run off the enforcers, Bel Vendra will thank any PCs who stood up for him, then continue; "I must apologize for this little contretemps. I... unfortunately... have incurred rather more debt than I can at this time handle. If there were a way for me to re-gain some measure of my former position in society, I could make certain contacts, develop a less vulnerable mode of existence..."

At this point, he pauses, expecting Taso Anas to offer aid in return for the aid Vendra so recently gave him. When it appears that that is the only socially acceptable response, Taso Anas will grudgingly do so.

"Excellent, my boy! And much appreciated, I assure you! There is a way you can be of inestimable aid to me – and to yourself, I think." Bel Vendra will outline a plan, with airy hand-waves of the specific details, for the debut of the long-thought-to-be-dead Prince Anatlio of Maran...

COMING OUT PARTY

Several days after their first chance encounter with Taso Anas and Bel Vendra, the PCs will receive invitations to a dinner party hosted by one of the leading merchant lords of Darisheel, Shamidan Banrus. Banrus is a great patron of the arts, and the party is in honor of the composer and light-sculptor Narveen Rindos, whose new symphonic work is about to premiere. They have Bel Vendra to thank for the invitations – he called upon some of his last remaining social contacts to get himself, Taso Anas, and the other witnesses

to his discovery of the 'missing heir to the throne of Maran' onto the guest list. Naturally, the PC Rescuers of the Prince will be expected by Bel Vendra to bear witness to his story when he reveals it over dinner.

Lady Torva Hurel is a business associate of the host, and will attend the dinner. Lan Chev is a friend of Lady Torva Hurel, and her escort for the evening. Turric and Linares Melquon will also attend, invited because Turric Melquon is the leading light of the Maran aristocracy in exile in Darisheel. The tension between Chev and Melquon will be palpable – no Notice roll will be required to see that they are unfriendly rivals.

Other notable guests at the party include Brother Paltaros, a shaven-pated prelate of the religious Dawn Brotherhood and Vice Admiral Kian Duleen of the Baltan Navy. Lord Yantou Prel, the barge-building magnate and Lady Arula Jiann, heiress to the Jiann vineyards are both present, as friends of the host and fellow patrons of the Encarmined Gate Theater. A PC who is an Earthman, or who has done something in previous adventures to generate fame or notoriety will be invited as well, as a society novelty. This is the entry point into the adventure for a PC who will fill the Celebrity role.

The dinner is an informal affair, held in a private room in a restaurant which caters to Darisheel's elite. Taso Anas will be somewhat out of place in such company, and will be making a great effort to leave a good impression.

When Bel Vendra recounts the story of his (and the PC's) daring rescue of the young poet, and reveals his identity as none other than the lost heir to the throne of Maran, Prince Anattio, he will ask the PCs to describe what they saw as well. Let each of the PCs tell their version of events in their own words.

Reactions among the guests will be varied. Lady Torva Hurel will be openly skeptical; she seems to have some prior knowledge of Bel Vendra's reputation. Shamidan Banrus, the host, will be non-committal, but complimentary to Taso Anas' poetry, which he has heard on previous occasions. Brother Paltaros will remain silent on both the poet's skill and his birthmark, directing the conversation back to Narveen Rindos' musical and optical accomplishments whenever possible.

Lan Chev and Turric Melquon, as Maran expatriates, will ask a number of pointed questions of the PCs and Bel Vendra, subtly checking the veracity of Vendra's story. When framing their questions, make sure to pick up on any inconsistencies within the PC's individual versions of the story. The tension between the two refugee-lords will lead to an undercurrent of 'competitive skepticism' between them; if one is convinced, the other will become more skeptical, and vice versa.

The remaining guests will take the claim at face value, and will address Taso Anas as 'your highness'. They will seem quite enchanted by this chance encounter with royalty. When the party breaks up, both Vice Admiral Duleen and Lady Arula Jian will invite Prince Anattio to dine with them at some future date.

A SKEPTICAL INQUIRY

Two days after the dinner party, a young Baltanese gentleman, barely into adulthood, will contact one of the PCs privately. He will be reticent about his identity, and state only that he represents a noble who wishes to employ the PC to make a 'sensitive inquiry'. This is the entry point for a PC who will fill the Agent role.

The meeting will take place at a quiet canal-side café in the central commercial District of the city, not far from one of the broad strolling parks. The youth will order wine for himself and the PC Agent, but will nervously skip any small talk and get right to business.

"The individual I represent wants a test conducted, to determine if this so-called 'Prince' is genuine, or some kind of fraud. He is willing to pay you well to make this determination."

The payment offer will be sufficient to tempt the PC Agent – fifty or a hundred alvash, perhaps, or a radium capsule if the PC owns a radium weapon. (Specific economics are not the focus of MARS adventures, and so the payment may be varied to suit your particular campaign.)

The mysterious noble will provide his agent with a way to check to see if the Prince's birthmark is genuine or a tattoo; a small radium-powered light-tube. His messenger will demonstrate the tubes use.

"All you need to do is shine this light on the 'birthmark'. If it is a tattoo, the ink will glow faintly for several minutes afterward. If it is a genuine birthmark, there is no ink, and no glow." The young nobleman will close the light-tube with a snap and hand it to the PC Agent. "You must do this in a dimly-lit place, and you must do it in front of witnesses – Noble and Highborn witnesses. You have three days. Meet me here afterward, and receive your payment."

The youth is Otal Melquon, and the noble he represents is his father, Turric Melquon. Turric has suspicions concerning the veracity the claims Bel Vendra made at the dinner party. He has grudgingly entrusted his son with the task of hiring and instructing an investigator to test the Prince's birthmark.

If the PC approached by Otal Melquon refuses to take the job, Otal will hire someone else – Boska Jurden.

If the Agent speaks to Bel Vendra about being approached with this mission, Vendra will be pleased "Excellent, excellent! Much as it pains me to be disbe-

It is Common Knowledge among the Red Martians that royal blue is a difficult color to create on their scarlet complexions. The only effective royal blue ink known to the tattoo artists of Mars is derived from the crushed shells of a species of thornpatch-dwelling insects. It is rare and difficult to acquire, and it has one other peculiar property; it fluoresces under certain specific frequencies of light.

lieved, this is a sign that someone is taking an interest in my young protégé!" Bel Vendra will get a wily look on his face. "Whenever you meet the messenger for your payment – follow him! See if you can figure out who his employer is..."

If the Agent speaks to Taso Anas about this, he will be anxious to test out the birthmark himself, and will ask the PC Agent to use the light-tube on him then and there. The birthmark, being genuine, will not glow. Taso Anas will be visibly relieved – up to this point, he hasn't been sure himself that Bel Vendra was serious about his heritage.

CHAPTER TWO:

ALL OF MARS IS A STAGE

In this Chapter, the PCs will become part of the newly-revealed Prince's inner circle – and they will find themselves protecting him from his own worst excesses...

LIVING THE HIGH LIFE

Narveen Rindos will find it entirely useful to invite the Prince to see and hear the first performance of his latest light-sculpture symphony. Bel Vendra is certainly happy to make sure that the Prince puts in an appearance at the Encarmined Gate Theater – and at the garden reception afterward. Any opportunities to eat, drink, and mingle with the Baltan gentry are to be seized with gusto!

PCs who are Friends or Rescuers of the Prince will also be invited by Narveen Rindos – to do otherwise would be rude, and might offend the Prince. Note that this will be true even if Taso Anas is unfriendly for some reason toward one or more of the PC Rescuers. It provides a logical reason for them to once more be thrown into the Prince's company.

Turric Melquon will be in the symphony audience, attended by one of his female slaves, Kashti, rather than by his wife. He will behave quite familiarly with her, even in public, caressing her near-naked flesh at every opportunity.

Lurra Rasik, a popular Darisheel actress, will be Shamidan Banrus' date for the event. The sexual attraction between them will be obvious – but not as blatantly vulgar as that between Turric Melquon and his slave.

Voer Creel, a local comedic actor and acquaintance of Taso Anas will be present. He is actually a party-crasher; he has neither paid to attend the symphony nor been invited to the reception afterward. Since he is a familiar face at the Encarmined Gate, he found it easy to slip in through the backstage door. Allow the PCs a Notice roll vs Voer Creel's Stealth to spot him sneaking in.

The other NPCs encountered at the dinner party are also present. They will take no further part in the main events of the adventure, but provide both background color and the opportunity for PCs to use their investigative and social Skills and Edges to discover details.

After the performance, the audience will gather in the garden courtyard in front of the theater. Small radium lanterns in a variety of colors have been hung from the columns and trees, providing pleasant illumination. Shamidan Banrus, as the composer's patron, has provided refreshments, and various unemployed actors and other theater hangers-on are acting as

waiters and attendants. Trays of drinks and food are circulating among the guests. This is an ideal time for the PCs to mingle, and overhear assorted gossip that might serve them well later.

Overheard at the garden party:

Vice Admiral Duleen, speaking to another Naval Officer: "Melquon's Kashti is quite spectacular, isn't she – you can tell by the way she moves that she's court-san trained. I've offered to buy her three times, but he won't sell."

Voer Creel to Lurra Rasik: "Bel Vendra must know more about politics than he seems to. He wouldn't be currying the favor of the Maran refugee-lords if he didn't."

Lord Yantou Prel, to Brother Paltaros "I've heard that boy recite! His poetry stands on its own merits; he doesn't need the cachet of being deposed royalty to sell theater seats..."

Lady Torva Hurel, to Shamidan Banrus: "Prince Anat-tio seems to have fallen in with bad company. Bel Vendra's reputation is... well... 'colorful' to say the least."

This is the ideal time for the Agent to attempt to fulfill his mission. The garden courtyard will be dimly lit by the colored radium lanterns, and there will be a number of Highborn witnesses – notably Shamidan Banrus and Turric Melquon. The only difficulty will be in getting close to Taso Anas – Bel Vendra will be at his side for the entire event, basking in the reflected fame. Of course, if the Agent confided in either one of them beforehand, that will not be a problem.

If Boska Jurden was hired as the Agent, he will make sure to be present, acting as a waiter. Allow the PCs Notice rolls to see him approach the Prince, with a small silver tube in his hand... PCs who succeed at the roll may well decide that the silver tube is a weapon or some other type of threat, and react accordingly. Deal initiative cards to Boska Jurden and any PCs who made their Notice rolls as normal. The Prince will get no card on the first round, being surprised by Boska Jurden's approach.

Of course, if the Agent is not also one of the PCs who are known to the Prince and his companions at this point, they may see the Agent as a threat, and react accordingly... Give any PC who does so a Bennie, for 'genre-appropriate role playing', and proceed to initiative, as above.

Regardless of the outcome of any combat, Turric Melquon will observe that the Prince's birthmark does not glow after being exposed to the light-tube.

PCs that make a Notice roll will observe that, of all the guests, only Turric Melquon seemed to expect that something might happen regarding the Prince's birthmark.

ENTOURAGE

Now that his plans are progressing, Bel Vendra is sensing certain problems relating to the Prince's habits. Taso Anas likes living the low life – which, in Vendra's opinion, will cause trouble. A few days after the garden party, Bel Vendra will approach PCs who are Friends or Rescuers of the Prince and ask, courteously, if they would keep an eye on his protégé, and try to keep him from harming himself with excess. In addition, any PC who is a member of the Nobility will be asked to coach Taso Anas in manners and comportment, so that he will be able to mingle more effectively with his peers.

PCs who agree to this protective role vis-à-vis the Prince will be referred to later in the adventure text as 'Minders'. Bel Vendra being who he is, money will never be mentioned, but some form of favor-trading will be implied.

Bel Vendra will invite the Prince to move into better quarters. "My boy, it ill befits royalty to live above a bordello!" He will move the young man into his own building, into a suite of rooms one floor above his own, where he can keep a close eye on him. He will further insist that the PC Minders move in with the Prince as well.

LOW FRIENDS IN LOWER PLACES

The following scenes should take place during the time period between the Prince's introduction to Baltan high society and the Water's Peak ball. They provide opportunities for the Prince's Friends and Minders to interact with the various NPCs. Pay special heed to the earlier intoxication rules: The Prince, at least, will be drinking heavily during these scenes.

DRUNKEN RIVALRY

The Prince will decide to go with a pair of his theater cronies, Voer Creel and Boska Jurden, (and any PCs who are Friends) to Grazz' Den to bet on the ythru fights. He will of course have to shake his Minders in order to do so; Bel Vendra would not approve of such a course of action. PCs who are Minders will need a success on a Notice roll to discover the Prince's plans, and may need a Tracking success to follow him there. Once the Minders arrive, Taso Anas will buy them a round of drinks and invite them to join his party. He will vigorously resist any attempt by the Minders to take him away from his pleasures.

During the course of the evening, Voer Creel will make drunken jokes, and Boska Jurden will make no secret

of his political beliefs, skewering his friend Voer Creel's 'bourgeois attitudes' at every turn, and mocking the idea that a 'Lowborn and gutter-raised poet' might actually be a scion of Royalty. "Not that I think the less of you for being Lowborn – on the contrary! Your mother was a whore, but an honest whore, at least! Most of our Highborn Baltanese 'ladies' spread their legs just as easily, and for more profit to themselves, though they'd never admit it." If any PC present is Highborn, Boska Jurden will be as thoughtlessly insulting to that PC as he is to everyone else.

Any PC who accompanies the Prince and who was also involved in the earlier fight against Grazz' enforcers will be spotted by one of those enforcers. The enforcer will bide his time until the beginning of a match between a ythru and a horde of shenqs. When he gets his opportunity, he will grab his victim and throw him into the pit with the shenqs!

Grazz will draw his radium pistol to keep order in the room – and begin booking bets on the PC! Other PCs may pursue their own revenge upon the enforcer; Grazz will not intervene unless it looks like his man is going to be killed. Depending upon the Prince's relationship with the PC in the pit, he may bet for or against him. Likewise, Voer Creel and Boska Jurden will wager – Jurden will bet against a PC who is Highborn, following his personal prejudices. If Taso Anas wins his wager, before he leaves the establishment he will use most of his winnings to purchase Bel Vendra's debt from Grazz.

SHADY BUSINESS

The Prince is feeling cooped up. He wants a night on the town. Voer Creel and the Prince decide to spend an evening at the Two Moons, finding some female companionship. PC Friends will be invited along; PC Minders will be avoided if necessary, or enlisted in the Prince's plans if possible.

While at the Two Moons, drinking in the common room after partaking of the 'specialty of the house', a thin Red Man with stringy hair will sidle up to Voer Creel, displaying something within the folds of his dark cloak. The inner lining of the cloak is sewn with small loops, many of which contain tiny vials of green powder. Voer Creel and Taso Anas will both purchase vials of the powder.

Voer Creel will tap a tiny amount of the powder into his wine, and drink it down with obvious anticipatory relish – then cough and spit the mouthful of wine onto the floor! "Scoundrel! This tastes like shenq droppings! What are you trying to pull, here?"

Regardless of what he had been trying to pull, the next thing that the drug dealer will pull is a dagger! The situation will deteriorate from there: A purveyor of illegal substances seldom hawks his wares alone – there is

an additional thug for each PC present, who will join in the fight. The drug dealer's backup will fight with their fists initially, unless the PCs draw weapons. Use the stats on page 170 of the MARS book for these thugs.

In addition, there is a bouncer and two 'doormen' who work at the Two Moons, who will attempt to break up the fight. Use the City Guard stats on page 169 of the MARS book for them, but treat them as Henchmen. Their goal is to break up the fight, disarm the people involved, and throw them bodily into the street. They will act against both sides of the fight, indiscriminately.

The PCs present will most likely attempt to get the Prince to safety – the Prince will insist that they rescue Voer Creel as well. Once outside in the street, the thugs will run off down various alleys, leaving the Prince and his entourage to stagger home unmo-
lested.

WATER'S PEAK

Bel Vendra, Taso Anas, and PCs who are Friends or Minders of the Prince will be invited to a formal Water's Peak ball at the estate of noted Maran expatriate Lan Chev. Many prominent members of the Maran community in Darisheel will be in attendance – notably Turric Melquon and his wife. Some of the notable citizens the PCs have encountered at previous gatherings will be present as well. Brother Paltaros will be notably absent – this is emphatically not his sort of party.

A light buffet-style meal will be served in the dining room, and dancing will begin immediately afterward in the ballroom. A chamber orchestra will perform from the secluded musician's gallery.

During the meal, Ulren Raxos will stand impassively, at the White Ape equivalent of 'parade rest' to one side of the dining room door. Two of his White Ape guards flank the door, at attention. Once the dancing begins, Raxos and his troops will re-locate to posts just inside the ballroom doors. Ulren Raxos' eyes never stray far from Lan Chev.

At dinner, the conversation will of course turn to the history of the refugee lords, and their flight from Maran. It will be obvious that the various expatriates hold a simmering hatred for the Citizen's Council.

Linares Melquon will ask the Prince many questions during dinner, allowing him to monopolize her time. She seems very interested in his early memories, and speaks solicitously to him about the hardships of his youth.

Like most Water's Peak celebrations, this is a bawdy party. Here, in the decadent Baltan Confederation, it verges on a bacchanal. Wine will flow freely, and the dancing will be pursued with wild abandon. The guests are obviously feeling the Red Martian's early-spring

ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES OF MARS

Alcohol is not the only intoxicant used on Mars. There are many others – some legal, some not. A popular illegal drug in the Baltan Confederacy is zirkif, a substance derived from the spores of a moss that grows in exceptionally moist conditions. Because it requires considerable water to grow, it is not found in the wild; it is carefully cultivated by 'independent businessmen'.

When readied for use, zirkif is a fine green powder, usually mixed with wine or spirits and imbibed. It is a powerful hallucinogenic, and also powerfully addictive.

mating urges. As servants circulate with trays of wine and sweetmeats, and the dance music becomes more spirited and sensuous, the various guests will begin pairing off. What started out as flirtations during dinner have become much more intimate.

Even though Turric Melquon has brought his wife, he has also brought a slave attendant. This time it is the lovely Marala. Anyone watching Melquon and the girl will notice that she squirms uncomfortably whenever Turric Melquon touches or caresses her – which he does with increasing frequency as the evening goes on. It is obvious that he enjoys her discomfort.

PCs who are not involved with their own seductions will, with a successful Notice roll, observe Linares Melquon attempting to seduce the Prince. The Prince is more than willing; in fact, he will enlist the aid of any Friend present to keep Turric Melquon occupied -- or at least to act as a lookout while he sneaks off with the nobleman's wife. Linares Melquon will lead Taso Anas to one of the private rooms on the third floor...

Other party-goers are finding private rooms as well – or engaging in fairly intimate acts near the fountain in the courtyard! PCs who are attempting to keep track of where everyone is will notice that Marala, Turric Melquon's slave, is speaking privately with the host, Lan Chev. Noticing that they are being observed, Lan Chev will draw Marala into his personal apartments, where they will remain for a short while in private.

This will leave Turric Melquon unaccompanied – except for the PC who is keeping him occupied for the Prince. The nobleman's capacity for small-talk is limited, unless the PC in question happens to be female and attractive. In that case, she may need to fend off his aggressive advances. In any other circumstance, it won't take too long for Turric Melquon to decide to find Marala. He will begin searching for her, barging into various rooms. PCs looking out for the Prince's best interests may decide to intervene so that Turric Melquon doesn't wind up walking in on the Prince's assignation with Linares Melquon!

CHAPTER THREE:

DEATH IN THE WINGS

In this Chapter, assassins sent by the Maran Secret Police arrive in Darisheel. Only the PCs stand between them and their goal – the death of Prince Anattio! The PCs, meanwhile, are likely to become embroiled in the complex machinations and relationships of the Prince's actor friends...

THE BIG TIME

Taso Anas's new-found celebrity is good for more than cadging fancy meals at the expense of the nobility. It has attracted attention to his poetry and his plays. Shamidan Banrus has agreed to finance the presentation of one of Taso Anas' dramas at the Encarmined Gate Theater.

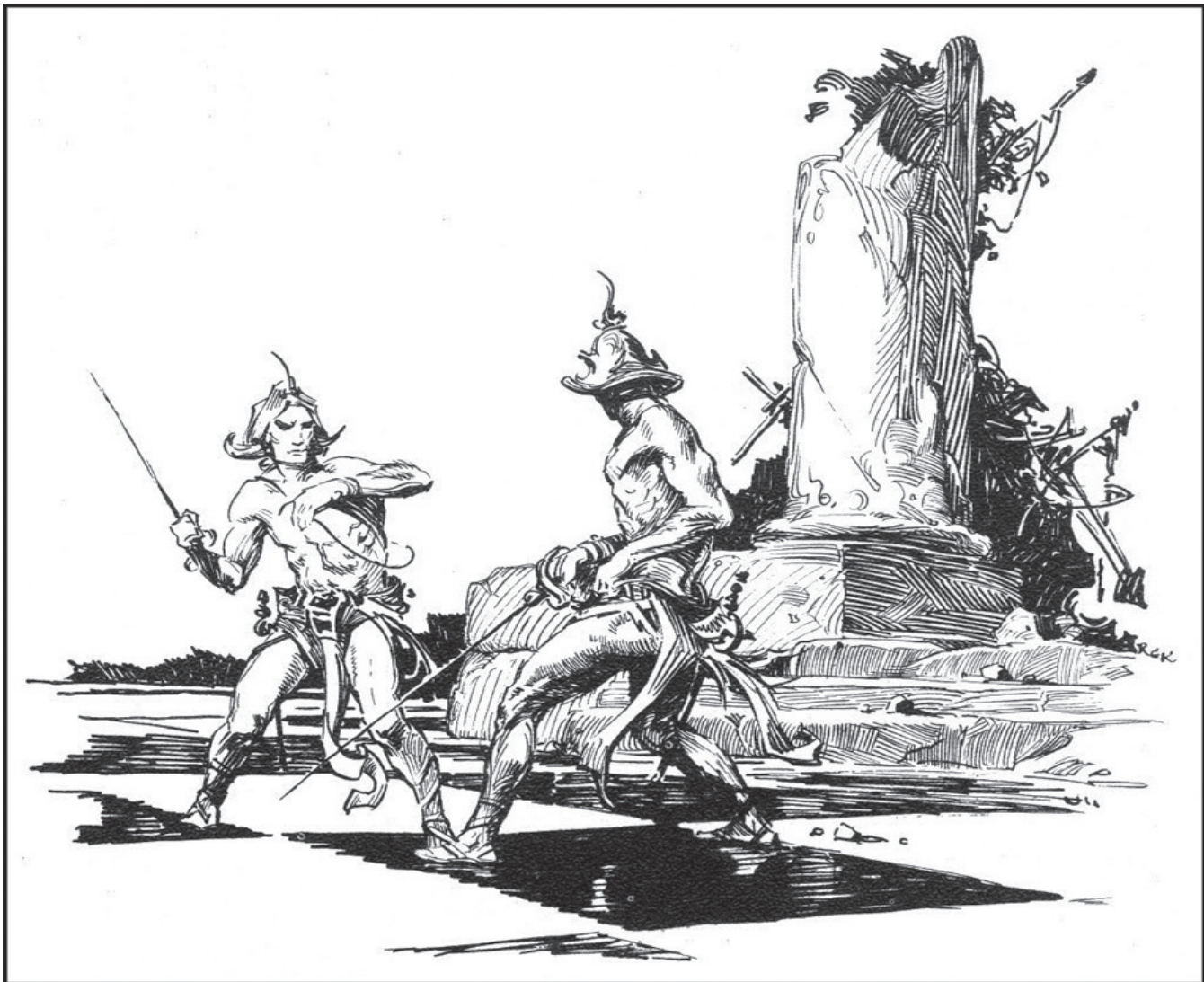
REHEARSAL FOR MURDER

During rehearsals for the production of Taso Anas' play "The Bloody-Handed Queen", Torv Bui and Barrigo Norros, assassins sent by the Maran Secret Police, will attempt to kill the Prince.

A PLAY'S THE THING

Taso Anas' latest work is "The Bloody-Handed Queen" a tale of murder, deceit, and revenge, based (loosely) on historical events from the early days of the Baltan Confederacy. Shamidan Banrus has insisted that Lurra Rasik be given the leading female role, that of the murderous Queen. Byram Osch will play her husband, the guilt-ridden King – much to Voer Creel's disgust. Naturally, Taso Anas has arranged for his crony Voer Creel to be cast as well, in the role of the sharp-tongued Royal Counsellor. Other members of the regular Encarmined Gate Theater Company fill out the rest of the cast.

After the drunken insults the Prince traded with Boska Jurden at Grazz' Pit, even Voer Creel's imploring could not get Jurden a part – not even as one of the numerous murder victims!



The two assassins will dress as common laborers, replacing the laborers delivering paint and other materials to the backstage of the theater. It will be easy for them to loiter in the backstage area until they have identified Taso Anas. Any PCs with Anas at the rehearsal should get a Notice roll to spot the loitering laborers and see them eyeing the Prince. Make these rolls openly: If the PCs fail the roll, the player's tension will increase as they realize that something is going to happen...

Torv Bui will strike when Taso Anas is alone, or at least at some distance from everyone else backstage. He will draw a concealed dagger and stab the Prince! Deal initiative cards as normal for the assassins and the PCs. Taso Anas will be surprised automatically, and get no card. After the initial attack, successful or not, the assassin will flee through the door to the alley. If pursued, he will make every effort to lose his pursuit by dodging between loaded dray-wagons and coffles of labor slaves hauling loads from the canal docks up to warehouses near the theater.

If PCs are sticking close to Taso Anas, Barrigo Norros will arrange a distraction so that his partner can strike. He will climb the ladder on the back of the acoustical shell to the catwalk above the stage. Once there, he will slash one of the supporting ropes that hold up a section of the theater's lighting rig, causing a framework hung with radium lamps to crash down onto the stage! In the confusion, Norros will slip away, sneaking down the alley behind the theater. Anyone on the stage at that time should make an Agility roll at -2 to dive out of the way of the falling framework and shattering glass. Failure at this roll results in 2d6 Damage.

Byram Osch will be on the stage, and will suffer a Wound from the collapsing structure. Lurra Rasik will run to his side – revealing to Shamidan Banrus (and any PC standing near the stage) that she still has feelings for her former lover. Osch is so self-centered that he will believe that the attack was aimed at him, and the stabbing of the Prince was merely the distraction – a belief that he will proclaim loudly, and at every opportunity.

Taso Anas, even if he comes out of his encounter with the assassins uninjured, will be upset and frightened by the attack. He will speak with a PC Friend, or one of his Minders whom he trusts, about his doubts. "Bel Vendra claims to have my best interests at heart, but..." He will look behind himself, over both shoulders, "He's not the one someone is trying to kill..."

ASSIGNATION

In the aftermath of the assassination attempt, Bel Vendra will insist that the Prince's Minders stay close to him at all times, and he will try to convince Taso Anas to stay in his residence at all times unless he has to be at the Encarmined Gate theater. For a few days,

Taso Anas will agree, but soon enough he will begin to chafe at the restriction.

With the Prince all but inaccessible, Linares Melquon will attempt to use one of the PCs as a go-between. She will select a muscular and handsome male PC, or a former gladiator, or failing that, a Friend of the Prince of any description. On some pretext, she will meet the PC alone, and ask that he or she take a message to Prince Anattio. "Let the Prince know that I very much enjoyed his company at the Water's Peak ball, and that I hope with all my heart that we can spend some time together again. Perhaps you could ask him to meet me beneath the flowers at the Encarmined Gate, this evening..." On a successful Notice roll versus her Persuasion, the PC will realize that Linares Melquon is lying about enjoying the Prince's company.

If the PC passes the message along to the Prince, the Prince will ask for the PC's aid in dodging his Minders and Bel Vendra, so that he can attend this rendezvous. If the PC agrees to assist the prince in escaping his Minders, give that PC a Bennie for 'genre-appropriate role playing'. Taso Anas will also ask the PC to make up some excuse to cover for his absence – putting the PC in the position of having to lie to Bel Vendra about his protégé's whereabouts. Play this scene for all it's worth, testing the PC's loyalty to the Prince as Bel Vendra tries to pick apart the player's story.

BACKSTAGE BACKSTABBING

Voer Creel dislikes Byram Osch and Shamidan Banrus because of their former and present relationships with Lurra Rasik – but he very much wishes to curry favor with Banrus, so that one of his own comedic plays might be produced. He will approach a PC who also seems to dislike Byram Osch with a proposal: "I don't know if you noticed, but the lovely Lurra Rasik was quick to run to our leading man's side when the lights collapsed on him. Lord Banrus is having second thoughts about the Prince's casting of dear old Byram as her husband – but it's too late in the production to just dismiss him. It would be very useful to our patron if Byram Osch were to remove himself from the production 'voluntarily', if you know what I mean..." A Notice roll versus Voer Creel's Persuade skill will show that he is lying – the lie is the implication that he represents Shamidan Banrus in this instance. His desire to remove Byram Osch from the production is entirely genuine.

Other PCs might begin to suspect Voer Creel of being behind the scenery collapse, and keep him under observation. Following the comedian around will eventually allow one or more of the PCs to eavesdrop on an encounter between Voer Creel and Shamidan Banrus, in which Voer Creel will offer "discrete assistance in the removal of the obstacle to your Lordship's desire..." Voer Creel is of course referring to getting rid of Byram Osch, leaving Shamidan Banrus free to

romance Lurra Rasik. Of course, eavesdroppers may take Voer Creel's words to mean something rather different...

NAME DAY

Taso Anas, his actor cronies, any Friends or Minders, and any other PC s with whom he is on good terms, will be celebrating Anas' name day with Bel Vendra at a local drinking establishment. Toasts will be made – and even PCs who are attempting to remain sober will have to make at least two Vigor checks to resist the effects of alcohol, or risk insulting the Prince by not drinking to his health.

Taso Anas will become, as usual, drunk and maudlin. As the evening shadows lengthen, he will finally slam his beaker of wine down on the table, and declaim "Name day! Hah! This is all a lie – I have no name day! I've never even spoken my own name aloud!"

Bel Vendra will attempt to mollify his protégé, and at the same time convince him to get fully on-board with the plan to trade upon the royal identity. "My dear boy, what of it? You need but say 'Prince Anattio' now, and today will be your name day..."

Taso Anas will see through this transparent attempt at manipulation. He will grab his wine and dash it in Vendra's face, then run out of the bar and into the darkness. The Prince will be facing -4 penalties to skills linked to Agiltiy and Smarts due to his intoxication.

PC Minders and possibly Friends may decide to pursue Taso Anas, or anticipate where he might end up. Those who do will face the difficulty that they, too, may have been imbibing heavily during the evening.

Anyone trying to figure out where the Prince might go could reasonably assume that he will wind up at his old garret apartment, or at the Two Moons brothel. Certainly that is what the Maran assassins who are after him have assumed...

THE COLD LIGHT OF DAWN

The PCs will catch up with Taso Anas as he staggers out of the Two Moons brothel, after a sordid rendezvous.

Torv Bui and Barrigo Norros have been stalking the Prince for some time, and have waited near his former residence above the brothel in the hopes of intercepting him. Now they have their chance! Barrigo Norros is the better shot, and will be waiting on a roof across the street from the entrance to the Two Moons. He has Medium Cover (-2) due to the buildings cornice. Torv Bui is watching the alley behind the brothel, where the ramp to Taso Anas' garret lies.

As the PCs approach the Two Moons, have them make a Notice roll to spot Barrigo Norros on the roof across the way. PCs who do not succeed at this roll

count as Surprised in the first round of combat. Taso Anas will be surprised automatically. Do not forget Barrigo Norros's Level Headed Edge, which allows him two cards on the initiative draw.

Barrigo Norros will fire at the Prince on the first round of combat, and will continue to fire at the Prince unless the PCs return fire upon him. In that case he will target PCs who are threats to him. If more than one PC is able to return fire, or if the PCs attempt to get up on the roof to melee him, he will flee.

Torv Bui will make a ranged attack on the Prince on the first round of combat, and then move into melee. If he is engaged by more than one PC he will disengage and flee. Both Barrigo Norros and Torv Bui are fanatics. If one is captured, the other will strike to kill him before he can be questioned. If both are captured, they will commit suicide before they will talk.

After the attack, the PCs will most likely try to hustle the Prince back to Bel Vendra's residence, and safety. Taso Anas will refuse to go, and insist on moving back into his garret. "I want nothing further to do with Bel Vendra! He can drown for all I care!"

A DUTIFUL SON

Otal Melquon will once again contact the PC Agent he hired before. By now, the Agent will probably be aware of the identity of his original employer. This time, however, Otal is engaging the PC Agent for his own purposes – not that he will make that known. During the meeting, have the Agent roll his Notice vs Otal's Persuasion. A success by the Agent will allow him to detect that Otal is lying about the source of his instructions.

"Our mutual patron is concerned with the Prince's behavior. It is not proper for him to consort with a married noblewoman. Our patron wishes for you to convey to the Prince, in the strongest possible terms, that he leave Linares Melquon alone!"

Otal Melquon will tell his Agent to stop the Prince's dalliance with Linares Melquon by "any means necessary" if the initial warning is not heeded. He will strongly imply that it would be fine with him if the Prince were beaten to a pulp in order to make the warning abundantly clear.

SPY CATCHING

It will be obvious to the PCs that the news of the return of Prince Anattio has reached Maran. They may begin to look for the path that information followed. This will require some Streetwise rolls, and a lot of footwork. Allow the PCs to frame whatever scenes they would like in order to speak with the various NPCs. Many different facts may come to light during this time – only some of which relate to identifying the Maran spy.

Success on a Streetwise roll when speaking to residents, servants, or slaves of the Melquon household will reveal that Turric Melquon harbors a deep resentment against the current rulership of the city of Maran. Success on an Investigation roll directed at the internal dealings of the household will reveal that Kashti envies Linares Melquon's position as lady of the house, and holds dreams of replacing her in that role.

Success on a Streetwise or Investigation roll when speaking to anyone from the Chev household will reveal that Lan Chev is the only rival for Turric Melquon's leadership role among the refugee lords. It will also reveal Lan Chev's moderate political position, which may lead to PC speculation that Lan Chev might be the spy.

Success on a Streetwise roll when speaking to anyone employed at the Encarmined Gate Theater will reveal the public details of Lurra Rasik's love life. Questioning her about the various members of the theater company will reveal several things, but specific to this inquiry, it will reveal Boska Jurden's political leanings.

The PCs should eventually piece together enough clues to realize that Boska Jurden is likely an informer for the Maran Secret Police. What they choose to do with him at that point is up to them. They may choose to do nothing, in which case he will continue to inform on the Prince's whereabouts and activities. They may choose to intimidate him, or attack him – in that case, allow the PCs to frame the scene, then play it out. Boska Jurden will not risk death for his political beliefs, if he is pushed to that brink. Attempts to follow the spy to the assassins will not pan out: Jurden is an informer who sends coded written reports. He has no idea that assassins have been sent after the Prince.

A MEAL TO DIE FOR

Turric Melquon, now convinced that the Prince is the genuine article, will invite the Prince and his entourage to a formal dinner at the Melquon estate, along with many of the Marran refugee-lords. His intent is to show that he is close to the Prince, thus solidifying his position of leadership in the refugee-lord's community; but his plans for the future go much further than that: He intends to use the Prince as a figurehead for a 'Royalist' counter-revolution! Turric Melquon has spoken privately with many of the other refugee-lords, planting the seeds of his plan for a counter-revolution. Naturally, most of them were skeptical. Melquon will have to prove that the Prince is at his side in order to bring the refugee-lords together.

Given that there have been two assassination attempts against the Prince, the PCs may well advise against attending the banquet. Even Bel Vendra will be uncertain of the wisdom of such an action – but Taso Anas will brook no resistance. He will go so far as to assert his position as a Prince, and order his entou-

rage to attend the banquet with him. He intends to see Linares Melquon again, no matter what. Moreover, since he is rebelling against Bel Vendra's influence, the more Vendra tries to convince him not to go, the more adamant the Prince will become.

As the guests arrive, Linares Melquon and Turric Melquon will greet them formally. Linares Melquon is dressed in the finest pale-cream silks, her hair caught back in a net of jewels. Turric Melquon is wearing the stiff formal garb of a Maran nobleman, a jewel-hilted rapier at his side. Household staff in matching livery and household slaves in kirtles will provide drinks, while musicians play softly in the background.

Lord Yantou Prel will arrive with a lovely female escort and six slaves as entourage. Lady Arula Jian will arrive without an escort, but she will make an entrance wearing a diaphanous green spidersilk gown covered in tiny emeralds and antique pearls. The other noble guests are no less fantastical in their dress, as each attempts to outmatch the next in the lavish display of wealth.

During the period before dinner is served, as the guests mingle and converse, Linares Melquon will seek out the Prince. She will make an attempt to draw the Prince away from any PCs accompanying him, and sneak upstairs with him to the Arboretum. PCs concerned about Taso Anas' safety may end up upstairs as well, standing lookout for him while he conducts his illicit affair.

The dinner is arranged in a formal, old-fashioned style. Separate tables, each surrounded by four low couches, are arranged in rows within the large semi-circular dining room. Each silk-draped couch is large enough to seat a couple. Four couples are served at each table, and musicians and acrobats entertain in the aisle between the tables.

Linares Melquon has arranged to be seated at the same couch as the Prince, while Turric Melquon will sit across the aisle at another table. His slave Kashti will attend him during the dinner, feeding him morsels from a golden tray. Kashti will not be seated on her master's couch, she will be kneeling on a cushion at his feet as befits her status.

Bel Vendra and the PCs will be at either Linares or Turric Melquon's table. At banquets in this style, it is customary for couples seated on the same couch to drink from the same large wine-bowl, each holding it as the other drinks. Linares and the Prince are sharing a broad-brimmed gold vessel. Shamidan Banrus and Lurra Rasik are seated together, sharing a silver-chased drinking bowl. Bel Vendra will be seated alone, but the Melquon's slave, Marala, will be attending to his needs. PCs attending the banquet will be paired off with attractive guests of the opposite sex (or at least of appropriate orientation) if they have not come with

companions of their own. Arula Jiann, the vintner's heiress, would make a fine couchmate for any Noble PC, or for a PC Celebrity who is an Earthman. She would make a fine potential romantic relationship for such a PC, as well...

During the second course, Linares Melquon will broach the idea to the Prince of re-taking the throne of Maran for himself. He will scoff at the idea – he's too worried about surviving to be interested in 'taking the fight to his enemies'.

Throughout the evening, Turric Melquon will circulate from table to table, arrange with selected refugee-lords to meet quietly at a later date. These will become the core group of his 'Royalist' conspiracy. PCs who succeed at a Notice roll will realize that he is making contacts for some hidden purpose, and may decide to eavesdrop.

Unbeknownst to all, Kaston Daav, a Maran assassin, has come to kill the Prince. He has slipped into the soiree in the guise of a slave attendant, and has a vial of poison concealed in his kirtle, along with a vial of the antidote which he keeps on his person for safety's sake.

He intends to poison the Prince's wine – he is unconcerned with the possibility that he may kill the Prince's dining companion in the process.

The mechanical effect of the poison is described in Kaston Daav's entry in the Dramatis Personae section. The symptoms suffered by the victim are a swelling and tightening of the throat, constricting the breathing, followed by paralysis of the lungs and ultimately death.

Kaston Daav will mingle with the household staff serving the meal. There are plenty of Melquon's servants and slaves around, plus slave attendants belonging to several of the Noble guests, so blending in should be easy. At an opportune moment, he will slip poison into the wine cup shared by the Prince and Linares Melquon. Roll his Stealth against the Notice skill of any PCs dining at the Prince's table. If none of the PCs make their roll, the players at least will suspect that something is up.

Once the poison is in place, Daav will retire to the kitchens to await word of his success. He anticipates

that news of a death at the banquet will spread quickly through the servants.

If a PC spots and tries to engage the assassin, he will flee. He will shove servants into the path of his pursuers to slow them down, spill wine or soup on the floor to make it slippery, and throw knives or other objects to delay the PCs. He will also divest himself of his vial of poison, emptying it into any convenient drinking vessel to create further confusion. Kaston Daav will flee toward the rear of the West Tower if possible, attempting to leave by the servant's entrance. If he is cut off from that route, he will head upward in the East Tower, making for its roof and the air-skiffs docked there.

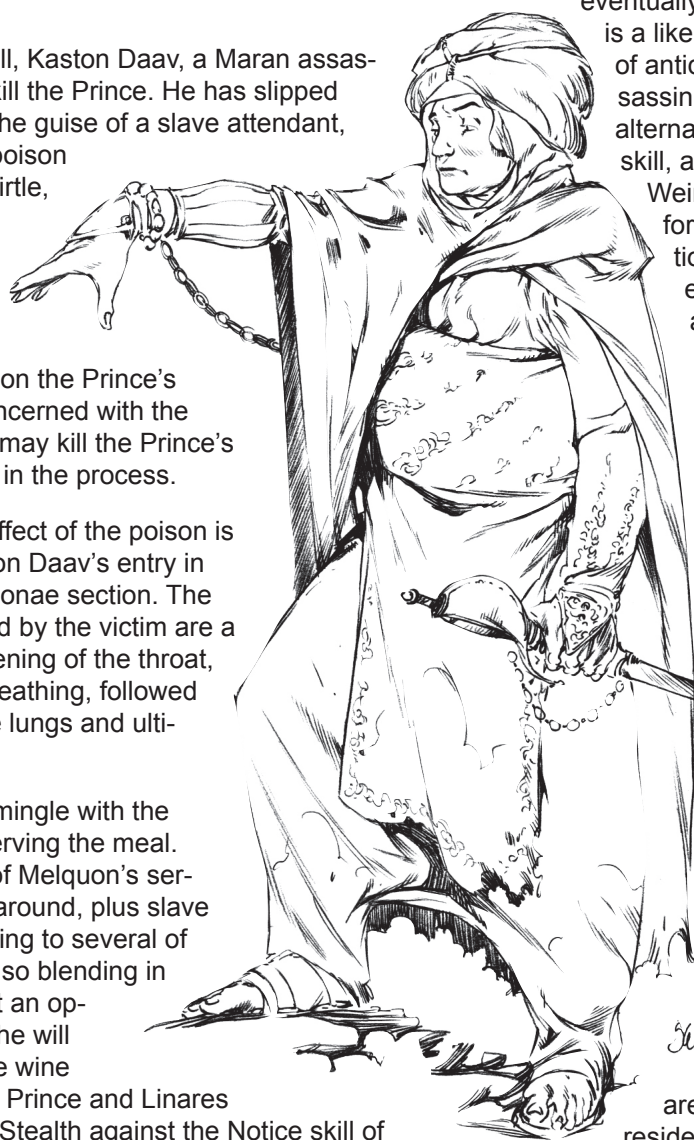
If the poison is delivered to the Prince's cup, both Taso Anas and Linares Melquon will be poisoned. If it is emptied into another cup during the pursuit, it will eventually be drunk by someone – Arula Jian is a likely candidate. In either case, the vial of antidote must be recovered from the assassin before death occurs! As a possible alternative, any PC with a high Survival skill, an appropriate Knowledge skill, or the Weird Science Edge, might be able to formulate an antidote utilizing combinations of the nectars of the Arboretum's exotic plants. This is an ideal spot for a PC to spend a Bennie for a Story Declaration.

In the aftermath of the poisoning attempt, suspicions will run high. As the owner of an Arboretum full of exotic hothouse plants, Turric Melquon might initially appear to be a suspect – but he would hardly want to kill the Prince. Alternatively, his slave Kashti might be suspected of trying to poison

Linares Melquon, based on her ambition to supplant her.

Logically however, Kashti would not have risked the Prince's life in such an attempt – she would not do anything to harm Turric Melquon's plans.

Accusations will be made and countered, and the party will break up quickly. Bel Vendra will insist that the PCs who are Minders escort the Prince to his residence, for safety. Taso Anas will refuse to go to Vendra's home, but will accept the presence of the Minders at his garret.



CHAPTER FOUR:

THE STOLEN HEIR

In this Chapter, the PCs will discover that the Prince has been kidnapped. It is up to them to find and rescue him, before something worse happens...

SECRET RENDEZVOUS

Marala will deliver a note from Linares Melquon to the Prince. It is a fake, but a convincing one. It asks the Prince to meet Linares for a rendezvous near the Encarmined Gate Theater. Ulren Raxos and two of his White Ape guards will be there instead.

Taso Anas will conceal the note, and make every effort to ditch his Minders so that he can meet Linares privately. He will first appeal to a PC Friend to help distract the Minders. If the PC he appeals to agrees to help him, give that PC a Bennie for 'genre-appropriate role playing'. If Taso Anas can't get an ally to assist

My Dearest Anattio,

I long for your touch! It has been too long since we have been alone with one another. I have made arrangements – meet me at the entrance to the park across the canal from the Encarmined Gate Theater. From there we will go to a secret place, where we can spend an evening of uninterrupted pleasure!

L.

him, he will resort to a riskier plan; he will drug his Minders. The last of the zirkif he purchased with Voer Creel will wind up in the Minder's wine cups at dinner. Give the victims a Notice roll vs Taso Anas' Stealth to spot him dosing their drinks, and a Vigor roll at –4 to resist the drug. At this dosage, if the Vigor roll is successful, the drugged characters are treated as

extremely intoxicated; –4 to skills linked to Agility or Smarts. If the Vigor roll fails, the characters will be knocked unconscious for 1d6 hours. Give the players of the drugged characters each a Bennie as recompense for this blatant railroading.

SEARCHING HIGH AND LOW

When the Prince fails to show up at the Theater for rehearsal, the cast will be concerned, and will contact both Shamidan Banrus and Bel Vendra, to see if they know Taso Anas' whereabouts.

The disappearance of Taso Anas will cause Bel Vendra to go into a panic. He will appeal to the PCs for aid in finding his protégé. A success on a Notice roll will show that the old rascal is genuinely concerned for the poet, not just for his own social position.

The PCs will presumably inquire among Taso Anas' other associates, and try to piece together what happened. As GM, you will have to play each of the NPC roles with a close eye on what they know and what their personal goals are.

If the PCs search Taso Anas' garret, they will discover the note beneath other papers on his writing desk.



PC Minders of the Prince will have seen Marala deliver the folded note, and will recognize her from visits to the Melquon household. If they bring this to Turric Melquon's attention he will question the girl privately – and brutally – in fashions best left unspecified. He will get a full confession from her; a confession from which she will not recover.

If the PCs intervene and prevent Turric Melquon from torturing the girl and question her personally, she will at first lie, sticking to the story that Linares Melquon asked her to take a note to the Prince. If the PCs succeed at an Intimidate roll versus her Spirit, they will get the truth. "Turric Melquon owns me; he can do anything to me he likes. I hate it when he touches my body. Lord Lan Chev said that he would take me into his household if I reported to him what my master was doing. I met with him at the market, on certain days. The last time we met he gave me a note to deliver, and told me to tell the Prince it was sent by Linares Melquon."

BREAKING AND ENTERING

Lan Chev has engineered the kidnapping of the Prince. His original intention was to hold him captive until after Turric Melquon's conspiratorial meeting. Without the Prince visibly on-board, Melquon's plans for a 'Royalist' counter-revolution will fail.

Now, however, many of the refugee-lords have turned their backs on Lan Chev and his moderate politics, so he has developed additional ideas: He intends to ransom Taso Anas to either Turric Melquon, or to the Maran Citizen's Council, whoever is the high bidder!

Taso Anas is locked in a room on the top floor of the Chev residence, at the back. The room is directly above the ballroom. The door is relatively easy to open; either a success on a Lockpicking roll, or a single raise on a Strength roll is all it will take. However, Ulren Raxos has his security forces on high alert: Two White Ape guards are on duty outside the Prince's door. Two others patrol the lower floor and the courtyard. The final two White Apes are on patrol outside the residence, holding the leashes of four trained ythru. Use the stats on page 171 of the MARS book for the White Apes.

The PCs will have to plan their assault on the guarded Chev estate carefully. Some or all of them may have been at the Water's Peak ball, and so will remember the layout. The most likely time to attempt entry is at night. The outer wall can be scaled with a simple Climbing roll. Crossing the lawn will require a Stealth success, opposed by the alert White Apes and ythru. The White Apes in the courtyard will not be alert unless the PCs cause an incident outside, but the ones guarding the Prince's door will be. If there is any com-

motion inside the residence, Ulren Raxos will respond as quickly as possible.

Another alternative is to stage an aerial assault, landing a flier of some sort on the roof. The external guards and the courtyard guards will both have a good chance of seeing the flier, however.

If the PCs get into a fight with the guards, the entire household will be roused. Servants and slaves will flood the courtyard and the lower floor, making escape that way extremely difficult. Lan Chev will avoid engaging personally in the fighting if at all possible, but he will snipe at PCs from a safe position with his radium pistol.

AERIAL CHASE

Trapped on the upper floor of the Chev residence, the PCs will likely have to take to the air. Lan Chev's air-skiff is conveniently available...

Ulren Raxos and any of his surviving subordinates will pursue in the other air-skiff. Set the initial Range Increment at 'Near'. If the PCs attempted to disable the other skiff before casting off, they will get a decisive head start before Ulren Raxos can get underway – set the initial Range Increment at 'Far'. Use the chase rules as normal. There is plenty of terrain in Darisheel to make for an exciting chase scene – towers whole and broken can be dodged around, canal bridges can be ducked under, and narrow streets can be used to shake the pursuit.

Fortunately for the Prince and the PCs, Lan Chev's air skiffs have no mounted weapons. Ulren Raxos and his men have self-loading handbows in addition to their melee weapons, and they will do their best to overtake the fleeing air-skiff and board! Start the boarding action using the rules on page 97 of the MARS book; once Ulren Raxos and his troops cross onto the PC's air skiff, fight the battle using the standard Savage Worlds rules.

Once the PCs have escaped or defeated their pursuers, they will have to figure out where to take the Prince. He will suggest the Encarmined Gate Theater – it's the only place he feels at home, any more...

CHAPTER FIVE: LIES IN INK

In this Chapter, Prince Anattio decides he has had enough – and demands that the PCs find a way to free him from his entanglements!

THE PRINCE COMMANDS

At large once again, Taso Anas will gather the PCs together, backstage at the Encarmined Gate Theater. He has had a little time to think, during his captivity, and he has become quite disillusioned -- disillusioned, and angry.

"I though Bel Vendra was my friend, but he just wanted to use me – and his 'brilliant plan' nearly got me assassinated! I thought Linares cared about me – but she was just working for her husband, who wanted to use me in a different way – and that got me kidnapped and imprisoned!"

"I'm done with this! There is no Prince – there's just me, Taso Anas, scribbler and poet!" He will round on the PCs, eyes blazing. "Bel Vendra hired you to do his dirty work – well now I want to hire you to do mine! I'll pay whatever you want, to make this go away!"

It is up to the PCs to figure out how to rescue Taso Anas from his situation. The PCs have complete freedom to formulate a plan, but Taso Anas will veto anything that he doesn't believe will work.

He will refuse to fake his own death, for instance. "Killing the Prince would be fine with me; but if Taso Anas dies, I have no career!"

He can't flee to some distant part of Mars – his birthmark will give him away. "There's no place in the world I can run, no place I can hide. This birthmark will be with me, always. I can't even cut it off – people would still remember that it was there in the beginning!" He will glare accusingly at the PC who acted as the Agent; "Melquon's little light made sure of that!"

A LIE MORE COMPELLING THAN TRUTH

The most obvious course of action is to convince everyone that Bel Vendra and Taso Anas were perpetrating a fraud from the very beginning. The easy way to convince the public – and certain Maran refugee-lords in particular – that Taso Anas isn't really Prince Anattio is to use the light-tube given to the Agent. If royal blue ink were tattooed into the real birthmark, it would appear to be nothing but a tattoo, forevermore.

If the PCs decide that they need a tattoo artist, it is quite likely that Grazz or one of his tattooed enforcers knows where to find one...

ROMANTIC ENTANGLEMENTS

If a PC has struck up a relationship with Arula Jian, there is the possibility that he or she will coincidentally be seated in the Jian box during the performance – which will cause the Maran assassin some additional difficulties. Daav will enter the box, hiding behind the sound-absorbent drapes, and attack the PC from behind with his poisoned dagger! Unless the PC is extremely observant, the assassin will have 'the Drop' on him. Once the PC and Arula Jian are neutralized, Kaston Daav will assemble his crossbow and await the curtain call...

OPENING NIGHT

The PCs will need to stage a very public exposure of the 'fraud'. The Encarmined Gate Theater is the obvious place to do this, since the premiere of Taso Anas' play will draw considerable crowds – even more, now that the Prince's misadventures have become well publicized in Darisheel. One way for it to look like an 'accidental' exposure of the 'fraud' is for the stage lighting rig to be altered to include the specific frequency of light produced by the Agent's light-tube. That way, as soon as Taso Anas walks on stage and takes his bow with the actors, the glowing tattoo will be visible. Narveeen Rindos the light-sculptor might be able to help with that...

Kaston Daav, the Maran assassin, also has a plan (assuming that he escaped from the Melquon estate): He will be in the upper balcony at the premiere of "The Bloody-Handed Queen". He has hidden his crossbow beneath a seat in the Jian family's private box in the Noble's tier earlier in the week, along with a supply of bolts. At the climax of the performance, when cries of "Author, author!" bring his victim onto the stage, Daav will dip a bolt into his fastest-acting poison, and fulfill his mission! If the PCs plan is timed such that the 'fraud' is exposed before this point, the assassin may be confused by the new information – but he will still attempt to kill his target; it's a matter of personal integrity.

Allow a Notice roll for any PCs with a line of sight to the upper balcony as the curtain calls are taken. PCs that succeed will get the opportunity to react when they see Kaston Daav stand up in the box and raise his crossbow.

If the PC's plan is successful, Bel Vendra will become notorious as the perpetrator of the fraud and scandal. He will be extremely unpopular with the refugee-lords, but Shamidan Banrus will owe him a favor for discovering Taso Anas... In the end, he will be philosophical about it. "One can dine out on infamy quite as well as one can on fame, after all."

Taso Anas will provide the PCs with whatever payment he offered them to resolve his situation. He has become a bit wiser than he was, and he has developed a sense of self which he never had before. He has the PCs to thank for that, and thank them he will. "You stood by my side when I was stupid, and when I was afraid. You saved me from certain death more than once. The money isn't enough to repay you for what you have done, but it's all I have to offer." He will pause, eyes distant in thought, and then grin. "Maybe someday, I'll write a play about this! What's money worth, when I can reward you with immortality!"

The PCs may desire to talk Taso Anas into waiting a while before writing his new play...

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Bel Vendra will come out of this reasonably well – but then, he has a habit of landing on his feet. It won't take long for him to wind up talking himself into some other shady and precarious circumstance – and now he knows capable people to whom he can appeal for help.

Grazz has plans to become more than just the proprietor of a minor gambling establishment. He intends one day to become the 'overlord of the underworld' in Darisheel. PCs might be enlisted to aid him in this task; they might just as easily be enlisted by his enemies to stop him.

The Encarmined Gate Theater and its various cast members and patrons might prove to be a rich source of contacts for the PCs. Shamidan Banrus or Lady Arula Jian might be interested in hiring one or more of them to undertake certain 'delicate tasks' relating to their business interests. Lurra Rasik might have need of a party of tough and competent retainers to see to her safety during an upcoming singing tour of the Baltan capital. Perhaps Voer Creel has humiliated some important Noble with his pointed brand of humor, and needs help from the PCs to get out of town fast...

FRAMING DEVICE

Historically, Taso Anas was exposed as a fake and a fraud, as he later fictionalized in his play 'Blood Legacy' – but the royal birthmark is hereditary; any of his descendants, male or female, might be born with it, starting the whole thing over again! This is the ideal set-up for the dénouement of a 'historical flashback' adventure... Especially if one of the PCs is revealed to be the great-great grandson or granddaughter of the infamous playwright!

A background of this sort is best handled at character creation; offer the idea of a 'secret Hindrance' to a player, the exact nature of which will be revealed at a future point. Once it is revealed, it can be represented with a special use of the Enemy (Major) Hindrance, representing that the Maran Citizen's Council and all their political apparatus is out to get the character.

DARISHEEL AND ITS DISTRICTS

The city of Darisheel is one of the smaller cities of the Baltan Confederation. Its main canal has six secondary canals branching off from it, dividing the city into seven districts. Numerous tertiary canals stretch across the city, providing canal-boat access within the various sectors. The main avenues of Darisheel cross the canals on arching bridges of stone and metal – but the narrower side streets run only within districts; the bridges provide natural choke-points to control access to a district if its inhabitants wish.

Each district is under the control of either a local noble family or a mercantile clan. Noble estates and clan-holds within the districts are in excellent repair, but they are surrounded by run-down and ruined towers, and by slums constructed over the centuries on the rubble of the past.

The exception to the above is the canal-dock district. In the center of Darisheel, south of the main canal and north of the longest tertiary canal lies the heart of the city's shipping and mercantile enterprises. No single noble family rules the docklands – it is a patchwork of competing interests. Docks, shipping companies, warehouses, and the associated businesses that feed, house, and entertain the workforce crowd the streets. The only unifying force, if it may be called that, is the shadowy leadership of the Darisheel underworld.

The following locations will be visited by the PCs more than once during the course of the adventure. Their detailed descriptions are collected here for reference.

BEL VENDRA' APARTMENTS

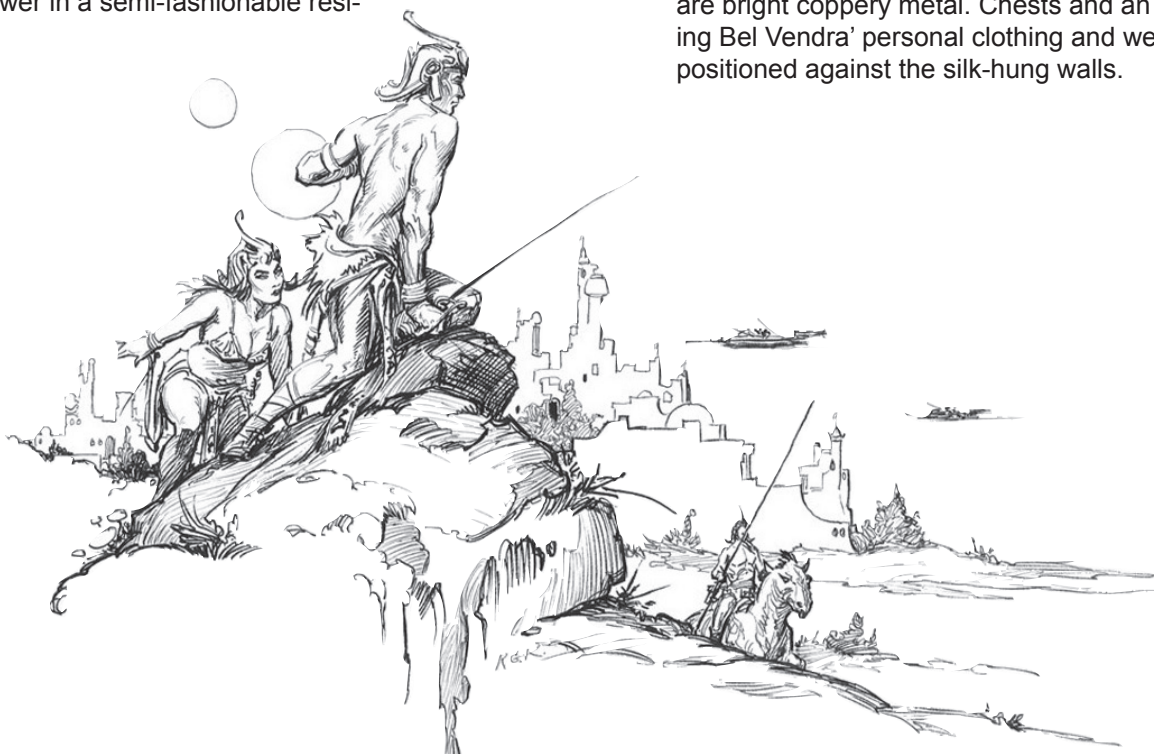
Bel Vendra lives in spacious if sparsely-furnished apartments on the fourth floor of a partially-ruined tower in a semi-fashionable resi-

dential neighborhood. The tower is faced with carved stone and reinforced with metallic ribs, but is broken and jagged above the tenth floor. Stone and metal elements of the upper stories have been used in more recent centuries to create an elaborate network of walls and ground-level homes clustered near the base of the tower. The Lowborn inhabitants of those homes are sometimes employed as servants by the residents of the tower.

The apartments themselves are reached by climbing a switchback-ramp that ascends the front of the tower behind decorative crystal panes. Radium lanterns glow at the landings and before the doors of occupied residences. In the tower's central foyer are fretted grilles that cover the shafts of elevators – but the elevators no longer run. The shafts are now home to flowering creepers which beautify the tower's hallways.

Within Bel Vendra' door is a wide, curving room equipped with couches and tables, and a few pieces of artwork. Atop one marble table is an exquisite brazier of hammered bronze set with opals, in which several sticks of incense smolder, filling the room with a musky, spicy aroma. There are signs on the walls and tables indicating that other objects of value and pieces of decorative art have been removed, perhaps recently.

At one end of the room are curtained doorways leading to a small kitchen, a dining area, and a pantry; at the other end are more substantial doors leading to a bedroom and a bath-chamber. The bedroom is appointed in typical Martian fashion, with a frame-bed filled with sleeping silks and furs suspended from the ceiling by decorative chains. In this case, the frame-bed is of carved hardwood, and the chains and fittings are bright coppery metal. Chests and an armoire holding Bel Vendra' personal clothing and weapons are positioned against the silk-hung walls.



TASO ANAS' GARRET

The young poet lives in a narrow pair of rooms on the sixth floor above the Twin Moons brothel in the canal-dock district. The upper floors of the building were constructed from materials looted from the rubble and ruins of previous buildings, and can best be described as a 'rickety firetrap'. Its various floors are reached by a steep external ramp with an unstable railing, which climbs the alley-side of the building in switchback fashion. This makes it difficult for Taso Anas to return home when he is seriously intoxicated – as often as not he can be found sleeping in the alley behind the brothel.

His rooms themselves are meanly furnished, with miss-matched table, chairs, and chest. A pair of radium lanterns provides light above a small writing desk littered with tattered books, papers, and scrolls. More papers are wadded and thrown into a corner, forming a collection of what the poet refers to as his 'lesser works'. The rear room is Taso Anas' bedroom. The bed-frame is not suspended, it rests on the floor. The sleeping silks are indifferently clean, and do not appear to have been folded at any point in their long history.

TWIN MOONS BROTHEL

Constructed within the still-solid lowest floor of a previous tower building, the Twin Moons entryway is graced with a glowing radium-powered image of the two moons of Mars, though distorted so as to appear both more equal in size and... rounder... than they appear in the sky. The reference is perhaps too subtle for some of the establishment's lower-class clientele, but the owner has hopes of attracting richer and more 'artistic' patrons.

Inside the entryway is a narrow corridor, dimly-lit by smoky incense-burners. Beyond is a large circular room where the patrons and whores mingle amid padded seats and couches. A bar at the rear serves wine and stronger alcoholic drinks. A ramp to the left of the bar rises to a circular balcony above the main room, behind a carved wooden railing. Doors on the balcony level lead to private 'entertainment rooms'. The bartender, the bouncer, and two burly 'doormen' are present at all times, along with between twelve and fifteen prostitutes.

GRAZZ' PIT

Grazz' fighting pit is an underground arena, not far from the canal docks, in an area of shinq-infested warehouses. Beneath a scrawling, luminous red radium sign is a sloping passage leading down into an alley between two warehouses. At the end of the passage is a warped and ancient wooden door studded with metal rivets. Beyond the door is a dark and malodorous underground room, generally crowded with the fighting pit's rough clientele.

The pit itself is a square twenty feet on a side and fifteen feet deep, lined with heavily-stained wooden planks, which come up to waist high on the crowd of bettors surrounding the pit. Its floor is rammed earth covered with an inch or so of loose red sand. Grazz himself, or one of his trusted flunkies, mans a bronze-filigreed cage above the edge of the pit, where he can view the entire room.

The pit is used for animal fights, not gladiatorial duels (which take place in much bigger arenas in Darisheel). Trained ythru are pitted against wild hagadan, or against bags full of captured shinq, with bets made and collected on the number of shinq a particular animal can kill within the time limit.

At the rear of the room is a curtained passage which leads upward into one of the adjacent warehouses. It is here that Grazz maintains his 'business office', and also where he houses the caged hagadan he uses in the fighting pit. Shinq are purchased by the sack-full from street urchins who scour Darisheel's sewers for the vile creatures.

ENCARMINED GATE THEATER

Theatrical productions are a part of the culture of the Baltan Confederation – but 'theater people' are not considered socially acceptable by most of the nobility. Thus, theaters are found in areas of the cities which pander to baser pleasures as well – among taverns, bordellos, and gambling halls. The Encarmined Gate Theater is a new addition to the stews of Darisheel. It is located at the southern edge of the docklands district, facing a tertiary canal. The theater is constructed primarily of brick, along with stone salvaged from collapsed buildings. Decorative carvings and statuary from a dozen different towers across the city have been incorporated into the theater, giving it a baroque aspect when seen against the more staid structures surrounding it.

In deference to its clientele, the Encarmined Gate is set back from the street and the canal, with a broad formal garden in front of its entrance. The garden is dotted with topiary plants, statuary, and carved columns, creating a cool and cultured space for the patrons to gather. The theater gets its name from the fluted red marble archway that leads from the street into the forecourt garden. Looted from a ruined temple that pre-dates the building of the canals, the archway is twined with vines bearing lustrous purple flowers that release a heady scent upon all who walk beneath them.

The overall plan of the theater building is that of a domed lozenge. Statues of men and beasts march across the front arcade, screening and shading the main doors. Immediately inside those doors is a wide, shallow lobby decorated with more statuary. Ramps on both ends lead upward to two balconies with box seats

and heavy draperies, and a wide archway leads down the main aisle to the floor seating.

Curved rows of wooden seats, well padded and upholstered with red moiré silk spread out on either side of the central aisle. At the front of the space is the elevated stage. It is a wide half-circle, stretching across the entire width of the structure, and backed with a hemispherical acoustical shell. The stage left and stage right entrances lead to the wings, where the chains and ropes which hold up the curtains, scenery, and lights are anchored. The stage left wing has an exit to the alley behind the theater; the stage right wing has a ramp which leads down to the musician's pit concealed in front of the stage. Connecting the wings behind the acoustical shell is the backstage area – a chaotic workroom full of half-constructed props, scenery flats, and tools. Ladder rungs up the back of the shell lead to a catwalk from which the curtains, hanging scenery, and radium lamps can be manipulated. Behind the work area are dressing rooms for the actors and actresses – tiny spaces where costumes and make-up can be stored and applied. Also in that area is an equally tiny room used as the theater office.

CHEV RESIDENCE

Lan Chev maintains a residence in a mercantile district of Darisheel, in a neighborhood where several other Maran refugee-lords have gathered. Native Darisheel nobility refer to the district as the 'foreign quarter' with a faint hint of disdain. Surrounded by a low wall, the broad lawns around the Chev residence are covered with fine lavender moss. Lan Chev's home itself is a three-story square building with a central courtyard.

The front of the villa, facing the highly-decorated gateway in the property's wall, contains an entry hallway which runs through an arched corridor directly into the central courtyard. Radium lanterns spaced down the arched roof provide light – and conceal firing ports which can be used by household security forces to fire down into the corridor from the room above.

To the left and right of the corridor are networks of chambers in the front of the building, accessible from doors in the courtyard, where the household staff work. Ramps inside lead up to the second floor devoted to living quarters for the staff, servants, and slaves.

The courtyard is planted with topiary bushes in red, yellow, and purple, and has a decorative pool in its center, which is filled with water during the canals high-flow season, and used as a sand-garden during the low-flow. A colorful silk awning fastened to slender wooden poles provides shade around the perimeter of the courtyard, screening the various doors to the interior of the building.

The left side of the courtyard has doors which lead to a reception room, a salon, and a formal dining room. To the right of the courtyard are doors leading to the private apartments set aside for the family – each has a sitting room and, above it on the second floor, a bedroom.

The entire width of the rear of the villa is a grand high-ceilinged ballroom, looking out at the well manicured moss-lawn. A small balcony above the main floor acts as a musician's gallery. There is space for a six-piece chamber orchestra to set up within the gallery, discretely screened by a wooden latticework.

The second floor on the left side of the courtyard is reached by a ramp from within the reception room. It is divided into three chambers as well; a library, a music room, and a study, where Lan Chev conducts his business deals.

The third floor, also accessible by the ramp leading up from the reception room, is a square corridor running the full circuit of the building, with small chambers opening off it overlooking either the courtyard or the lawn. Some of these are guest bedrooms; others are multi-use chambers ideal for private meetings or as-signations.

The outer rows of rooms in the front are divided off by recent construction. All but two doors have been bricked up and covered with either folding decorative screens or fabric wall-hangings. One door leads to two rooms which form a suite occupied by Ulren Raxos, the estate's Chief of Security, and Lan Chev's personal bodyguard. The other leads to a series of barracks-rooms where Raxos's guards, six White Apes, are housed. They are isolated here, at the top of the villa, because their presence in the staff quarters might disturb the other servants.

The roof of the building serves as a landing site for air-skiffs. Lan Chev's personal air-skiff is docked here, along with a slightly larger air-skiff used on occasion by the household staff. Both vessels are Medium Air-ships, with no mounted weapons. although Lan Chev's personal skiff is ornately decorated.

MELQUON ESTATE

The Melquon estate is also in the 'foreign quarter' of Darisheel. Surrounded by lush moss-lawn and red-leaved trees, the main residence is a pair of circular towers constructed of fine-veined white marble. The left, or North tower, is the main entrance to the building. Inside the elaborately-decorated entry doors is a stylish circular foyer with ramps on either side rising to a columned balcony on the second floor. Tasteful statues and antiquities dot the foyer's green marble floor. The remainder of the first floor is devoted to servant's and slave's quarters, and the household kitchens. Pantries for food and wine storage are located in

cellars beneath the rear of the building. The servant's entrance to the building is located behind the kitchens. Beyond it is a small courtyard surrounded by a fret-work stone wall.

The second floor is divided into wedge-shaped rooms; lounges, salons, and a library. At the back of the second floor are wide crystal doors which open on a large terrace, suitable for outdoor entertaining. Ramps along each side of the terrace lead to the third floor Arboretum.

The Arboretum is enclosed by a segmented crystal dome which concentrates the feeble sunlight and allows Melquon to raise exotic hothouse plants from distant parts of Mars.

A hallway runs south from the entry foyer and bisects the entire South tower, ending in a circular air-shaft with a coiling ramp which gives access to the South tower's upper floors. The air-shaft's external walls are pierced with a lace-like pattern of openings each filled with colored glass louvers which can be opened in fine weather for ventilation.

The front of the first floor of the South tower is a formal banquet hall, set with a series of large circular tables. The rear of the first floor is divided between a private dining room used for family meals and two smaller chambers where more intimate gatherings might be held.

The second floor of the South tower is divided into a sitting room and three private apartments. One is used by Turric Melquon, one by his wife Linares, and the third belongs to their son Otal.

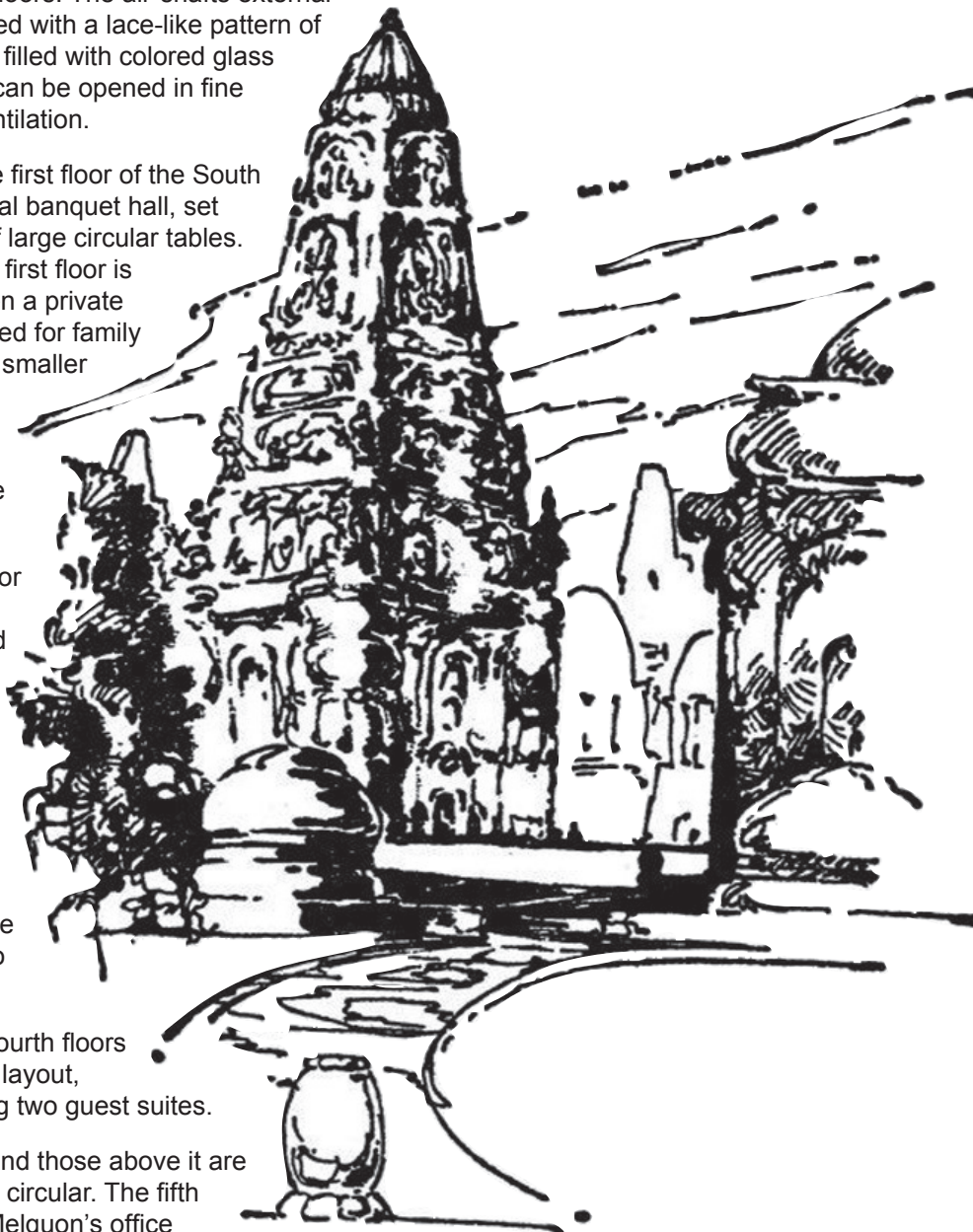
The third and fourth floors are identical in layout, each containing two guest suites.

The fifth floor and those above it are smaller but still circular. The fifth floor is Turric Melquon's office and study, a set of well-appointed

rooms from which he conducts his business and political dealings.

The sixth floor is closed off by a locked door, and so far as the household staff and occupants are aware, unused. In actuality, it is Turric Melquon's secret armory. It is here that he stores the weapons he is amassing for his projected counter-revolution. There are over two hundred swords and axes stored here, along with approximately thirty radium weapons of various makes.

The seventh floor is a storage area, containing the various equipment necessary to supply and repair the estates air-skiffs, which are docked on the roof of the South Tower. There are two Medium Airships and one Small Airship in davits on the roof. One of the Medium vessels has two mounted Radium Guns and an empty Bomb Rack, the other two vessels are unarmed.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Most of the background detail on each NPC in this section can be learned either by simple observation, or by the use of the skills Investigation or Streetwise. Investigation will turn up more specific details, while Streetwise will turn up what 'everyone knows' about someone – the rumors and gossip, which may or may not be entirely true.

TASO ANAS

Taso Anas is a wastrel poet and, unbeknownst even to himself, the son of the deposed King of Maran. Refer to the introduction for the full details of his early life. He is a slender young Red Man of average appearance. He wears his dark hair in long ringlets – a rather foppish Baltan style. His face shows the beginning puffiness of early dissipation.

GOALS:

Taso Anas's goals are seldom long-term. He is looking for a patron so that his plays might get produced, he is looking for a drink or drug to dull the sense of rootlessness and failure which occasionally overcomes him.

Taso Anas (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6 Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d6 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d6 Gambling: d4 Streetwise: d8 Knowledge(Literature): d8
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges: Yellow, Habit (Alcohol)
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

BEL VENDRA

Bel Vendra appears to be a hearty and bluff-spoken bon vivant – but in actuality he has the heart of a con-artist. He is well educated, and knows a little bit about a broad span of topics – a trait that is very helpful when attempting to convince others to go along with his plans. He is a tall, dignified Red Man of indeterminate age; not elderly, but no longer quite in his prime. His shock of white hair, always neatly dressed, adds to this impression. He moves and speaks with great flourish, always presuming himself to be the center of attention in any gathering.

GOALS:

When Vendra discovered that his young protégé in the theatrical world bore the birthmark of the royal family of Maran, he immediately knew what it meant – it meant that at last he, Bel Vendra, had an entrée into Baltan high society once again, coat-tailing on the fame of the deposed Prince! Initially, his plans went no further than that; however, current circumstances have caused him to seriously consider the notion that

if the Prince were to actually be restored to the throne of Maran, his own social position might rise commensurately...

Bel Vendra

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8 Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d8 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d10 Riding: d8 Streetwise: d8 Lockpicking: d6 Healing: d4
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges: Charismatic, Criminal
Gear: Rapier (Str+d6)

TURRIC MELQUON

Turric Melquon was a young man in his prime when he was forced to flee Maran in the wake of the Revolution. He lost everything; his family, his property, his position – everything, in fact, except his ambition. In Darisheel, he found a group of other expatriate Maran nobles and in time became the de facto leader of the local Maran community. He is a heavysset man for a Martian, with a thick neck and powerful arms. His hair is dark, and he keeps it cropped close to his scalp, in an almost military style. He lacks any real interest in the wife who brought him wealth-by-dowry, and finds sexual release with two of his household slaves.

GOALS:

Turric Melquon chafes at the existence of the Maranian Citizen's Council. His fondest wish is to somehow lead a counter-revolution and seize the city of Maran himself. The discovery of an actual, living scion of the royal house of Maran is the tipping point for his goals: With the Prince at his side (and under his thumb), he can gather together the forces of the refugee-lords and get political backing for his plan.

Turric Melquon (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8 Strength: d8 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d6 Taunt: d8 Riding: d8
Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Connections, Stubborn
Edges: Strong Willed
Gear: Rapier (Str+d6)

LINARES MELQUON

Linares Melquon is Turric Melquon's wife, and the source of his wealth. Linares is tall and well-proportioned, with long blonde hair which she keeps in elaborate coiffures. Baltanese by birth, she is comfortable enough in her life and in her arranged marriage. Turric has his slave girl playthings, she has a succession of ruggedly-handsome gladiators...

GOALS:

She has been tasked by Turric to seduce the Prince, to get control over the youth. If he becomes infatuated with Linares, he will be visibly an associate of the Melquon household. Once that is accomplished, she can begin to convince him to agree to Turric's plan for counter-revolution.

If approached at any point about her feelings toward the Prince, she will lie, and say that she is taken with the young man because of his talent and wit.

Linares Melquon

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d6 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d8 Riding: d8
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges: Attractive
Gear:

OTAL MELQUON

Otal Melquon is the Melquon heir. He is thickly-built, like his father, but fair-haired like his mother, and with her narrow and aristocratic nose. He is a young man, not yet out of his teenage years. He is aware that his parent's marriage is one of financial and political partnership, not love. Raised by a succession of servants, he nevertheless has a closer relationship to his manipulative mother than to his distant and cold father. He knows of his father's plans to start a counter-revolution, and, at least at the beginning is a willing participant in the conspiracy.

GOALS:

Initially, his goals are simple – follow his father's orders and impress him with evidence of maturity and capability. Gaining his father's approval has always been difficult for Otal, and it is the one thing for which he strives. Once the conspiracy develops, however, Otal will find that his father's treatment of his mother has begun to grate. Using her like a common harlot as a lure for the Prince is disrespectful. Angry at his father, and increasingly jealous of the attention paid to the Prince, Otal will formulate a plan of his own...

Otal Melquon

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d6 Notice: d6
Shooting: d6 Riding: d8 Persuasion: d4 Stealth: d6
Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges:
Gear: Short Sword (STR+d6)

Treat Otal Melquon as a Henchman

KASHTI

Kashti is one of Turric Melquon's household slaves. She is red-haired and voluptuous, with skin like burnished copper. Melquon treats her with considerable favoritism, which has sparked a certain ambition within her.

GOALS:

Kashti wants to supplant Linares Melquon as lady of the house. This would not be an entirely singular event – courtesans, even slaves, have been made respectable, even freed, by marriage to a free citizen. She feels she has Turric's favor; all she has to do now is remove Linares Melquon from the picture, and let nature take its course...

If the opportunity presents itself, she will try to plant the suggestion with Turric Melquon that Linares might be a spy for the First Citizen of Maran!

Kashti

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d10
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d8 Notice: d8 Persuasion: d10
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges: Attractive
Gear: gold-plated bracelet-manacles and collar

MARALA

Marala is another of Turric Melquon's household slaves – she wears her dark hair long and very straight. She is a tiny woman with a lithe, slender build, and a pale lavender complexion. She has sleepy, sultry eyes and a sensuous smile. Secretly, she hates Melquon, and loathes his frequent 'personal attentions'. She is reporting on Melquon's activities to his rival, Lan Chev.

GOALS:

She wants to cause Turric Melquon's plans to fail – whatever those plans might be. She believes Lan Chev will take her into his household if she can help bring down her current owner.

Marala will lie to conceal her connection to Lan Chev. If she is questioned concerning her meeting with Lan Chev during the Waters Peak ball, she will say that she was avoiding Turric Melquon so that Linares Melquon would have the opportunity to seduce him.

Marala

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8 Strength: d6 Vigor: d8
Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d6 Notice: d8 Persuasion: d8 Stealth: d6 Streetwise: d6
Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4
Toughness: 6
Hindrances:
Edges:
Gear: gold-plated bracelet-manacles and collar

LAN CHEV

Lan Chev is the son of Maran nobility. He was barely an adult when his family fled the Revolution, and grew up more Baltanese than Maran. Nevertheless, he also grew up on his parent's stories of their power and position in the 'old days', and he feels a very strong sense of community with the other Maran expatriates in Darisheel.

GOALS:

He desires to lead the Maran refugee-lords as a community, but has no interest in 'retaking Maran'. He despises Turric Melquon as an old man mired in the past, and believes that he is likely to get a lot of people killed in his pursuit of a counter-revolution. By kidnapping the prince, he foils Melquon's plan – if Melquon can't produce the heir, he can't get the other refugee-lords to go along with him.

Lan Chev (Wild Card)

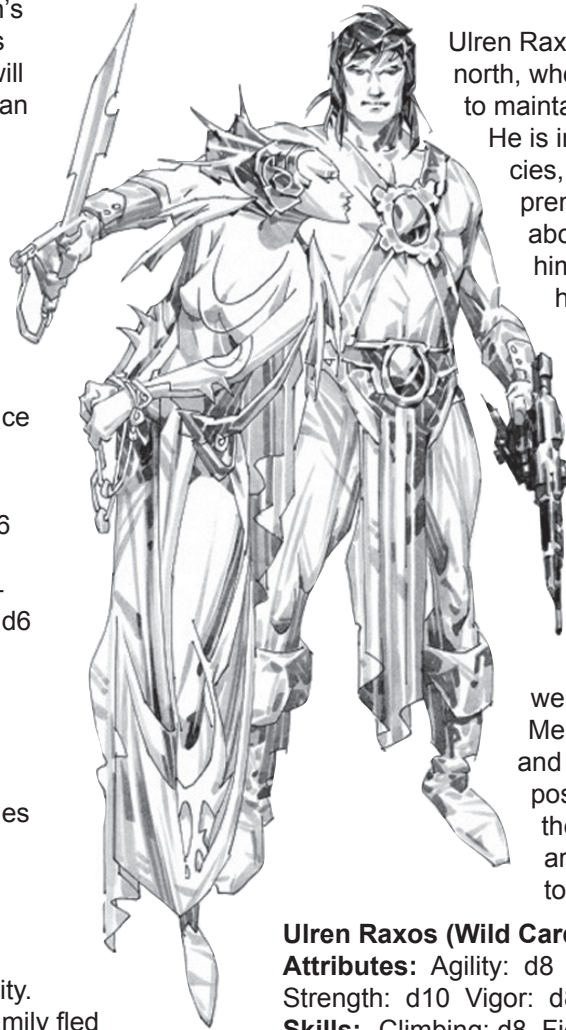
Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8 Strength: d8 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d6 Riding: d8
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges: Noble
Gear: Rapier (Str+d6), holdout radium pistol (R: 10/20/40, D: 3d6, AP3, 3 shots)

ULREN RAXOS

Ulren Raxos is a White Ape from the far north, who is employed by Lan Chev to maintain security at the Chev villa. He is in late middle-age for his species, and beginning to go bald a bit prematurely. He is thick-skinned about the way Lan Chev treats him, but he takes his rage out on his staff.

GOALS:

Raxos is dedicated to his duty, and takes his job seriously. He follows orders to the letter, and is loyal to his employer. There is only one thing that might sway him from that duty: He long ago gave up his youthful dreams of war-glory. If he were to be convinced that Turric Melquon's plan to raise an army and re-take the city of Maran was possible, and if he were offered the General's position in that army, he would break any oath to accept it.



Ulren Raxos (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d8 Strength: d10 Vigor: d8
Skills: Climbing: d8 Fighting: d10 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d8 Knowledge(Tactics): d8 Notice: d6 Riding: d8 Shooting: d8 Piloting: d6 Stealth: d6
Charisma: -4 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 7 **Toughness:** 11
Hindrances: Clumsy, Bloodthirsty, Loyal
Edges: Command, Frenzy
Gear: Legionnaire Armor (5), Broadsword (Str+d8)

GRAZZ

Grazz is a Red Man of late middle-age, who is heavily scarred and has only one leg. He gets around with a collapsible metal cane. His arms and chest are covered with black and violet tattoos, designed to accentuate his collection of scars. Rumor has it that Grazz

was once a gladiator in the arena, but 'retired' after sustaining a severe injury. He now operates a business in the shady underworld of Darisheel, leveraging his frightening appearance and equally frightening reputation.

GOALS:

Grazz would like to become wealthy, but he knows that he will never become respectable. Still, his position is most secure when people are afraid to cross him. Making sure that people stay afraid to cross him is a full-time job... but at least it is a job he enjoys.

Grazz

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d10

Strength: d8 Vigor: d8

Skills: Fighting: d10 Guts: d10 Notice: d6 Shooting: d4 Stealth: d6

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: One Leg, Greedy

Edges: Dirty Fighter, Really Dirty Fighter

Gear: Metal crutch, dagger (Str+4), holdout radium pistol (R: 10/20/40, D: 3d6, AP3, 3 shots)

Treat Grazz as a Henchman

TORV BUI

Torv Bui, Maran assassin. He is broad shouldered and deep chested, with a dark red complexion and corded muscles on his arms and legs. His hair is dark, and he wears it long in order to conceal the white line of a scar which crosses his right eye.

GOALS:

As a fanatic servant of the Maran Citizen's Council, Torv Bui has only one goal – complete his mission and kill Prince Anattio!

Torv Bui

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8

Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Climbing: d6 Fighting: d8 Guts: d6 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d8 Stealth: d6 Shooting: d6

Streetwise: d6 Tracking: d6

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

Hindrances: Wanted

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes

Gear: dagger (Str+4), short sword (Str+d6), crossbow (R: 15/30/60, D: 2d6, AP2)

BARRIGO NOROS

Barrigo Noros, Maran assassin. He is as slight as his partner is bulky, but he is no less capable at his job. His hair is dark and cut short. Barrigo Noros has the reputation of seldom speaking, even among those he considers to be friends. Of course, to date, he has never met anyone whom he might consider to be a friend.

GOALS:

Like his partner, Barrigo Noros is a fanatic. He will do whatever it takes to kill the Prince – including die, if that becomes necessary.

Barrigo Noros

Attributes: Agility: d10 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6

Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Climbing: d8 Fighting: d6 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d8 Stealth: d6 Shooting: d8

Streetwise: d6 Tracking: d8

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

Hindrances: Wanted

Edges: Level Headed, Marksman

Gear: dagger (Str+4), short sword (Str+d6), crossbow (R: 15/30/60, D: 2d6, AP2)

KASTON DAAV

Kaston Daav, Maran assassin specializing in poisons. He is tall for a Red Martian, and slender of build. His appearance is otherwise nondescript – a feature which he uses to his advantage. As a native Maran, Daav has no personal experience of Martian nobility; he prefers to pose as a Lowborn, or even as a slave, when disguising himself.

GOALS:

Daav was dispatched by the Maran Secret Police separately from the other two assassins. They do not know of his existence, nor does he know of theirs. His mission is to poison Prince Anattio, preferably in a fashion that will not be traced back to the Secret Police. In extremis, he will use other methods to accomplish his ends.

Kaston Daav (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility: d10 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d8

Strength: d6 Vigor: d8

Skills: Climbing: d6 Fighting: d8 Guts: d6 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d10 Stealth: d8 Shooting: d6

Streetwise: d6 Throwing: d6

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 6

Toughness: 6

Hindrances: Arrogant, Wanted

Edges: Alertness, First Strike

Gear: dagger (Str+d4), short sword (Str+d6), crossbow (R: 15/30/60, D: 2d6, AP2), vial of poison for dagger or crossbow bolts (victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 or take 1 Wound in addition to the effect of the weapon), vial of orally-administered poison (victim must make a Vigor roll at -2. On a success, the victim is Exhausted, on a failure the victim will die in 2d6 minutes unless the antidote is administered), vial of antidote to orally-administered poison.

BOSKA JURDEN

Boska Jurden, poet, occasional actor, and (secretly) an informer for the Maran Secret Police. Jurden is Baltanese by birth, and well-educated for someone of his social rank. In the course of his young life, he has seen the worst excesses of the Baltanese nobility first hand, and has come to despise the system that sets some men above others by no other criterion than the precedence of their birth. The Maran Secret Police often finds that young men and women of Jurden's sort make ideal agents-in-place in foreign cities...

GOALS:

Boska Jurden's goal in life is to pass along information that might be of use to his Maran associates, and await the coming of the glorious revolution to the Baltan Confederation. In the mean time, his fiery brand of rebellious poetry gets him a certain notoriety in the wine-shops and gambling dens of Darisheel.

Boska Jurden

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d6 Notice: d6
Shooting: d4 Stealth: d6
Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges:
Gear:

BYRAM OSCH

Byram Osch, actor with the company which performs at the Encarmined Gate Theater. He is both a leading man and a ladies' man.

GOALS:

Byram Osch is first and foremost interested in Byram Osch. He is his own first love, and self-centered enough not to see that as egotism. He wants fame and fortune, beautiful women, and cheering crowds. Starving in Taso Anas' play is a step in that direction.

Byram Osch

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d6 Notice: d6
Shooting: d4 Stealth: d6
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges: Charismatic
Gear:

VOER CREEL

Voer Creel, comedic actor with the Encarmined Gate Theater. He is a fleshy man for a Martian, with a loud voice, a louder laugh, and a talent for lampooning those around him. As a comedian Voer Creel can't help but be a keen observer of human foibles – unfortunately

for the people exhibiting those foibles, he also can't help making jokes about them in public.

GOALS:

Voer Creel would like nothing better than to have one of his own plays produced by Shamidan Banrus. He is insanely jealous of Taso Anas' sudden success and social connections. He is madly in love with Lurra Rasik, but knows that she has no interest in him.

Voer Creel

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d6 Notice: d8
Shooting: d4 Stealth: d4
Charisma: -1 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Big Mouth, Habit (Braying laugh)
Edges:
Gear:

LURRA RASIK

Lurra Rasik, actress and singer. She is a petite woman, but her voice is a powerful contralto. Her lavender eyes are large and luminous, easily her best feature. She has been romantically involved with both Boska Jurden and Byram Osch in the past. Her passionate nature often leads her into entanglements with men who have motives that are less than pure.

Questioning Lurra Rasik about her theater acquaintances will give the following information:

- "Boska Jurden is so fiery! He is passionate about everything he does... Love, politics, art... He has talent as a poet, but he always argues with authority. His political satires have come close to getting him imprisoned."
- "Byram Osch is very handsome, and he's actually a very nice person. He's not as shallow as people say – they're just jealous of his looks and talent."
- "Voer Creel? He's funny! He's also rather rude. I can see why people don't like him. If his humor didn't win him powerful friends, he would probably need to be a better swordsman..."
- "Shamidan Banrus is a cultured gentleman, with a truly discerning eye for talent. It's nice to be courted in an old-fashioned manner..."
- "I love the Prince's poetry! His play is wonderful, too, of course, but his poetry is sublime! I wish he would set some of it to music; then I could sing it on stage."

GOALS:

Lurra Rasik is not naïve, but she holds a secret be-

lief, unfashionable in cynical Baltan, in the power of romance and true love. Her goal is to find someone she can love unconditionally, and who will love her in return.

Lurra Rasik

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

Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d6 Notice: d6
Shooting: d4 Stealth: d6

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances:

Edges:

Gear:

SHAMIDAN BANRUS

Shamidan Banrus is a Baltanese nobleman from an old and much-respected family. He is a courtier and dabbles in scholarly and artistic pursuits, but relies on his extensive staff to handle the day to day running of his estates and holdings. He keeps his graying hair in immaculate order at all times, and is always bedecked with gemstones, bracelets, and rings. He is a patron of the arts, and sees it as a social obligation to support cultural undertakings.

GOALS:

Shamidan Banrus desires, above all, to contribute to the cultural life of his city – and to be recognized by his peers for having done so. He is skeptical of Bel Vendra's claims about the Prince's origin – skeptical of anything Vendra has to say, in fact. To Banrus, the man seems to be something of a charlatan, and not the kind of person with whom proper folk should associate... On the other hand, Taso Anas is a talented poet and playwright, regardless of the nature of his origins or of his friends.

Shamidan Banrus

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

Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d6 Riding: d8

Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances:

Edges: Connections, Noble

Gear: Rapier (Str+d6)

MINOR NPCs

There are a number of minor NPCs in this adventure – a necessity when many of the scenes take place at large social gatherings. Each is described only briefly, with one or two key elements. Use the stats on page 169 & 170 of the MARS book for these NPCs, when and if stats become necessary.

Narveen Rindos is a small man, but he fills a room because of his irrepressible personal energy and enthusiasm. He waves his hands constantly as he speaks – his gestures are as expressive as his words.

Lady Torva Hurel is a majestic woman in early middle age, who wears her dark hair up in ever-more-elaborate coiffures. She is certain of her opinions, and not at all shy about stating them. Other people's opinions are dismissed with an airy wave.

Brother Paltaros is a prelate of the Dawn Brotherhood, a religious order. His head is shaved and his expression seems permanently dour. He is dressed at all times in the formal blue robes of his order.

Lord Yantou Prel is a vigorous older Red Man, whose hair has gone entirely white with age. He is a widower, in the market for a new wife.

Lady Arula Jian is a lovely young woman, with large lavender eyes and a vibrant personality. She has less concept of personal space than most Baltanese nobles, and frequently touches those with whom she speaks.

Vice Admiral Kian Duleen of the Baltan Navy; he holds himself ramrod straight at all times, and his uniform is immaculate. When he speaks, it is with a haughty drawl, dismissive of both the topic of conversation and the person with whom he is conversing.

CREATURES

HAGADAN

Hagadan are vicious animals, quick and pantherish in their motions. They have eight slim legs and a series of spike-covered plates down their spines, making them resemble a hideous cross between reptile and insect.

Hagadan

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d4(A) Spirit: d8 Strength: d8 Vigor: d8
Skills: Fighting: d8 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d8 Notice: d6

Pace: 8 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8(2)

Special Abilites:

Bite: Str+d4

Armor: +2

SHINQ

Shinq are small, rat-like Martian vermin which can be found in most Martian cities, feeding on the detritus of the Red or Green inhabitants. They are six-limbed, grey-green and slick-skinned, with lipless jaws and large exposed incisors. Individually they are no threat, but when they swarm – driven by hunger, fire, or flooding – they will attack anything in their paths. Shinq are filthy creatures which live in sewage. Their bites and scratches cause puffy, infected welts which lead to fever.

Shinq

Attributes: Agility: d10 Smarts: d4(A) Spirit: d12 Strength: d8 Vigor: d10

Skills: Notice: d6

Pace: 10 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilites:

- **Bite:** Shinq swarms inflict many tiny bites and scratches every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the victim's least-armored location.
- **Infection:** Anyone Shaken or Wounded by Shinq bites must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from infection. Cumulative bites can lead to Incapacitation, but never Death. The fever passes after a Martian day, or can be cured by a successful Healing roll.
- **Split:** Shinq swarms are clever enough to split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is reduced to 5 each.
- **Swarm:** The swarm covers an area equal to a Medium Burst Template. Parry +2; because the swarm is composed of dozens of small creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect attacks work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his Strength as damage to the swarm each round. Shinq

swarms can be escaped by diving into water, if open water is available. Shinq will swim, but only to escape danger. In water, they no longer constitute a viable swarm.

YTHRU

Ythru are steppe hunters, trained by the Red Men of some cities as guard animals. They are six-legged mammals with wide jaws which can unhinge to take in small animals in a single gulp. Their tails are long and very-nearly prehensile. In the wild, female Ythru are dominant, leading small packs of males and subordinate females. Each pack nests in a communal burrow beneath the mossy ground-cover of the Martian steppes, in the center of their hunting area. The 'queen' females are very territorial, and their pack-mates follow the cues of the 'queen'. Domesticated Ythru can thus be easily trained to defend specific areas – and to do so with great ferocity.

Ythru

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

Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d6 Intimidation: d10 Notice: d10 Tracking: d8

Pace: 10 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilites:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Fleet-Footed:** Ythru roll a d10 when running instead of a d6
- **Go for the Throat:** Ythru instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on the attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.

RELATIONSHIP MAP

