



THE SAVAGE WORLD OF
**SOLOMON
KANE**

10403

The Path of Kane

BASED ON THE WORKS OF ROBERT E. HOWARD



The Path of Kane

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He wasn't a good man. In fact, he had taken part in deeds infamous and malign for nearly a decade. But he had taken little joy in it—though he knew that would not save his soul from damnation—and were he not pressed by circumstance he might even have been a man of character.

John Porter knew this as he stared at the silver tip of the saber before him. This landless man, this mad and reckless Wanderer, would end him now and all that would be forgotten. Would that he could redo these last years before he met his Maker.

"Why do you hesitate, Wanderer?" Porter asked through blood-drenched lips. "You've slain these bastards...my mates...and beaten me fairly with your steel. I've not asked for mercy."

"You'll go to the devil," said the tall Puritan quietly.

"I've known that for a while. I make no excuses for my wretched ways. Let me face my punishment as a man."

It was raining on the Caribbean that day. The twilight sky was dark and cold and the sea-foam bit sharply into each man's many wounds. Solomon Kane looked up through the smoke and fumes. The pirate fleet was a shambles. Men drifted in the water like apples bobbing in water, occasionally twisting violently as some unseen predator tore at their flesh. The English privateers were sundered and bloody as well, but had fared better than the corpses who now littered the Atlantic floor.

"I have traveled far and slain many evil men, pirate," Kane muttered, more to himself than his prey. He realized his indirectness and settled his cold gray eyes upon the man at his sword-point.

John Porter trembled. Not at the fear of his certain demise—he was far beyond that. No, this was a strange fear that made

the air rise fitfully through his lungs. This was the fear of hope; of redemption. He could not explain it, the stranger had not offered it, and he knew he certainly didn't deserve it, but for whatever reason John Porter suddenly felt hope—and that was the most terrifying thing of all.

Kane lowered his sword. "I am compelled."

Porter said nothing. He still could not allow himself to hope that perhaps his darkened soul could be redeemed.

"There are far greater evils in this world than the blood-stained hands of man, pirate. I have walked the Dark Continent and stared into the eyes of a vampire queen. I have battled beside the braves of the New World against ancient things that lurk still within their primeval forests. And I have slain demons on the shores of distant cruel Cathay."

Porter remained quiet. He felt the rain patter on his brow and tasted the cold salt air, and felt a heavy burden begin to lift from his heart. It was a sensation he would recall for many, many years to come.

"What..." Porter shivered at the sudden interruption of his own voice. "What must I do?"

"This I know not. Your fate is not mine to decide. But you will hear the call. It will come from strange sources—perhaps in your nightmares, perhaps while you are deep in your cups trying to stave off your own wickedness. But you will hear it. This I know. And you will heed it, or your soul will be thrice-damned."

John Porter squinted up through the drizzling rain and into the steely gaze of Kane. "And what of my fate today? How will I avoid the gibbet?"



PROLOGUE

"I know not. Perhaps you won't and this is all some fevered imagining of my tired mind."

Porter frowned.

"But you will not die by my hand this day, John Porter."

The pirate gave his captor a quizzical look, knowing not how his name came unbidden to the Wanderer's lips.

At that the stranger turned and leapt onto a lifeboat floating nearby. He rowed into the darkness and John Porter never saw him again.

That night the pirate managed to escape the encircling privateers on a piece of blood-stained driftwood. The sharks followed, but were perhaps satisfied with the meat of his former companions. He washed up days later on some unknown and forgotten island. For months he sat marooned, living on sea-turtles and rain-water collected in their shells. He had many long nights to contemplate his future, and reconcile his past. As he approached something of a peace within himself, it so happened that a passing merchantman found and took pity on him. The captain was a former pirate gone straight himself and so gave John Porter a position on his ship, the Redemption.

He served there for years, working a hard but honest living with the other sailors and even occasionally fending off the same scurrilous breed he had fallen in with a life-time ago.

In 1610, the Redemption landed at Jamaica, bearing medicine and food for a terrible outbreak of cholera that had taken the island. Most would not go ashore but simply cast the crates and barrels to the quarantined dock-hands below. But John Porter had a dream. In his nightmares he had walked the shores of Jamaica for some

weeks. He knew its shoals and lagoons well enough to navigate, and he knew the location of the strange and savage natives who dwelled along the deep, dark river—and of the curse they had placed upon the intruding New Worlders.

John Porter supped at the local tavern, refilled his black powder and shot-horn, and purchased a new saber with the money he'd saved aboard the Redemption. As he ate what he felt would likely be his last civilized meal he spied a woman with haunting green eyes. Her name was Sally, and like John, she had heard the call. She was a wanderer now, she claimed, freed from a den of iniquity some years back by a steel-eyed man in a slouch hat and dark cape. Sally had left England soon after and landed here, where she turned to nursing the unfortunate islanders and indentured servants of Jamaica at the hospice. But lately she had suffered dreams—terrible dreams—of some dark and loathsome creature of pestilence and disease borne in the darkest thickets of the jungle. With little more than her surgeon's knife and a small kit of supplies, she had been ready to tread this unholy path alone. Now she found in John Porter a kindred spirit—one touched by the Wanderer and another force—a distant and unnamed juju man who seemed to speak to them in dreams and portents.

The thing in the jungle would be their end. They knew this as certainly as they knew the sun would rise on the morrow. But that was a small price to pay for the salvation of their souls. With grim determination and growing righteous rage, the pair walked into the savage jungle.





INTRODUCTION

Years ago you disappeared and Sir John spread the rumour that you had drowned. Yet when he lay dying with my rapier through his body, he gasped out that he had kidnapped you and sold you to a Barbary rover, whom he named—a bloody pirate whose name has not been unknown on England’s coasts aforetime. So I came seeking you, and a long weary trail it has been, stretching into long leagues and bitter years.

—*The Moon of Skulls*

Welcome to *The Path of Kane*, a collection of adventures for use with *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*. Inside these pages you’ll find a wealth of Savage Tales covering most of the known world—and beyond. The stories contained here will take your players from the green and pleasant land of England to the shores of Madagascar, the deep forests of the Hudson Valley, the foothills of the towering Himalayan Mountains, and countless locales between.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

TO get the most of this work, you’ll need *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*. The Savage Tales here are meant to supplement those already contained in the main setting book. They expand on the world we’ve presented there and provide additional points of interest for your wanderers. With *The Path of Kane*, you will be able to extend the Plot Point campaign detailed in the core book for weeks, months, or even years.

None of the Savage Tales contained in *The Path of Kane* are Plot Point adventures. That means you’re free to pick and choose amongst them, selecting the ones you feel

best appeal to your own group without missing any vital pieces necessary to complete the Plot Point campaign presented in *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*. Or, if you’ve chosen to craft your own storyline, these Savage Tales can be plugged into that without any concerns about dangling plotlines or unanswered questions.

CHRONOLOGY

The early 17th century is a very volatile time politically. Europe is ravaged by the ebb and tide of several wars, and former allies can become new enemies overnight. Various powers on the continent are expanding their influence into the rest of the world, whether in Africa, Asia, or the New World. Old empires in decline crumble as younger ones rise to take their place.

The “official” date for *The Path of Kane* is the year 1610. All the material provided in this book assumes that timeframe. Given the travel limitations of the age, it’s likely that your own campaign will span years—if not decades—which may drastically affect the historical accuracy of the information presented here. How closely you want to stick to reality is entirely up to you.

We’ve also provided a little more background on the world at the time of Solomon Kane. This book won’t serve as a replacement for a good historical text, but we’ve included information to help you get a feel for the political climate of the time. Each of the Savage Tales is set in a specific country or city and often draws on its locale for inspiration. However, as you’ll see, several of the tales are readily transferrable to another location with minimal changes necessary should you like the adventure but not the specific setting.



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ADVENTURE LINKS

Adventure
This is
step 1

Although all of the adventures in this book are designed to stand on their own, there are some that share certain elements and/or characters. Where this is the case, we've noted it with sidebars entitled **Adventure Link**. These sidebars tell you all you need to know about how one Savage Tale ties to another and where to find the associated adventure.

It's not necessary to run a linked adventure, but if you do choose to use that option, it provides additional continuity for your game.

RUMORS

Rumor
"Bless my
soul! This
is the
start

At several points in *The Path of Kane*, you'll also find sidebars titled **Rumors**. These are simply seeds for other adventures in this book, presented as gossip or rumors the wanderers may overhear in a tavern, while dealing with a merchant, or even just walking the street. Most aren't location specific—if you find one you like, you can drop it into your campaign nearly anywhere. Or you can use them as inspiration to generate your own leads for your party of adventurers.

Now strap on your saber, shoulder your matchlock, and prepare to walk...the *Path of Kane*.



Europe

During the early 17th century, Europe is best described as being in a perpetual state of war. Most countries of Europe have taken an expansionistic approach, trying to solidify holds on lands both within the continent and without. Although France is poised to be a major world power both militarily and politically, it is steadily losing ground to its neighbors as England consolidates its grasp on the northern areas of Europe while the Papal States expand through the southern portions.

Not all aggressive actions occur for political reasons either, as the ever splintering denominations of Christianity struggle against each other. As a natural progression from the tight space and constant desire for more land and secular or spiritual power, conflict becomes inevitable.

Evil skulks in the dark alleys of large European cities, on roads between villages, in the shadowy recesses of great cathedrals, and any place people avert their gaze for their own safe-keeping.

Dutch Republic

The Seven United Netherlands—also known as the Dutch Republic—are composed of the northern provinces which recently separated from the Spanish Netherlands. The major religious force among the Dutch is Calvinism. A faith stressing humility and the concept that God is solely in control of Man's salvation, it is a primary cause of Dutch social egalitarianism. Fearing the persecution brought by the Catholic Spanish Inquisition, these primarily Protestant provinces revolted against Spain. This event escalated into a lengthy war of independence

(eventually known as the Eighty Years War), which was recently halted in 1609 by truce between the two countries.

Although it has only recently been recognized by other European powers, the Dutch Republic is the preeminent power in world trade, with Amsterdam becoming Europe's most vital point for the shipping of goods. The Dutch East India Company holds a 21-year monopoly on trade to the Far East and serves as traders and colonizers for the Dutch Republic.

This is a very progressive time for the Dutch. They established the world's first stock market in 1602 and the Dutch East Indian Company is the first multinational corporation financed by shares sold publicly.

Dutch Superstitions

Cats are not allowed in rooms where families discussed private matters, since it is believed the cat would go out and spread gossip about the family.

Dutch Sailors approaching certain areas in a sea voyage for the first time are often hung down from a yardarm and dipped three times in the ocean in order to stave off bad luck.

Passing under a ladder brings bad luck.

Hanging a piece of clothing of a sick person from a tree helps them heal.

Never receive a knife as a gift or there will be a fight, it must be paid for with a gift of copper.



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In spite of the religious conflict that sparked the country's rebellion from Spain, the Dutch Republic espouses religious tolerance. They are a bastion of philosophical and artistic growth and social liberties.

RUMOR

"I hear the Spaniards finally caught that scoundrel Swafford. No doubt, he'll soon hang."

This rumor leads to the **Savage Tale: The Last Vigilant**, on page 77.

Unlike the rest of Europe, class structures are not based on birth, but rather on wealth and continuing income. Nobles frequently marry into prominent merchant families, and often titles and heraldry can be purchased, not inherited. The middle class are scholars, artisans, professionals, and industrialists who rise to their positions even from the lowest class if they work hard and long. Mathematicians and scientists of all kinds flourish in the Dutch Republic, making it a great place for a master of the occult to hide and grow powerful.

Known as the Low Countries for a reason, much of the Dutch coastline lies at or below sea level. The ubiquitous windmills are used to pump water out of the land and back into the sea, keeping major cities and roads dry. As a result, severe storms often result in massive flooding in these low-lying regions.

AMSTERDAM

With the capture of Antwerp, the former capital of the Dutch Republic, by Spanish forces in the late 16th century, Amsterdam has become the seat of the United Provinces. Taking its name from the nearby Amstel river, Amsterdam has become the iconic city representing the Dutch Ideal. Here Protestants, Catholics, Jews and other religions coexist.

Immigrants from all over Europe are attracted to the city by its multicultural trade centers and unique commodities. With them

comes not only diversity, but also a great deal of wealth as Protestant and Jewish merchants flee less-tolerant nations for the safety of the Dutch Republic. Several universities and an influx of printers from all over the continent make this the center for European free press.

Already Amsterdam is the home port for ships trading all across the globe. The Dutch East Indian Company is aggressive in obtaining both trade and colonies for the new republic in Asia, and talk has begun about similar possibilities in the New World as well.

JUDGE NOT

LEAD In: The wanderers seek out a well-known blacksmith in Amsterdam to have their weapons repaired or perhaps to have a special weapon crafted. Upon their arrival at his shop, they learn of a terrible event that has recently befallen the man and his family.

Alternately, the heroes learn a local magistrate is offering a bounty for the capture of an escaped killer and rescue of the family he has taken hostage.

SMITHY STRUHARIK

Stephan Struharik is a well-known blacksmith in Amsterdam, so much so that people come from all over Europe to purchase items he has crafted. He frequently accepts commissions from nobles, merchants, and royalty for high quality pieces. If the characters need any weapon repaired or a new weapon made while near the city, they're directed to Struharik immediately.

His smithy is near the northernmost part of Amsterdam. It's a busy place, as many people come in to pick up or purchase new items. A small selection of weapons, gating, and decorative pieces hang from the walls, and the shop is decorated throughout with fine accents, particularly iron. Although the shop is open, the smith is not present when the group arrives.

His young apprentice tells the wanderers there has been a horrible tragedy. Struharik's 13-year-old daughter was killed. The murderer is a beast of a man, a deaf fool known only as Felden Hoeweler. To complicate matters, once Felden was captured, he was

tried for his crimes—but escaped, this time kidnapping Stephan’s wife Klasina and remaining daughter, Wilhelmina.

Struharik was mad with grief, and to “protect Mr. Struharik and those attempting a rescue,” the magistrate who found Felden guilty ordered Stephan arrested. The judge in question, Magistrate Steinberg, sent several constables to arrest Felden and rescue the Struhariks, yet none have returned. There is a bounty on Hoeweler, and able-bodied men are being asked to report to Magistrate Steinberg.

MEETING THE MAGISTRATE

Should the characters choose to follow on this quest, they are directed to Magistrate Steinberg’s residence. The magistrate is refusing to hear any further cases until this most pressing issue is resolved. His home is located near the Amstel River, and is quite a lavish house—a mansion even, by most standards.

The judge greets the characters with little enthusiasm, asking if they can succeed where others have apparently failed. He speaks with a condescending and haughty tone, summarily dismissing the newcomers as barely worth his time. He goes so far as to attend to other duties while speaking with them, finishing letters or documents and handing them to one of the several armed guards always in his presence.

Once the party’s determination to follow through is evident, Steinberg becomes coldly formal. The adventurers are offered a meager commission of £10 each for returning Felden, alive or dead. Another £10 will be paid if the Struharik family is returned safely.

The magistrate informs the group that Felden was last seen with Mrs. Struharik and her daughter in the forests to the southwest. He suggests patronizingly that they begin their search there.

AMBUSHED!

Once the wanderers have left Amsterdam proper, a Tracking roll picks up the trails of several small groups, all headed

along the same general route into the deeper reaches of the forest. After following these tracks for an hour, they meet a tracker on the road, who gives his name as Sudaj Vydykhan.

The man says he is also looking to retrieve Felden and asks to join the group. He insists that he is a master tracker from the Far East, and his clothing and bearing seem to put truth to it. Sudaj reveals that he heard the deaf man has taken refuge in a sea cave on the coast, perhaps believing the sound of the crashing waves will disorient rescuers. Sudaj adds that he knows of a nearby sea cave that fits that description and suggests they check there first.

After half an hour of Sudaj leading, allow characters to make a Tracking roll to spot that Sudaj is leading them on the same route that many other, smaller groups have gone. With a raise, a tracker quietly notes that the only tracks returning are very similar to Sudaj’s own.

If the wanderers voice suspicion of his motives, Sudaj angrily denies any and all accusations. In the middle of his rant, he



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picks up a stick and breaks it over his knee. Otherwise, he calls a halt at some point on the trail, picks up a stick and casually breaks it over his knee.

Once he does, crossbow bolts fly from further up the trails. The travelers have been led into an ambush! Sudaj turns and runs as several men rush from the surrounding forest and attack.

The ambush begins with each of the mercenaries firing a volley of bolts. Afterward, half their number close with the heroes while the others continue to harass the group with missile weapons. After more than half of their number are defeated, the mercenaries attempt to flee. Sudaj does not join in the attack himself.

🐉 **Mercenaries (2 per hero):** See page 13.

CONFESSIONS

Once the characters have defeated their attackers, Sudaj drops to his knees, begging for mercy. He claims he and his cohorts were sent here by the Magistrate to kill any who sought to find Felden. Their orders were also to kill both Felden *and* the Struharik family. Sudaj parleys for his life by offering to lead the party to Felden.

If characters search the area near the ambush site, they find many shallow graves, along with a small camp.

If they accept his offer, Sudaj leads the party a half mile from the ambush. Otherwise, they must succeed on a Tracking roll (-2) to find the trail. As they near the hideaway, they hear the crashing roar of waves. The pathway follows the crest of a low line of cliffs before descending to a cave entrance.

DEAF BUT NOT DUMB

As the entrance comes into view, a large man moves out of the mouth, setting himself into a defensive posture. Spotting the group, he points two pistols in their direction—conspicuously trained on Sudaj if he is there.

This is Felden, and he looks like he's seen better days. His clothing is stuck to him, worn and muddy. His hair and thick beard are plastered directly to his head, and he has

the look of someone nearing the edges of exhaustion. He grimaces as waits to see the actions of the party.

Shouting up to Felden garners no response due to his deafness. If a hero makes a show of disarming, Felden walks halfway down the sloped pathway and does his best to indicate that the disarmed character should come to him.

Once the wanderer is within 10 feet of Felden, he's in for a shock. The man can speak! Although his speech is slightly slurred, he is quite adept at reading lips. He pauses the character from time to time to make sure he follows everything they say. He can communicate very well, and seems far more intelligent than he had been credited.

It takes some convincing, but if the wanderers can show honorable intentions, Hoeweler reveals quite a story.

THE DEVIL YOU DON'T KNOW

It quickly becomes clear that Felden did not slay the elder Struharik daughter, and in reality, he is trying to protect the Struhariks. The magistrate himself murdered the girl in some grotesque ritual in the woods.

Felden stumbled upon the strange, and obviously diabolic, ceremony by accident. His appearance interrupted the ceremony, ruining the ritual—unfortunately not before the girl was killed. Felden tried to run away and expose the evil men, but was captured by the magistrate's henchmen.

Thinking Felden incapable of understanding, the magistrate instructed his men on when and how to enact a devious scheme. They would hold a mock trial for the crime, and then claim Hoeweler had escaped. Needing more victims for his plans, the magistrate was going to arrest Stephan Struharik in the middle of the night and take Struharik's wife and other daughter as replacement sacrifices.

Once Felden and the two Struharik women arrived at Sudaj's camp, Felden made his staged escape a reality. He stole the pistols from the guards and escaped with Mrs. Struharik and Wilhelmina. He took up residence in this cave to protect them until he could devise a better plan.

They are all in desperate shape, as they've been without food for the past few days. Hoeweler is really in no condition to fight. It's obvious that Sudaj and company were waiting for Felden to exhaust himself before moving in.

Once Hoeweler comes to fully trust the party, he signals the Struharik women to come out of hiding, and they confirm his story from their perspective.

LEST YE BE JUDGED

When the party returns to Amsterdam, their arrival attracts a great deal of attention. Whether they come marching in with Felden and the Struhariks in plain sight or they try the subtle route of taking Felden in as a "prisoner," a crowd quickly gathers. Soon, one of Magistrate Steinberg's men meets the party, informing them they are wanted at the court to proceed with due haste in the final disposition of Felden.

By the time the wanderers reach the court, there is quite the gathering with them, fitting the public spectacle that Steinberg wants. If the party brings Sudaj or the Struhariks with them into the court room, Steinberg visibly pales and orders the entire party arrested. In the event that the party attempts to capture the magistrate, Steinberg orders their arrest and sends his guards after the group.

Under no circumstances does Steinberg himself enter combat, instead cowering in fear if threatened.

If they resist, the magistrate's guards—who are unknowing pawns of the magistrate in the affair—fight to the death. They do, however, accept surrender from the heroes at any time. Should the heroes allow themselves to be taken prisoner, they are charged with aiding and abetting a murderer (Felden) and sentenced to death. Unless they can formulate a clever plan to escape, they are in dire straits indeed.

An alternative to fighting is to quickly expose the magistrate's nefarious deeds. A member of the party can make a Persuasion roll to convince the crowd of the facts. Sudaj's confession adds a +2 bonus if he is present. No roll is even necessary if the Struharik women testify.

Once the magistrate is revealed for the villain he is, the mob handles the judging and execution of the guilty right then unless the wanderers intervene. Otherwise, Steinberg and his cronies can be turned over to another magistrate for judging.

After all is said and done, Stephan appears in the crowd, pushing his way forward to have a tearful reunion with his family.

🐾 **Guards (2, plus 1 per hero):** See below.

🐾 **Magistrate Steinberg:** See page 14.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

GUARD

These guards are loyal to Steinberg, corrupt to the bone and willing to kill to keep their master's secrets.

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

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

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4), pistol (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP 1), shot & powder (10).

MERCENARY

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Charisma: -2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy, Mean

Edges: —

Gear: Long sword (Str+d6), crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6), bolts (10), leather armor (+1).

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MAGISTRATE STEINBERG

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Charismatic, Noble

Gear: Magistrate's robes.



THE ORGAN GRINDER

RUMORS in Amsterdam indicate that several ladies of the evening have gone missing. Beggars, travelers and seamen have also disappeared. The class of the people involved means that the local constabulary has not taken much notice and, unless the heroes step in, it's apparent that whatever foul deeds are transpiring will continue unabated.

BACKGROUND

Fascinated by the functioning of the human body, Dr. Richard Gibson began obtaining specimens for study through questionable means years ago. At first, he limited his acquisitions to cadavers provided by grave robbers in the dark of night. After some time, he determined that the decay present in those disinterred bodies was adversely affecting his studies, so he began gathering subjects through a more direct route—murder.

Once he started down that path, his tumble into the dark arts was not far behind. Dr. Gibson found that, while necromancy did not necessarily provide him any scientific knowledge, the power was intoxicating. Unfortunately for the doctor his activities were discovered and he fled the country a few steps ahead of a lynch mob.

Dr. Gibson immigrated to Amsterdam from England not long ago. He quickly began his obscene practices again, but this time took care to avoid drawing attention. Initially, he purchased cadavers from abroad, having them shipped in as “medical supplies.” However, as before, he found the bodies suffering more decomposition than was acceptable.

Now, with the assistance of a somewhat reluctant assistant, Dr. Gibson has begun to prey once again on the living.

INVESTIGATING THE DISAPPEARANCES

Asking around the city about the missing citizens, the wanderers quickly learn that the local constabulary has taken little interest in the case. The missing people were among the lowest classes in the city: beggars, prostitutes, or the destitute. A few travelers and seamen have been reported as well, but the official opinion is that it's likely those individuals simply left the city on their own.

A Streetwise roll identifies a common thread amongst all the missing people: all were either sick or injured prior to their disappearance. Once the heroes have learned this, following up on that bit of information with a second Streetwise roll turns up the fact that one local doctor, Dr. Richard Gibson, is known for his charitable work amongst the poor in Amsterdam.

The doctor is something of a pariah with other members of his profession, not for his work with the poor, but because he also provides services to prostitutes with their “occupational difficulties” from time to time.

He and his assistant Mr. Jackson make rounds about the city in the early evening to attend to those unable to make an appointment. If anyone would have any clues as to the disappearances, the travelers are told, it would be those gentlemen.

MISTAKEN IDENTITIES

The heroes' interest in the missing persons has not gone unnoticed, however. After they've been asking around for a short while, a young boy approaches them and says he knows someone who'd like to speak with them. He motions them into a nearby alleyway.

If the wanderers follow the boy, they find themselves immediately set upon by a small gang of strangely tattooed men. The men enter from either end of the alley, trapping the party between them. With little preamble, they attack!

The men do not surrender and do not give quarter—in fact, they do not speak at all. Upon their defeat, the heroes discover that the men were all apparently already dead and somehow reanimated! The “tattoos” are actually carved into the flesh of the zombies and seem faintly luminescent, glowing with a dim red light which fades after the creatures are destroyed.

If the characters don’t quickly grab him, the boy flees the scene at the first signs of impending combat. Locating him afterward requires a Streetwise roll (–2). If questioned, he’s clearly terrified to lie. He says only that a man paid him £1 to call the heroes into the alleyway. Pressed for a description, he can only recall the man wore a long brown coat and hat.

 **Zombies (2 per hero):** See page 18.

THE DOCTOR IS IN

Gibson’s office is located near the docks, through an area riddled with seafood vendors and other small merchants. Second from the end of the row, the converted warehouse does little to stand out from the other businesses on the avenue. The distinct symbol of a doctor on the sign above the door is all that distinguishes it.

The door leads into a medium-sized office, cramped compared to the size of the building from the outside. A single door stands to the right of a sizable wooden counter, and the door opens to admit a thin gentleman in his 40s. His white beard is kept neat and long, and he speaks with an English accent.

He introduces himself as “Bertram Jackson, assistant to Dr. Gibson,” inquiring as to how he may help. If pressed for information about any of the disappearing persons, Mr. Jackson says that he and the doctor only provide the best care they can and do not monitor patients after they leave. He adds that he suspects most of the missing have likely just moved on, as ships leave Amsterdam on a frequent basis.



ADVENTURE LINK

If you choose, you can connect this adventure to the **Savage Tale: Duquesa Roja** and/or the **Savage Tale: The Lady in White**. Those tales can serve as either prelude or sequel to this adventure.

If you choose to run this tale first, Dr. Gibson flees to Spain and the Duchess’ household from Amsterdam. On the other hand, should you prefer to run the other tale before this one, the heroes find evidence that the Duchess has been having some of the remains of her own victims sent to the not-so-good doctor.

BEHIND THE CONSPICUOUS DOOR

Mr. Jackson does not allow the characters to go through the door by which he entered, saying that the treatment room lies beyond it. Only patients, he, and the doctor are allowed there. However, if one of the adventurers is injured (or just fakes a malady), he escorts her back.

Behind the door is a smaller room equipped with a pair of chairs, a treatment table, and a medicine cabinet. Astute characters may make a Knowledge (Medicine, Science, or Alchemy) roll to observe that many of the chemicals are anesthetics. A successful Notice roll also spots a long brown coat and hat hanging on a hook beside the door.

There are three other rooms, all behind closed doors, exiting the treatment room. Jackson knocks on one of the doors as he leaves. A few moments later, Dr. Gibson, an affable man also in his early 40s with trim brown hair and beard emerges from the door. Gibson inspects the “patient” thoroughly, and rather accurately diagnoses them. If the patient is faking an illness, he recommends exercise and a tonic, with a return visit in two days.

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Dr. Gibson's assessment complete, the character is asked to let herself out, and if she is able, to toss a few coins in the jar on the counter. If the player is looking, they see Jackson loading a stack of crates in one of the previously closed rooms before Gibson enters the hallway behind them.

JACKSON'S CONSCIENCE

Later that night, Mr. Jackson visits them wherever they are staying. He wears a long brown coat and carries a hat in hand. He asks to speak to the adventurers privately, away from prying ears.

"I've been with Dr. Gibson for a few months now and seen things no man should see. At first, he limited his blasphemies to cadavers he purchased from abroad—or had me steal from local graveyards. He paid me well, so I turned a blind eye, but now I fear for my own soul's salvation.

"Of late, I believe he's been killing some of his own patients. Poor folks or whores that no one would miss. He says he needs 'fresher subjects.' I've been too afraid to tell anyone. The doctor is an evil man, but he is very wealthy and money buys friends in high places. But you folk seem a Godly sort—and interested in what has been going on."

Jackson doesn't know what the man does with the bodies, but suspects some nefarious business. Gibson has shipped cadavers out of the country, hidden in boxes that claim to be full of medicines. In some cases, he carves strange symbols on the pieces of his victims before crating them up.

He denies any knowledge of the ambush that befell the adventurers earlier. Allow the characters to make a Notice roll to determine if he's being truthful. (He is—it was Dr. Gibson.) If you want to add to their uncertainty, roll some dice just to keep them guessing.

Should the party agree to help Jackson, he hands them a sheet that shows the bills for the last shipments bound for Madrid. Jackson asks the characters to come with him immediately, before he loses his nerve.

THE DOCTOR'S LAST OPERATION

Jackson hurriedly guides the party through the streets, explaining that Dr. Gibson is "making his nightly rounds." This gives them a short time in which to investigate the crates that Gibson has prepared for shipment. Arriving in the rear of the office, Jackson fumbles with his keys for a moment before opening the door, revealing a grim workshop.

Four operating tables contain various pieces and limbs, and several crates lie sealed in one corner of the room. Surgical instruments are strewn about the space, some with dried blood still flecked upon their edges. Several of the parts have carvings or burns that appear to be arcane symbols, and one table containing a mostly dissected female adult.

A fetid stench blankets the area, a mixture of preservative chemicals, disposed organs and rotting meat assaulting the nose. Jackson hurriedly grabs a crowbar from one of the tables and heads directly to the crates, attempting to pry one open. "In here, you'll see exactly what I mean," he says in whispered tones as the lid cracks open. "Underneath the first layer of—AUGH!"

FALL TO PIECES

The reason for Jackson's despair is quickly apparent, as a single, severed forearm has reached out from inside the box, gripping Jackson by the throat. The limb is covered with the strange glowing red runes they saw on the zombies in the alleyway.

"Are you such a fool as to believe your base treachery would go unnoticed?" says the voice of Dr. Gibson from a door at the far end of the room. "It is a pity to lose you and your new friends, although your deaths will at least provide me with more subjects for my research."

All the various remains come to life, animated by foul sorcery. Complete zombies rise from the tables, but that's far from all. Torsos crawl along the floor, headless bodies clamber to their feet, and severed limbs scuttle along the floor. The horrific sight requires Guts checks from the heroes.

Treat most of the reanimated cadavers as zombies and the severed limbs as creeping hands. The bulk of these are between the heroes and Dr. Gibson, preventing them from charging after the doctor immediately. A pair of creeping hands lie in wait for anyone who manages to break free from the horde of undead and threaten Gibson directly.

The final fate of Dr. Gibson is up to you. If you wish to have him escape and appear in the **Savage Tale: Duquesa Roja** later, he retreats into the night once his ghoulish mob attacks. On the other hand, if you want to wrap up the foul doctor's evil practices here, he raises his arms and surrenders once the heroes best his creations.

If the wanderers seem inclined to accept his surrender, Jackson (if he's still alive) objects to this, mentioning Gibson's immense pull and influence. How the party deals with that situation should provide ample opportunities for roleplaying any relevant Hindrances. Should the adventurers turn the doctor over to the authorities, his final fate is in your hands as to what best suits your plans for your campaign.

🦋 **Bertram Jackson:** See below.

🦋 **Creeping Hands (2, plus 1 per hero):** See below.

🦋 **Dr. Gibson:** See page 18.

🦋 **Zombies (1, plus 2 per hero):** See page 18.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

BERTRAM JACKSON

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Healing d6, Knowledge (Medicine) d4, Notice d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Greedy (minor)

Edges: —

Gear: Knife (Str+d4).



CREEPING HAND

Dr. Gibson's vile experiments become his mindless minions pounce reanimated, defending the wicked doctor until destroyed.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d10, Strength d10 (or as former "owner"), Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Notice d4, Stealth d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Scuttle:** Creeping hands roll a d4 running die, instead of a d6.
- **Size -2:** Creeping hands are small.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer -2 to attack rolls against a creeping hand, due to its size.
- **Throttle:** A creeping hand scoring a raise on a Fighting attack has grabbed its opponent's throat. Each round the grip is maintained, the victim must make a Vigor roll opposed by the hand's unearthly Strength or suffer one level of Fatigue. This can lead to Death. The victim may remove the hand with a successful opposed Strength roll.

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DR. RICHARD GIBSON

Dr. Gibson prefers to avoid physical combat, but his knowledge of the body and skill with a scalpel make him a deadly foe. Because the trappings of his spells require some preparation, he cannot cast them in combat.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Healing d8, Knowledge (Medicine) d10, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Magick d8, Notice d6, Shooting d4

Charisma: -4 (+0)

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

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), Filthy Rich, Improved Close Fighting

Gear: Scalpel (Str+d4).

Powers: *Animate hand* (runes carved on hand), *zombie* (runes carved on body).

Treat as a Veteran character.

ZOMBIES

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claw:** Str.
- **Fear:** Characters must make a Guts check when they first encounter the zombie.
- **Fearless:** The zombie is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called Shots do no extra damage.

ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

When Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, her closest relative was King James VI of Scotland. He assumed the crown of the Kingdom of England as James I, technically ruling both kingdoms. Thanks to careful groundwork laid both by James and members of the English government, his ascension to the English throne passed without protest or incident. However, even after he took the throne, the two countries remained separate countries—albeit with a single monarch.

King James quickly made peace with Spain upon taking office, ending a nearly twenty-year war between the two. Since then, England has been largely at peace with the rest of Europe. The East India Company, however, often clashes with Dutch and Portuguese traders in the Indian Ocean.

Both England and Scotland are fiercely Protestant nations. Catholics who swear an oath of allegiance to the king are tolerated, but those who refuse are viewed with unveiled suspicion. Puritans, even those that remain within the Church of England, are seen as close to heretics for their religious views and near treasonous for their denial of the divine right of kings. It is also during this time that the first King James version of the Bible is produced (1611).

ENGLISH SUPERSTITIONS

It's good luck for a black cat to cross your path.

Lighting a cigarette with a candle means a sailor will die.

Death comes soon when a bird flies into a window.

It is bad luck to put new shoes on a table.

Visitors to a home must kiss the family cat for good luck.

The Kingdom of Scotland is almost an aberration during this time. Scotland has almost none of the social upheaval seen in England or Ireland, preferring to allow things such as clan affiliation to determine caste. Indeed, one's family sets one's destiny, as most struggles are clan against clan. Many a Scottish ghost story begins with a young woman locked away for falling in love with someone from a hated rival family.

Scotland is home to a significant number of monoliths and cairns, hidden places that hint of ancient cultures and long-forgotten rituals.

RUMOR

"The Spanish Inquisition claims believing in witchcraft is as much a heresy as witchcraft itself! If you ever needed proof that the Spanish are crazed, there it is!"

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Jackals Amongst The Wolves**, on page 76.

Although it is nominally a kingdom, Ireland is a conquered (though often rebellious) portion of England since the early part of the last century. In addition to the resentment over the English rule, Ireland is a Catholic nation and its populace resolutely refuses to convert to the Church of England. Currently, the English treat it almost as a colony, seeding the countryside with plantations belonging to English Protestants in hopes of controlling the population.

DOVER

Dover lies at the mouth of the valley of the River Dour, where it meets the English Channel. To the east and west rise the fabled white cliffs of Dover. The soft stone of the cliffs is easily worked and several tunnels lie behind the cliffs, serving as both defensive works and smugglers' dens.

At one point, the river emptied in a wide estuary, but this silted up and the port is now protected by man-made piers to stop further erosion of the coast. King James granted a Royal Charter to the Dover Harbour Board, allowing it to collect revenue to maintain the port.

Dover lies at the narrowest spot of the English Channel and is the most likely point for invasion from the continent. Castle Dover, atop the highlands east of the port, has stood for over 500 years and was improved by Henry VIII to meet the threat posed by gunpowder weapons. From atop the castle towers, one can see not only the French coast, but if the conditions are right, even some of the taller buildings in Calais, France.

The port is a very important port in England, particularly in the realms of expansion and trade. This is often the last stop for ships prior to the New World or the Far East. A center for trade, captains load up on supplies here before undertaking the long and dangerous voyage across the seas.

NEWLY TURNED

LEAD In: As the wanderers pass near Dover, they observe a large number of livestock being burned throughout the countryside.

DRAINED RESOURCES

At several farms along their route, the party see the carcasses of cattle and sheep burned on pyres. If the characters question any of the shepherds or farmers on their way, they learn that a wasting disease seems to be making its way through the livestock. Most disturbing about this plague is the quick onset—one day an animal is in perfect health, the next they are dead on the fields, wasted away to flesh and bones.

Once in Dover, they learn that the disease made its appearance about two weeks ago and is spreading rapidly. No ship's master will take on any livestock from the area for fear of the disease not only contaminating other animals aboard his vessel, but also that the malady may infect his crew once they're at sea. This virtual blockade has begun to take its toll on not only those wishing to sell their livestock, but on port revenues as well.

ADVENTURE LINK



This adventure is loosely tied to the **Savage Tale: Blood West**, on page 139. While the adventure is set in Dover, it is easily placed near virtually any European seaport.

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causing the Harbour Board to offer a bounty of £100 to anyone who can stem the tide of the epidemic.

INVESTIGATING THE SOURCE

Currently, all the animals brought to market in Dover are being kept in public holding pens near the docks. None of the animals in the pen exhibit any sort of illness or symptoms. All seem perfectly healthy, if somewhat crowded and underfed.

A Streetwise roll learns that the “disease” strikes suddenly and always claims its victims at night. As a result, many in Dover have come to believe that the sickness is carried somehow on the night air. This belief is so common that few venture out at night—and none to the area of the holding pens.

Another Streetwise roll turns up a drover who recently brought a small flock of goats to Dover for sale. He tells the wanderers about a goat of his that died from the disease just last night.



“Whatever it is, it works fast. My goats was healthy as horses when I got here—no problem with no plagues back in Temple Ewell. Anyways, this morning I came to feed them, and one of my best billy goats was dead as a doornail. I can’t even sell the meat, the constable says I got to burn it.”

If they ask, the man allows them to examine the goat carcass before he burns it. The goat seems emaciated and somewhat desiccated, but there are no other signs of illness. A Notice roll finds a pair of puncture marks on the goat’s neck, however. There are traces of blood around the marks crusting the hair.

The drover’s remaining animals show no evidence of any wounds or illness. All seem to be in perfect health.

An examination of the other animals in the holding pens turns up no evidence of any wounds or illness. Asking other workers around the holding pens reveals that other animals did die last night, but all those carcasses have been burnt.

So far, no one in the city can cite any instances of any human being affected. However, if the party specifically asks instead about missing persons, allow them a Streetwise roll. On a success, they learn that a few folks have come up missing over the last week, mostly dock or warehouse workers. Given the influx of traffic from the port, it was assumed they either left the city on their own or were pressed into service on a merchant vessel.

STAKE OUT

Should the wanderers decide to keep watch on the holding pens after dark, at approximately midnight allow them to make Notice rolls. On a success, they see a few figures moving amongst the animals in the pen. If the heroes confront them, they quickly learn the cause of the “disease” plaguing Dover—vampires! Provided with a source of human blood, the undead immediately focus their attacks on the party.

Most of the vampires are newly created. They are slightly weaker than a fully blooded vampire and shouldn’t pose much of a threat to the adventurers. Only the vampire

responsible for Dover's infestation is a Wild Card. Even it is newly created though, and it remains largely feral in its actions.

None of the vampires retreat. They have no idea that they can "die again" and fight to the bitter end.

Once the characters defeat the creatures, they find the Wild Card to be barefoot and bare-chested. On his arm is a tattoo with an anchor and a ship's name, *The Promise*. A Streetwise roll quickly identifies the ship as one that departed the area over two weeks ago bound for the New World.

The other vampires are identified as citizens or visitors who had gone missing recently. A search of warehouses near where the *The Promise* was docked discovers several large, empty crates that were apparently serving as the undead's lair.

 **Newly-Created Vampires (1 per hero):** Use the Vampire profile below. However, these creatures are not Wild Cards, but merely Extras.

 **Vampire:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



VAMPIRE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Blood Drain:** A vampire who succeeds in grappling an opponent can make a bite (Fighting) attack next round with a +2 bonus. With a success, the victim must make a Vigor roll, -2 with a raise, or suffer Fatigue from blood loss. This can lead to Death.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Frenzy:** Vampires can make two attacks per round with a -2 penalty to each attack.
- **Level Headed:** Vampires act on the best of two cards.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by a vampire has a 50%

chance of rising as a vampire themselves in 1d4 days.

- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No wound penalties. Called Shots do no extra damage (except to the heart—see below).
- **Weakness (Holy Symbol):** A character with a holy symbol may keep a vampire at bay by brandishing the holy symbol. A vampire who wants to directly attack the victim must beat her in an opposed test of Spirits.
- **Weakness (Holy Water):** A vampire sprinkled with holy water is Fatigued. If immersed, he combusts as if it were direct sunlight (see below).
- **Weakness (Invitation Only):** Vampires cannot enter a private dwelling without being invited. They may enter public domains as they please.
- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (-6) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Vampires catch fire if any part of their skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust. Armor does not protect.

EDINBURGH

Located at the mouth of the Firth of Forth River, which is over five miles across at this point, Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland. The city is bounded by the Pentland Hills to the south and is home to over 20,000 people.

The royal Castle and the Scottish Parliament are located here. However, as the Scottish crown consolidates with the English

RUMOR

"Have you read *The Catholic Heresies*? Goes to show how our 'sister nation' thinks about those who aren't like them."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: The Fading Scent of Gunpowder**, on page 26.

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one in London, many nobles have followed their liege south, leaving behind empty castles and fortifications.

Edinburgh is sometimes referred to as the Athens of the North, both for its geography and its growing culture of enlightenment. The University of Edinburgh, founded in 1582, is the fourth such establishment in Scotland; neighboring England has only two at this time. Over a thousand merchants and craftsmen make the city their home, and while nearly a quarter of that number are tailors, the first factories have just been built near the city's center.

Edinburgh Castle sits atop Castle Rock near the center of the city. King James holds court here when he visits from England, but resides in the nearby Palace of Holyrood. With construction dating back over 250 years, the castle ranks with the Tower of London as one of the most haunted places in the world. Phantom pipers, headless drummers, ghostly cemetery dogs are all rumored to haunt the castle, and indeed, the city as a whole.



■ THE PIED BAGPIPER

LEAD In: Several travelers and merchant groups leaving Edinburgh are being attacked in the middle of the night by bandits—or, as some rumors are claiming, “fey creatures of the night.”



ADVENTURE LINK

This adventure can lead to the **Savage Tale: Timing is Everything**, on page 53, if you want. Assuming the wanderers defeat Immes, Fearghas offers them a small stipend of perhaps £50 each to take the music box to Zurich so that it can be repaired in time for his daughter's wedding.

If they do so, once the box is repaired, the wanderers find that the tune it plays is the same one that Immes used to summon the goblins...

BACKGROUND

In Scotland as elsewhere, a rivalry between families can form for virtually any reason. In this case, a feud between the Fullarton and the Ruthven clans began over the gift of a music box. Initially given as a present to a Ruthven as he wed a Fullarton, it was demanded back when the Ruthven turned out his wife in favor of a mistress. The former groom gave back everything *but* the music box, claiming it a gift freely given.

The refusal caused terrible contention between the two families, which quickly escalated into armed conflicts over the next century. The Fullartons, although the larger clan, fared poorly against the Ruthvens in battle, thanks largely to an alliance between the Ruthvens and the family of the ex-husband's mistress. In a few decades, the brutal fighting saw the Fullartons nearly expunged as a clan.

Fearghas Ruthven, the clan patriarch (known as the Ruthven of Edinburgh), currently holds the music box. His own daughter is about to be wed to an influential member of King James' Scottish court and Fearghas plans to give the heirloom as one of his wedding gifts. Unfortunately, it has not worked in years, so he's made arrangements to have it sent to Zurich for repair.

One of the few remaining members of clan Fullarton, Immes Fullarton feels very strongly about the heirloom, vowing to retake it at any cost. Lacking the monetary or material resources to confront the Ruthven clan by himself, he turned to the dark arts of his ancestors to find a way to strike back against his foes. He discovered an old family reference to an ancient race that lived beneath the earth, and how a talented bagpiper of Fullarton blood used his skills to drive them away.

Being a piper of no small skill himself, Immes found some music purported to have been used by the legendary piper, and subverted it to his purpose. He has had surprising success in calling the creatures forth, and while he can't actually force them to do his bidding, they've proven to be bloodthirsty enough on their own. Immes, learning of Fearghas Ruthven's intent to have the heir-

loom repaired, has begun intercepting likely groups leaving the city in an attempt to seize the music box.

SCENE OF THE CRIME

The heroes hear of one of the attacks that just occurred less than half a day's journey from the city. Alternately, they can come across the scene of one as they approach Edinburgh. Either way, investigating the site of the attack reveals several things to an observant wanderer.

Some of the bodies of the victims killed in the attack yet remain at the scene. The wounds appear more in line with what would be expected from an animal attack than a bandits' weaponry. Furthermore, while the possessions of the victims have been obviously thoroughly searched—often scattered around the ground—many valuables are visible, including coins and jewelry.

With a successful Notice roll, the wanderers observe that all the victims appear to be wearing the same pattern of cloth, either on their kilts or sashes. A Knowledge (Heraldry) roll identifies this as the tartan of Clan Ruthven. Any character of Scottish origin can attempt a Common Knowledge roll to determine the same thing.

A Tracking roll tells the wanderers that the attackers were barefoot, but apparently human. Searching the immediate area (or just following the tracks) uncovers several small holes not too distant. The attackers appear to have been hidden in them prior to the attack.

Most of the holes have completely caved in, although a few seem to go several feet into the ground. These are actually the openings to tunnels hurriedly dug by the goblins. Unreinforced and in loose soil, they collapsed not long after the creatures crawled back to the depths.

TALK OF THE TOWN

If the wanderers follow up on the attack, they quickly discover that there have been several such ambushes over the past few

GOBLINS

Goblins are twisted creatures about the size of a child with pale, leathery skin. They evolved—or perhaps devolved—from humans enslaved eons ago by an inhuman race to work in mines. Subject to foul sorceries and physical mutilations to make them more suited to their subterranean environment, they are now a degenerate race of underground dwellers sometimes mistaken for creatures of legend and myth.

Their eyes are milky white and pupilless, rendered useless after generations of lightless existence in the dank tunnels under the earth. To compensate, they have evolved the ability to navigate solely by sound. When not trying to be stealthy, the creatures make an unnerving cooing sound by which to better sense their surroundings.

You'll find all the information you need to use goblins in this *Savage Tale*, but for more on them, see *The Savage Foes of Solomon Kane*.

weeks. Strangely, the bandits do not seem interested in merchant trains entering the city, only those leaving it.

A Streetwise roll on the subject garners the fact that witnesses also report hearing a haunting pipe melody playing nearby, something that sounded so unearthly it sent shivers up their spines. Furthermore, more than one rumor is circulating that the attackers aren't even humans, but some terrible bogeymen seemingly out of a children's fairy story.

If the heroes ask around about tartans or Clan Ruthven, they learn that the leader of the family, Fearghas Ruthven, has put out a call for fighting men. The Ruthven, it seems, is intent not to let some silly stories frighten him. The man is making a great public show of announcing he is looking for paid assistance to help squash these bandits once and for all. Should the adventurers express interest in joining him, they are directed to a small manor on the outskirts of Edinburgh that serves as home for Clan Ruthven.

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MEETING THE RUTHVEN

When the characters arrive, twilight is setting and Fearghas welcomes them inside his second story study, having just completed dinner. He discusses the local rumors and says he doesn't believe in fanciful stories about monsters or bogies. He believes that a group of highwaymen have taken residence in the areas south of Edinburgh—and that they are targeting his family for some reason.

He explains that he intends to take a small group of his clansmen out to hunt down the bandits the next day. He welcomes the adventurers to join his band and offers them £25 apiece to do so.

Fearghas mentions that his family has a history of standing up to bullies, detailing the history of the music box. Given that he feels that victory over the Fullartons is complete, he intends to have the music box repaired and then given as a gift to his daughter's future in-laws. He believes it will make a nice piece for a noble of discerning tastes. He proudly shows the music box to the wanderers.

It's possible at this point the party puts together the clues and guesses that the music box is the cause of the attacks. If so, Fearghas is bull-headed about the music box and refuses to relinquish it. However, with a Persuasion roll, the wanderers can get him to agree to use it as bait to draw out the attackers.

LAYING A TRAP

If the characters have talked Fearghas into using the music box to lure the attackers into a trap, allow them to set up an ambush as they see fit. Fearghas and five of his clansmen make themselves available to aid the heroes in their scheme. Allow the players to run the clansmen and Fearghas as allies.

Leaking information that Fearghas is sending the music box for repair quickly makes it to Immes' ears. The party can virtually pick the ground where they choose to fight. Unless the plan is particularly bad, Immes falls for it hook, line, and sinker, but he doesn't come alone.

Moments before the goblins attack, the heroes hear an almost unearthly piping. Even the Scotsmen seem unnerved by the sound. Then, bursting from the ground nearby, Immes' goblin allies attack! Assuming they defeat the creatures, Immes realizes he has fallen for a trap and attempts to flee, but draws his sword and fights if confronted.

Under no circumstance does he surrender, but if the adventurers offer him the music box, he does agree to call off further attacks. However, if Fearghas is still alive, under no circumstances does he agree to giving Immes the heirloom.

🐉 **Goblins (4, plus 2 per hero):** See page 25.

🐉 **Ruthven Clansmen (5):** See page 25.

🐉 **Fearghas Ruthven:** See page 25.

🐉 **Immes Fullarton:** See page 25.

TRACKING DOWN IMMES

If the heroes do not concoct a plan to trick Immes into attacking, Fearghas and five of his clansmen head out the next morning as planned. The Ruthven explains his trackers plan to pick up the bandit's trail from the site of the last attack, the very one the heroes have likely investigated. Once they arrive, his men quickly confirm what the wanderers already discovered. It seems the bandits literally sprung from the earth and disappeared back into it once they finished their assault.

However, the trackers discover a single set of tracks leading to and from a nearby knoll. This is where Immes stood as he piped up the goblins and watched them savage the caravan. From there, the tracks head off into the wilderness, eventually leading to the ruins of a cottage far from the beaten track.

No sooner does the group arrive than a strange piping begins. Suddenly, from all around the group, goblins burst forth and attack! Immes is nearby and fights if attacked. Unfortunately for the heroes, once the goblins have been summoned, stopping the piping has no effect.

As above, Immes does not surrender, but if offered the music box, agrees to stop his attacks on the Ruthvens. Fearghas does not agree to this under any circumstances if he is still alive.

👤 **Goblins (4, plus 2 per hero):** See below.

👤 **Ruthven Clansmen (5):** See below.

👤 **Fearghas Ruthven:** See below.

👤 **Immes Fullarton:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



FEARGHAS RUTHVEN

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Heraldry) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8

Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Overconfident, Stubborn

Edges: Command, Connections, Noble

Gear: Claymore (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4).

GOBLIN

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Goblins are densely muscled and have a thick, leathery hide, making them surprisingly resistant to physical injury.
- **Blind:** These creatures are immune to any vision-based effects (darkness, invisibility, obscure, etc.).
- **Burrowing:** 4".
- **Claws:** Str+1d4, AP 2. Goblin claws are dense and sharp, capable of scoring solid stone.
- **Echo Location:** Goblins do not suffer any penalties for bad lighting.
- **Size -1:** Goblins stand 4' tall on average.
- **Weakness (Sound):** Loud noises, such as

gunshots or explosions, force goblins to make a Vigor roll or be deafened, suffering a -6 to all physical tasks that require "vision" for the next round.



IMMES FULLARTON

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Music) d10, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d6, Taunt d8

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Vengeful (Major), Vow (recover music box)

Edges: First Strike, Quick Draw

Gear: Claymore (Str+d8), bagpipes.

Special Abilities:

- **Summon Goblin:** By playing his bagpipes for a few rounds, Immes can summon nearby goblins to the surface. He usually uses his music to keep several lurking nearby so he can call them at a moment's notice. Immes has no control of the goblins once they're summoned, so he takes care to keep himself far from the ferocious creatures.

RUTHVEN CLANSMEN

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6 Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Tracking d8

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Claymore (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4), flintlock musket (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d8), shot & powder (10).

LONDON

London is the seat of the English throne and the largest city on the isle of Britain. It has been a population center since at least the 1st century A.D., when the Romans founded a settlement here. It has more than quadrupled in size over the last century and is currently home to approximately 225,000 inhabitants.



THE PATH OF KANE

Theater is becoming quite fashionable in London, with a writer named William Shakespeare producing some of the most popular plays. It's not universally favored, however. Puritans disapprove of the theater's worldly nature and authorities fear the large crowds it often generates, whether as a source of potential mobs or simply for the spread of the dreaded plague.

Throughout the late 16th and early 17th centuries, London suffers several bouts with the plague. King James' coronation coincided with a particularly severe epidemic in which tens of thousands died due to the disease. London is currently well on the way to recovery from that outbreak and the king recently reinstated the popular Lord Mayor's Show and parade.

RUMOR

"I swear to God, just one wrong step and I fell through a hole, and the chambers I found went on for miles! I'm lucky I ever made it out of Paris at all."

This rumor may lead the party to the **Savage Tale: What's at Stake**, on page 39.

London is a walled city, but the population is beginning to expand outside the walls, reaching into the surrounding countryside. London Bridge, the only bridge across the River Thames inside the city, is a crowded and cramped affair. Only 26' across, the bridge also holds dozens of houses and shops, reducing the actual street width to less than half that. The bridge is so populated that it is as large as some small towns.

Another famous—or perhaps infamous—London structure is the Tower. It is best known as a prison, particularly for prisoners of noble or even royal backgrounds. Currently, Sir Walter Raleigh is held here, albeit in relative comfort and in the company of his wife and children.

With construction dating back to William the Conqueror, the Tower is the backdrop for numerous ghost stories as countless prisoners have been executed here—their heads often displayed on the gates to London Bridge. Legend holds that the Tower is always home to at least six ravens and should those birds ever leave, the fortress, and indeed the entire kingdom, will fall.



THE FADING SCENT OF GUNPOWDER

LEAD In: The Lord Mayor of London is hosting a public discourse on the subject of unifying the various Protestant denominations under a single banner. The meeting is to be held in the Norman Chapel of the Tower of London and many prominent local theologians and politicians will be in attendance.

FOOTPRINTS AND DEATH

The Tower of London is actually a large fortress, containing concentric walls and several independent buildings. The Norman Chapel is but one of these. The Tower of London was once a Royal residence and hosts the Crown Jewels, political prisoners, and the occasional execution for treason. This means the Yeoman Warders, the ceremonial guardians of the Tower, are always present, providing a layer of security above and beyond a normal meeting.

Throughout the evening, the Lord Mayor, Grayson Devlin, plays the host well, introducing prominent scholars and religious figures to each other. With this many differing ideologies, it's only a matter of time before things go less smoothly. Shortly prior to 11:00PM, a prominent Protestant Bishop, John Grant, gets into a heated argument with the Lord Mayor. The conflict is spurred by a thin balding man with sharp, angular features. Angered, Grant makes a show of leaving to meet his carriage outside the Tower's outer wall.

At 11:05 PM, a scream erupts from the yard between the Chapel and the Gate to the outer wall. As all rush to the scene, the

Bishop is found dead, and although his body has been quartered, his heart still beats for a few moments. The scent of gunpowder lingers in the air, although no wound indicates a musket or pistol caused the Bishop's demise.

As the characters come upon the scene, allow them a Tracking roll to discover footprints in the yard leading away from the corpse, each with a small amount of gunpowder inside. The Yeoman Warders respond to the cry as well, and one of them makes note of the prints should none of the heroes discover it.

If a character spots the gunpowder in the footprints, allow them to make a Smarts roll to recall the famous rhyme about Guy Fawkes. Otherwise, just mentioning the footprints and the gunpowder allows a random guest or guard to recall the rhyme.

"Remember, remember, the Fifth of November,

The gunpowder treason and plot.

I see no reason, that gunpowder treason,

Should ever be forgot."

INTERROGATIONS

As everyone is pushed inside the Chapel, the guards take people aside to ask quick, rough questions. During the interrogations, a few of the guests are dragged off and not returned. The Yeoman gruffly explain that these are people "of interest." A small detachment searches the grounds, looking for an attacker.

If the adventurers mill about or ask questions, a Streetwise roll uncovers the fact the Bishop had recently printed a series of papers. Titled "The Catholic Heresies: A Declaration Upon The Failure Of False Faith," he authored these with two Protestant scholars, Thomas Crowne and Luther Ambler. Some guests whisper that perhaps the document incited a Catholic to such rage that it resulted in the Bishop's murder.

Should the wanderers not make the connection with Guy Fawkes by this time, another guest briefly mentions that "recent unpleasantness" and provides them with a brief synopsis of the Gunpowder Plot.

Eventually, the guests not taken for further questioning are released in small groups, including the heroes. However, all are sternly warned not to leave London until the crime is solved. It's now very late into the evening, and further investigation at the grounds is discouraged. The Yeoman Warders insist that everyone exit the Tower.

ACADEMIC PURSUITS

The next day, if they look for a copy of "The Catholic Heresies: A Declaration Upon The Failure Of False Faith," they easily obtain one by asking around local businesses. Even characters who aren't favorable towards Catholics note that this document is little more than propaganda.

The paper shows Thomas Crowne as publisher, a rather outspoken guest from the previous evening. Luther Ambler, the other author, is regarded as a scholar who works frequently with the deceased Bishop. Thomas can be found at his shop and Luther in his modest North London home.

THOMAS CROWNE

Thomas Crowne's print shop is located near the heart of town. From the outside, it appears as yet another tiny building in

GUY FAWKES

During the time of Kane, Catholicism was largely underground in England. Those who practiced it were often victimized and vilified. Guy Fawkes was one of a group of Catholic conspirators who attempted to use gunpowder to blow up Parliament in 1605.

Fawkes was captured before he lit the gunpowder, and was summarily tried for treason. He was executed by being drawn and quartered. The conspiracy was popularly known as the Gunpowder Plot.

THE PATH OF KANE



a tightly packed industrial setting. Upon entering, the party finds the very epitome of industrial printing, with a pair of Gutenberg presses the centerpieces. The floor is littered with discarded papers as several workers pull, move, and cut stacks of printed materials.

Thomas, a thin man wearing glasses, raises his head from inspecting a roll of typeset. Wiping his hand on his smock before offering it to the group, Thomas approaches. Thomas begins by asking what he can do for the players, and the party finds him generally receptive to questions.

When discussing his relationship to the Archbishop or his religious views, Crowne becomes quite animated. He boisterously decries the death of John Grant and curses his unknown assailant. Crowne gets worked up and if at any point the wanderers show that they don't share Crowne's views, he shows them the door in an abrupt manner. He has little information to offer in the way of identifying the likely attacker.

LUTHER AMBLER

Luther Ambler's home is located on the northern edge of London, within eyesight of the Thames. The home is part of a row of townhomes that indicate a modicum of wealth. A knock on the door is answered swiftly, but the door only opens a crack.

Demure and tentative, Luther questions the characters as to their intentions before letting them inside. Once inside, they find Ambler is a large man, although he speaks with a quiet intensity that denotes a razor-sharp mind. Both he and his home are neat to a fault, well-organized bookcases lining the walls of every room.

When questioned about "The Catholic Heresies," Ambler states that his role is that of researcher, providing references to Grant's statements. Luther feels that Grant was a good man, if misguided, and then turns the conversation. He tries to gain as much information about the wanderers as possible, particularly in the areas of the faith. Well-educated in that arena, he is respectful of anything short of outright devilry.

Should the adventurers mention the gunpowder rhyme, Luther elaborates on the story of Guy Fawkes. He mentions that Fawkes' execution occurred at the Tower of London. Overall, this meeting should be pleasant, Luther being intrigued and asking the characters to come again.

By the time the characters have spoken to both Crowne and Ambler, it is growing dark, prompting a return to their lodgings.

INTERROGATIONS REDUX

An hour after nightfall, ten Yeoman Warders track down the wanderers. The party has been selected for further questioning and is escorted back to the Tower. En route, the characters hear snippets of conversation:

"You think they did it?"; "Never seen a body like that before, eh?"; "Did you hear the ninny we talked to last night? She said she saw a ghost do it, walked right through the door, he did." and finally "Who'd have thought ink smells so much like gunpowder?"

Once the characters arrive, they're escorted to a single room. After an uncomfortable wait, the Constable of the Tower joins them, flanked by Warders. The constable has a military bearing, the veteran of many campaigns. He's a hard man with an eye towards simplicity.

The constable has further questions for the group. In particular, he's interested in the nature and timing of their conversation with Thomas Crowne. So long as the adventurers give reasonably true answers—and none claim to be Catholic—the constable appears satisfied. Once the conversation ends, the constable orders the characters removed.

If the characters ask why they were brought here, the constable informs them that Thomas Crowne was murdered. He was found by his wife at his shop, body drawn and quartered over a pile of "The Catholic Heresies." The Warders escort the characters back to their lodgings, but don't guard them further.

DEAD LETTER OFFICE

In the event the heroes return to Thomas Crowne's shop to perform their own investigation, they find two Yeoman Warders standing guard. Although it's late, people are milling about discussing the tragic event. Some support the statement that ghosts were at work, others blame a new Catholic conspiracy. The Warders prevent all access to the shop from the front.

Crafty characters can head through a few back alleys to locate the unguarded rear of the shop. The door is locked; a Lockpicking roll is required to open it stealthily or a Strength roll to bash it aside. Inside is a scene much the same as the one from the previous night. Although Crowne's body is gone, the blood alone tells one right where he died. The shop is in total disarray, and the smell of gunpowder is choking in these close quarters.

A Notice roll finds footprints, this time comprised wholly of gunpowder, from the front door to the corpse. Looking at any of "The Catholic Heresies" shows that blood covers

the names of Bishop Grant and Thomas Crowne on every one. Luther Ambler's name is untouched on any of the pamphlets.

GHOSTLY VISION

The adventurers may head to Ambler's house as a result of what they witnessed at Crowne's print shop or simply due to his status as the last living man connected to the pamphlet. If so, when they are in eyesight of Ambler's home, an apparition materializes at the front door. The specter doesn't respond to being hailed, instead stepping through the door as the adventurers near him.

A Strength roll is sufficient enough to burst the door open, just in time for the characters to hear a scream from upstairs. As they rush towards the sound, the scent of gunpowder stings their nostrils and they hear the drawing of a sword.

Arriving at the entrance to Ambler's bedroom, the ghost has raised its weapon over its head. From the sharp facial features and the primly trimmed mustache, it's obvious that the phantom is none other than Guy Fawkes.

Ambler lies on the floor beneath him, his arms raised to defend himself. If the heroes intervene to save him, Fawkes turns from Ambler enraged and attacks the party.

If the adventurers discover Fawkes' vulnerability to fire, this is an easy fight. If the ghost is presenting too tough a challenge, you may reveal this weakness by having a candle fall and land in one of his footprints. This causes the print to erupt in flame and Fawkes to grab his foot, grimacing. Any time a torch or other flaming item is thrust at Fawkes, he recoils from it.

Once defeated, Fawkes literally explodes, and his footprints catch fire, smoldering in the wake of his demise. The explosion draws attention to Ambler's home. Shortly thereafter, the Yeoman Warders arrive and round everyone up for an immediate inquiry by the Constable of the Tower. Although the constable is skeptical at first, a calm explanation combined with Ambler testifying on their behalf convinces him to release the adventurers.

THE PATH OF KANE

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



THE GHOST OF GUY FAWKES

The shade of Guy Fawkes has come to eliminate those who would disparage his mortal faith. Awakened by the religious summit on the Tower grounds, he seeks revenge.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidate d12+2, Notice d12, Taunt d10, Stealth d12+4, Throwing d12

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

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** As a ghost, Fawkes is immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks or truly courageous heroes. A hero can attack Guy with their bare hands (not with weapons) by using the Guts skill in place of the Fighting skill. All modifiers associated with Fighting apply to Guts for this purpose.
- **Fear -2:** Guys causes a Guts check at -2 when first seen.
- **Ghostly Sword:** Fawkes' sword is soul-chillingly cold. If Guy succeeds at a Fighting attack, he does damage equal to his Spirit+d8. The target gets no benefit from nonmagical armor.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Fawkes takes double damage from fire. Even setting fire to Fawkes' footprint while he is in the room will cause him 1d8 damage.



THE LADY IN WHITE

LEAD In: The party collectively experiences a dream in which a woman in white is menaced by a man in black armor with a withered hand. It quickly becomes clear the dream is a psychic cry for help on a matter of utmost importance.

BACKGROUND

Melou Leving, a power-hungry necromancer, came into the possession of an item of potential power: the mummified right hand



ADVENTURE LINK

This adventure is loosely linked to the **Savage Tale: The Organ Grinder**, on page 14 and the **Savage Tale: Duquesa Roja** on page 80. However, neither tale requires the other for the party to enjoy it.

of Mordred, the illegitimate son of King Arthur. While he knew the potential such a relic possessed, Leving could find no means by which he could capitalize on his find. Every application of his not-inconsiderable skill in the dark arts failed to find a use for the appendage.

Then he made the acquaintance of Dr. Richard Gibson. Gibson's obscene experiments in anatomy combined perfectly with Leving's necromancy. In exchange for some of Leving's sorcerous knowledge, Gibson performed a few favors—not the least of which was grafting the hand of Mordred onto Leving's own arm. With his foul magics animating the appendage, Leving has found a new purpose: wresting Excalibur from its legendary guardian, the Lady of the Lake.

Leving believes that the hand of Arthur's heir will allow him to not only summon the Lady, but also claim Excalibur. With it, he will lay claim to the entire isle of Britain. To that end, he has already located and acquired the legendary sheath and is making his way toward the watery resting place of the sword, in southwest England.

The Lady is aware of the evil sorcerer's activity. While Leving is correct, the hand of Mordred will allow him to summon her and seize the sword, she is not completely helpless. She sends out a call for aid and that call that is heard by the wanderers.

DISCORDANT DREAM

One night as the party rests (preferably in London, but this adventure need not begin there), each member is visited by the same disturbing dream.



You are standing on the misty shore of some small lake or pond. Nearby, a man in black armor holds one end of a chain in a withered, almost skeletal hand. The rest of the chain runs into the waters of the lake and disappears.

The man begins to pull on the chain, a leering grin on his face. A beautiful woman dressed in a flowing white dress rises until she stands on the very surface of the lake. She holds a shining sword in her right hand, and the other end of the chain is wrapped around her neck. Though she struggles fiercely against the man, she is unable to resist his obvious strength as he pulls her to the shore.

When she reaches the shore, her eyes plead silently for your aid. Before you can act, the man grabs the sword from her with his withered hand and plunges the blade into her chest. As he does, a brilliant crown of gold descends from above to rest on his head. The mists clear and you see around you a crowd of thousands, all bending knee to the man in black.

All the wanderers awake with a searing pain in their own chests. Heroes of British ancestry may make a Common Knowledge roll to recognize the sword as Excalibur and the woman as the Lady of the Lake. Other characters can attempt Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Literature), or Knowledge (Occult) rolls to gain the same information.

DRAWN TO THE WATER

The dream repeats itself nightly. The Lady does not have the power to compel the wanderers to come to her aid. The dream and its implications are, however, unusually unsettling to the dreamers. Any who do not heed its call must make a Spirit roll each morning upon waking. Failure indicates the character is Fatigued for that day. Successive failures are not cumulative.

While the body of water in the dream is not named, the legend of Arthur and Excalibur is fairly well known in England. A British adventurer may make a Common Knowledge roll to remember the lake's name and general location—Dozmary Pool in Cornwall. Any character can make a Knowledge (Literature)

LEVING'S JOURNAL

Written in scrabbling handwriting, Leving's journal details his plan to seize Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake. Scanning the work in a matter of minutes requires an Investigation roll, but uncovers several key passages:

"Now that I have the right hand of Sir Mordred, I find myself stymied for how to employ it. Contrary to some popular myths, it does not appear that he was a sorcerer of any measure. Perhaps his bloodline holds some promise..."

"I have found a chirurgeon in London who holds interests parallel to my own esoteric arts. I shall make inquiries and mayhap we can reach an arrangement beneficial to both of us."

"My efforts with G. were successful beyond expectation. He seemed as pleased as I with the outcome and gifted me with several of his creations. I have no doubt I shall find use for them in the near future."

"The graft works! I tested the Great Sword's scabbard and found I benefit from its puissant ward as if I were of the blood myself! Now, away to the lake to claim my prize!"

roll to determine it as well. If the party is in London, a Streetwise or Investigation roll reveals the same information, as does simply finding a scholar of literature or history.

Dozmary Pool lies over 200 miles from London, which is about a week's ride at a normal pace. During this time, the dreams continue, but as long as the heroes are headed to the lake, they no longer suffer any negative effects from it.

THE LAKE OF THE LADY

After traveling for several days, the party reaches the countryside near Dozmary Pool. The land is fairly level, having left the rugged hills of Wales to the east. The coast is over 15 miles away, but the wind carries an occasional scent of seawater to the wanderers.

THE PATH OF KANE

The heroes may make a Tracking roll. Those who succeed find the tracks of a small group of men and at least one wagon leading toward a wooded area at the eastern edge of the pool. Following the trail leads them to Leving's camp hidden amongst the trees.

There is a horse-drawn wagon in the camp, but it is empty of any cargo. A fire occupies the center of the encampment and bedrolls lie haphazardly about the area. A small group of men mills about the area, busy with mundane tasks.

The necromancer is not present, having already departed for the lake, but many of his henchmen are. Leving left specific instructions that any visitors who happened upon the area were to be killed. They attack immediately.

After the party defeats Leving's men, they may search the area. On a successful Notice roll, one of the group discovers his journal (see sidebar).

🐾 **Henchmen (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 33.



BLOODY INHERITANCE

A Tracking roll at the camp uncovers a single trail, albeit one traveled quite heavily in the last day or so, leading toward the lake's shore. It leads to a small clearing opening onto Dozmary Pool.

As the wanderers reach the edge of the clearing, they observe two men standing beside several large crates near where the trail enters the clearing. The men have just finished prying the lid off the last crate. A third man who looks startlingly like the black-armored man in their dreams stands near the water's edge. On his waist is an empty scabbard.

From within each of the crates, a person stands up. Each of the occupants is strangely tattooed with markings that seem carved into their very flesh. These markings glow with a faint red radiance. While the wanderers watch, the man at the lake shore removes a gauntlet from his right hand. Just as in their dreams, his hand is withered but likewise covered with identical tattoos.

A sharp pain, similar to the one in their dreams, strikes the heroes in the chest, leaving them momentarily unable to act. Though temporarily incapacitated, they hear the man's voice.

"...son of Mordred, son of Arthur Pendragon, rightful king of all the isles. To me you must give that which you hold in trust, the mighty Excalibur, birthright to the true king and proof of my royal bearing."

As he finishes speaking, a single female arm emerges from the center of the lake, holding the sword from the communal dream. The arm carries the same symbols as the "people" surrounding the shore, only instead of glowing they are bleeding, giving the water a reddish tint.

The adventurers may make a Spirit roll to break free of the pain at this point. If they succeed, they break free of the phantom pain and act normally. If not, they may still take actions, but suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls. Each round they may attempt the Spirit roll again. Once successful, they no longer suffer the modifier.



His henchman and the zombies try to prevent the characters from reaching Leving while he summons the Lady. He requires only two rounds to retrieve the sword. Once he does, he joins the fray, wielding the weapon against the party.

If the heroes were not stealthy in defeating his henchmen at the camp, and especially if guns were fired by anyone, Leving has cast *deflection* on himself prior to beginning this ritual.

Leving is no fighter, but Excalibur and its scabbard make him a formidable foe. However, he is only able to wield the weapon as long as Mordred's hand remains grafted to his body. A Called Shot to his arm or hand that causes a wound severs the hand—and any benefit he gained from the powerful items.

🐉 **Henchmen (2):** See below.

🐉 **Zombies (1 per hero):** See page 34.

🐉 **Melou Leving:** See page 34.

THE LADY'S BLESSING

Once Leving is defeated or the heroes manage to sever Mordred's hand, his power over the Lady of the Lake is ended. The bloody markings on her arm heal instantly, as if they

never existed. A wave rises up suddenly and sweeps Leving, Excalibur, its sheath, and the hand of Mordred out into Dozmary Pool where they disappear.

The Lady rises above the waters and walks across the surface of the lake to near the shore line. She smiles beatifically at the heroes and bows her head ever so slightly in thanks. The wanderers feel a wave of gratitude and peace wash over them. From this point on, each session they are on the isle of Britain, they gain an extra benny for as long as they remain on English (or Scottish) soil.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

HECHMAN

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: -2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy, Mean

ARTIFACT: EXCALIBUR

Excalibur is a long sword of striking appearance, with its hilt gilt not only in precious metals, but diamond, topaz, and jacinth. On one side of its blade is etched "*Take me,*" while the other reads "*Cast me away.*" Excalibur is said to be unbreakable and another of its many names translates to "Cut Steel." Only one of Arthur's bloodline may wield the sword.

Excalibur ignores all non-magical armor and halves the effect of magical armor (round down). It grants its wielder a +1 Parry and any opponent receives -1 Parry against attacks by the sword.

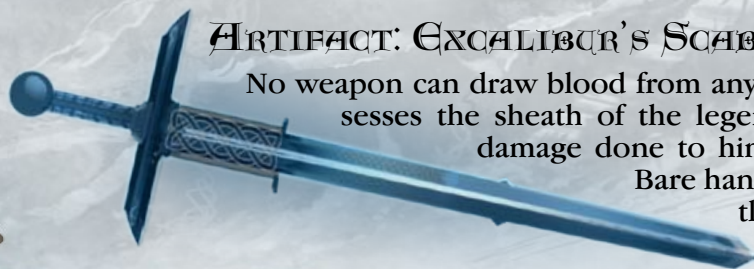
The sword does Str+d8 damage and allows its wielders to harm creatures otherwise immune to normal weapons. It inflicts +d8 with a raise on the Fighting roll instead of +d6.

Excalibur grants all bonuses and damage even if the wielder doesn't have Strength d8.

ARTIFACT: EXCALIBUR'S SCABBARD

No weapon can draw blood from anyone of King Arthur's bloodline who possesses the sheath of the legendary sword, Excalibur. This halves any damage done to him by any weapon, magical or mundane.

Bare handed attacks do normal damage, and wrestling the scabbard away ends the effect.



THE PATH OF KANE

Edges: —

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), flintlock pistol (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP 1), leather armor (+1), powder & shot (20).



MELOC LEVING

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Magick d10, Notice d6, Taunt d8

Charisma: -2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with Excalibur); **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), Strong Caster

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), scabbard of Excalibur (see sidebar).

Powers: *Animate band, boost/lower trait, curse, deflection, fear, grave speak, puppet, spirit ward, summon spirit, zombie.*

Treat as a Veteran character.

TATTOOED ZOMBIE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called Shots do no extra damage.



FRANCE

The Kingdom of France is the site of many power struggles, surrounded as it is by not only several small border kingdoms, but also the powerful Holy Roman Empire and Spain.



Like much of Europe, it is still reeling from the one-two punch of the Black Plague and the Hundred Years War.

However, the greatest conflict taking place on its soil is that between the Catholics and the Protestants. The after effects of the French Wars of Religion are still felt. Henry IV, father of Louis XIII, was recently assassinated by a fanatical Catholic over matters religious and political—even though Henry was Catholic himself. Nonetheless, France is on its way to becoming the dominant European nation.

The smaller nations which dot the borders of France remain outside of French rule, often under the control of the Holy Roman Empire. Although most are not large enough to pose a threat by themselves, they are frequented by spies from other nations. These foreign agents see the border kingdoms as a safe area to fall back to either as a base of operations or escape route should they be discovered.

Complicating French unity is the lack of a singular language common to all its inhabitants. Although French is the official language used for all documents and legal acts, the languages used in normal conversation vary away from the provinces of central France. For example, the residents of northern France speak various dialects of *Langues d'oïl*, a combination of several Gallo-Romantic languages. The populace of southern France tends to speak Occitan, another Romantic tongue, or other, less common, provincial languages.

Although most associate the Inquisition with Spain, the Grand Inquisitor Sebastian Michaelis, one of the most famous witch-hunters of the time of Kane, operates in France. It is not uncommon to see the merciless wrath of the Inquisition as it comes down upon towns and individuals, as a sole inquisitor could send hundreds of “witches” to the stake.

Robert E. Howard wrote several stories in France during the time of Kane involving some of his other characters. Further research on Howard’s perspective of France can be found in short stories such as “Blades for France,” “Sword Woman,” and “Mistress of Death.”

SUPERSTITIONS

Crossing a stream while carrying a cat will bring bad luck.

A single white hair on a black cat brings incredible good fortune.

If a pregnant woman does not eat fish, her child will be born with the head of a fish.

PARIS

Paris is the capital of France, and in some ways, of all Europe. With a population nearing 400,000 people, Paris is the largest city in Europe. It spans the Seine River, and includes two islands, Île de la Cité and Île Saint-Louis. Île de la Cité is the oldest part of the city and home to Notre Dame. All distances in Paris are measured from the island.

More than anything, Paris is most well-known for its extravagant architecture. The Pont Neuf bridge, spanning the Seine at Île de la Cité and joining the Left and Right Banks of the Seine, is the largest such structure in the world, at over 1200 feet in length and nearly 100 feet wide. The lavishly-appointed Louvre, once a humble fortress, has served as the Royal Palace since the 14th century.

Developed during centuries of growth, Paris is a complete labyrinth of unplanned streets, alleys, and paths, all narrow and winding. Henry IV, and now Louis XIII, have tried to reverse that trend, mapping and plotting all development on Île Saint-Louis in recent years. However, beneath Paris lies another maze, the byzantine underground limestone

RUMOR

“There is a priest in Vienna who can cure blindness! You just need to believe in God.”

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Faith Healing**, on page 50.



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quarries left from the Romans, haven for anyone—or *anything*—bold enough to go down there.



■ THE LAST COMMAND

LEAD In: A short time after arriving in Paris, the adventurers receive a letter from a Royal courtier. The letter addresses the characters by name, and requests that they present themselves at the Louvre Palace to meet with Lady Madeleine du Lyon to break their fast.

I THINK I KNOW YOU

A Common Knowledge roll tells the wanderers that a lesser knight with a similar name served one of the King's higher ranking ministers until he was very recently murdered. In fact, quite a stir arose from his death, as his body was found mutilated just a few hundred feet inside the city walls.

When they arrive, they are greeted by the same courtier who delivered the invitation, Hugues Leon, a royal messenger. He guides them to a smaller chamber of the Palace, where Madeleine awaits the party. The Lady du Lyon is very social even though she seems somewhat in shock. If a traveler raises the issue of the murdered knight, she seems upset and states that such discussions are not for polite company.

Offering the characters various delicacies first—as etiquette demands, of course—she then regales the adventurers with some of

The French Wars of Religion can provide an immersive setting for a campaign in *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*. At this time, the Catholic Church is constantly under assault by members of the Protestant Reformed Church of France, also known as the Huguenots. At times, the fighting between these factions was so severe it crippled the entire country, although in the time of Kane the overt fighting has all but died out. The French monarchy has declared Catholicism as the official state religion, but many of the commoners still practice Protestant religions.

their own deeds in a very matter-of-fact way. She addresses the heroes in a very direct, almost masculine, fashion that is at odds with her earlier gentility.

"I have called you to me because you are a group that has a reputation for handling the most extraordinary of issues. Furthermore, as you are not of this Court, for reasons I cannot yet reveal, I feel I can trust you more than I could an agent of the Crown. I have a task that requires your specialized assistance, and you will be compensated for your efforts."

"I will have one who is loyal to me meet you at 2:00 this afternoon where you are staying in the city. They will be bearing this," she says, brandishing a small coat of arms that pictures a gold lion with a three-towered fort at the top, "as a sign that they are loyal to me." With that, Madeleine returns to a far less formal demeanor and hurriedly exits the room with a smile.

A courtesan appears shortly and leads the characters out of the palace, bidding them farewell on behalf of the Lady du Lyon.

FOREIGN BODY

Promptly at 2 p.m., the characters are visited by a cloaked and hooded figure carrying the du Lyon coat of arms. He removes his cloak, revealing he is dressed in the manner of a knight of the Order of St. Michael, an order of lesser nobles dedicated to the Crown.

A Notice roll reveals the man is likely a close relation to Madeleine du Lyon. If asked, he acknowledges they are relatives, but does not reveal their exact relationship.

"I am Marison and I directly serve Minister Roquefort to protect the Crown of France. We require your aid on a task of the most sensitive nature. There has been rumor of a traitor in the Court, one who traffics with devils in order to increase their standing. Recently, an agent of the Crown was slain after attempting to learn the identity of the traitor. As we know not whom the idolater among our ranks might be, this limits our resources—which, in turn, leads me to you."



If they agree to assist him, he asks the party to meet him again that evening. He prefers they reconvene three hours after sunset by the west gates to the city, and tells them to bring horses. Completing the arrangements, Marison turns about smartly and reaches for his cloak.

A sudden shift in demeanor hits, and he becomes less rigid, gazing around the room confused. Marison—actually Madeleine du Lyon in disguise—asks in a familiar, feminine lilt how she came to be amongst the characters.

If the heroes tell about “Marison,” she explains that was her brother’s name. Weeping, she breaks down and informs the party that her twin brother, Marison, was an agent for the King. He died while attempting to complete his last mission, and since that night, she has been haunted by disquieting dreams. In these dreams, she knows things only Marison should, and has apparently taken to sleepwalking as she has awoken on more than one occasion wandering the streets. She’s not certain what to make of it, but finds it very upsetting.

One thing of which she is certain however, is that whatever Marison was trying to accomplish, it was of the greatest importance. If her actions, no matter how strange, are somehow related to it, she urges the heroes to help her. She again makes a hasty exit, drawing the cloak and hood about her as she leaves.

We Meet Again

At three hours after dusk, Madeleine meets the party outside the city gates. She is once more dressed as Marison, and greets the characters a little less stiffly than before.

“Now that we are outside the confines of the city, I feel at liberty to speak more freely with you. As you have most likely ascertained, I am the agent who was slain. I know of no reason I would stay among you other than that God wants me to complete this mission, and that my sister is the vessel through which His will shall be done.”

He tells the party that he had discovered papers that appeared to hold the key to the identity of the traitor. However, before he could deliver them, he was attacked by

several large, foul-looking beasts. The things appeared dog-like but possessed a diabolic intelligence and reeked of brimstone. The foul creatures slew him and stole the documents before he could report his findings.

Madeleine/Marison believes he must recover the papers and deliver them to the Crown to release his spirit. Unfortunately, he knows that in his sister’s body, he has no chance to best the creatures and he needs the wanderers’ assistance to defeat them and free his soul.

RELEASE THE HOUNDS!

Marison explains he somehow “knows” where the beasts that slew him hide and is able to guide the explorers to a small system of caves roughly 6 miles out from the city. Pausing at several smaller egresses, Marison eventually dismounts before a cave of considerable size. Indicating that the beasts are inside the tunnel, he draws his pistol and sword before marching inside.

The cave is dark and massive, splintering away from a 10’ entrance into a nearly 50’ wide chamber. It takes only seconds after the group enters before they can see their prize and their opposition – three massive hellhounds guard a case that has been dented, chewed and splintered, yet remains intact.

One hound takes the document case and attempts to flee the cave while the other two remain behind to delay the party. The hellhounds defend the case to the death, but Marison focuses only on the hellhound with the case, even leaving the group if need be.

Killing the final hellhound allows Marison to retrieve the case. As he guides the characters back towards Paris, he thanks them for their assistance and promises his sister’s gratitude as well. Marison believes that once this task is complete, he’ll no longer be bound to the mortal plane, and asks the characters one last favor—to give his farewell to his sister.

For secrecy, Marison parts with the adventurers a block from the Louvre Palace.

🐾 **Hellhounds (1, plus 1 per hero):** See page 38.



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INTERCEPTED!

As the wanderers head towards their lodging, a snarl rends the air. A scream follows, prompting the party to rush and investigate. Only a few hundred yards from the palace, two more hellhounds have Marison cornered. A member of the city guard lies dead at their feet, another screaming as he runs away.

After the hellhounds are defeated, Marison becomes concerned about how the demonic creatures found him. He decides it isn't safe to be the sole owner of the documents, and produces a distinct key and inserts it into the case's delicately engraved lock. It opens with a click.

🐾 **Hellhounds (2):** See below.

THE TRAITOR REVEALED

Marison glances over the documents then gasps—the traitor and Infernalist is Hugues Leon, one of the most trusted Royal messengers! He asks that the adventurers come with him as he confronts the double agent.

Marison goes straight to Leon's chambers. The door is heavy oak and locked. A Strength roll (−4) is necessary to force it open. A cooperative roll is possible, but no more than three characters can participate due to the size of the door.

Once the heroes break down the door, they find Leon kneeling in the middle of a necromantic circle. The diabolist snatches a rapier from the floor and jumps to his feet as the group enters. He is aware he has been found out and has prepared to defend himself.

Prior to the party's arrival, Leon has cast *armor* and *boost trait* (Fighting) on himself. These bonuses are reflected in his profile. Additionally, he has a *spirit servant* summoned. In the first round of combat, Leon casts *lower trait* (Fighting) on the most formidable appearing opponent. The *servant* immediately launches an attack with a rapier (Fighting d8, Damage: d8+d4).

Leon knows what his fate is should he be captured, so he fights to the death.

🐾 **Hugues Leon:** See below.

MORTAL RELEASE

Knowing the commotion is bound to bring the Palace guards, Marison quickly takes his leave. He explains he doesn't want to cause scrutiny to fall upon his sister. Before he departs, he hands the incriminating documents to the party as proof of the messenger's betrayal.

When the Palace guards arrive, the documents and the obvious magical circle on the floor of Leon's chambers are enough for them to take the adventurers at their word.

The next day when the characters meet with Madeleine, she is free of her brother's spirit. She thanks the characters for helping her brother finish his mortal business. She offers them a reward of £500 for aiding her and her brother. Regardless of whether they accept, she then demurely excuses herself to grieve her brother's death.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

HELLHOUND

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Stealth d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Fear:** Anyone who sees a hellhound must make a Guts roll.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Hellhounds have a d10 running die.
- **Go for the Throat:** If a hellhound gets a raise on its attack roll, it strikes its foe's least armored location.
- **Terrible Wounds:** The jagged teeth of a hellhound inflict terrible wounds, which do not heal quickly. Healing rolls, whether magical or natural healing, are subject to an additional −2 penalty.

HUGUES LEON

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



Skills: Fighting d10 (d8), Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Heraldry) d10, Magick d8, Notice d8, Riding d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: —

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7/8; **Toughness:** 8(2)

Hindrances: Overconfident, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), Combat Reflexes, Connections (the Crown), Level Headed

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry), pistol (Range: 5/10/20; RoF 1; Shots 1; Damage: 2d6+1, AP 1), spell components (10), powder & shot (20).

Powers: *Armor, boost/lower trait, fear, spirit servant, spirit ward.*

Treat Hughes Leon as a Veteran character.



MADELEINE DU LYON

Madeleine du Lyon is a petite, attractive noblewoman. She is the picture of decorum and courtly behavior.

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

Skills: Guts d6, Knowledge (Heraldry) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d6

Charisma: +4

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

Hindrances: Small

Edges: Attractive, Noble

Gear: Courtly dress.



MARISON DU LYON

(MADELEINE POSSESSED)

While possessed by her brother, Madeleine dresses, speaks, and carries herself in a masculine manner. She downplays all aspects of her femininity and only a close examination reveals the disguise.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Heraldry) d10, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6/7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Loyal, Small, Vow (Serve the French Crown)

Edges: Iron Will, Quick Draw, Noble

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry)

WHAT'S AT STAKE

LEAD In: Shortly after the characters arrive in Paris, rumors begin to fly about desiccated bodies found just outside the city gates. Every few nights, another body is found, in roughly the same area—outside the city gates near the Left Bank of the Seine. Adding to the excitement, each body has been found drained of all fluids, several pairs of punctures wounds covering their bodies.

OUT FOR BLOOD

In reality, two mated pairs of giant spiders have taken residence underneath Paris. Their attacks are causing confusion and rumors of a vampire, particularly among the superstitious and impoverished lower classes. If the heroes pursue the tales, they hear fantastical claims—everything from a witch to a vampire simply *must* be behind this.

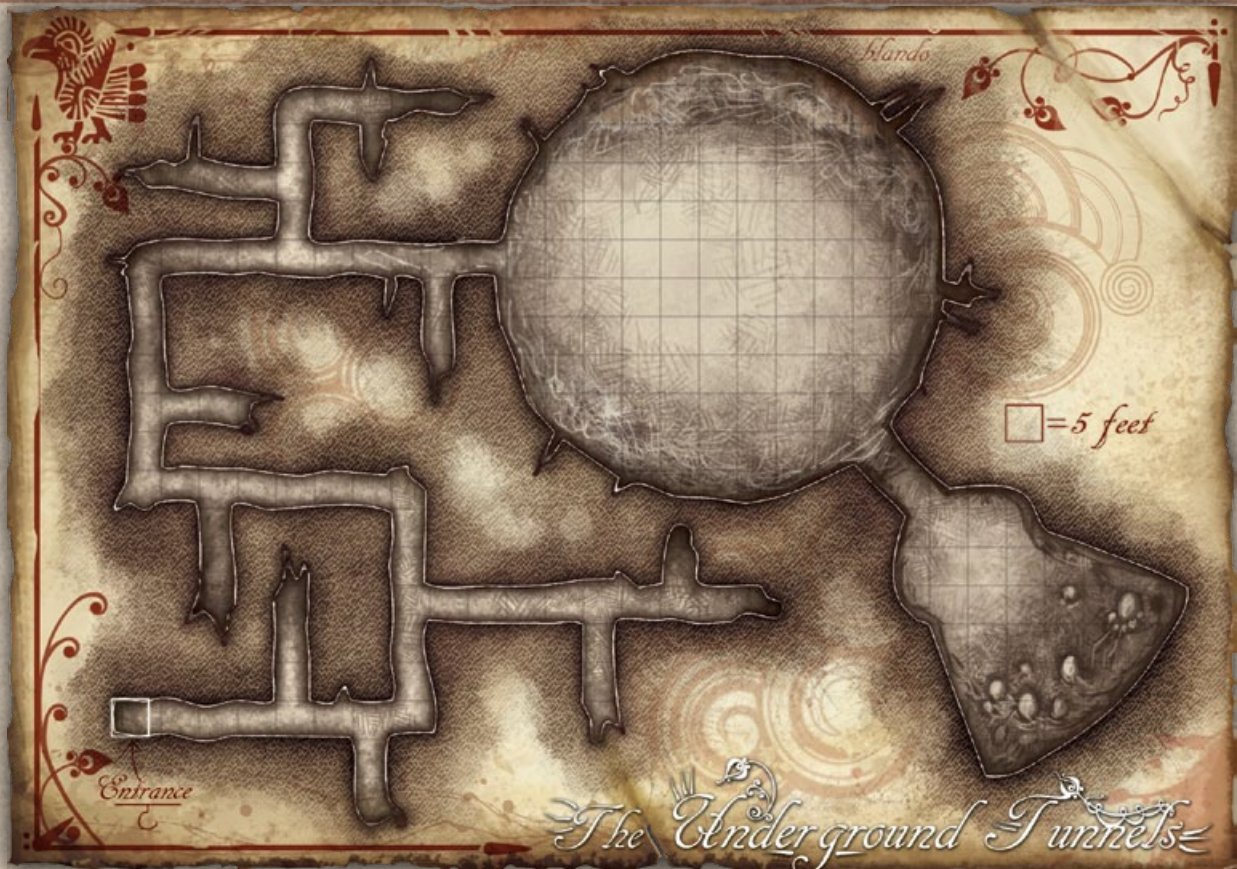
A simple Streetwise roll finds directions to the area where the bodies have been located near the city gates. Characters searching the area need to make an Agility roll. On a failure they trip and fall. They discover a sticky, viscous grey substance has adhered to the bottom of their shoes, throwing them off balance.

As the wanderers search further from the entrance to the city gates along the wall, a Notice roll reveals a small patch of earth which sticks out above the rest. Further examination shows that the ground in this raised area is relatively solid, but the turf can be pulled away to expose the entrance to a tunnel.

I'M NOT GOING DOWN THERE!

Should the party choose not to go down into the tunnels, then the four giant spiders emerge slightly after nightfall. If two of the spiders are slain, the others retreat back into the tunnel. This, however, allows time for the eggs to hatch and release the young spiders which will plague the city very shortly.

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Dank and dark, the tunnel leads the party into a portion of the Roman limestone quarries which form a massive labyrinth under Paris. Traversing the tunnel is slow going for the first several minutes until they reach a larger chamber. A successful Notice roll reveals small bones in each passage.

THE CENTRAL LAIR

The rough hewn walls of the first tunnel close in until the party must go through single file, down a 20 degree slope. After 30 feet, the bones on the floor are more frequent and the walls are increasingly covered with the same grayish substance found aboveground. The path widens abruptly, opening up into a large roughly circular room.

Bones litter the floor, and giant webs span from the ceiling to the floor and across the wall. Inside the webs are several cocooned humanoid shapes, none larger than a young child. Each traveler needs to make an Agility roll to prevent getting caught on a web (even while fighting). Failure on this roll means the

hero is trapped and must be cut or broken free (Toughness 7). Characters caught in the webs can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.

Four giant spiders nest on the ceiling. Any disruption of the web causes them to plummet from their perches and attack!

Once the spiders are dispatched, the wanderers are free to explore the chamber. In the cocoons are more bodies, mostly devoured skeletal remains. A Smarts roll tells the heroes that the victims aboveground were likely too difficult to pull through the caverns.

🕷 **Giant Spiders (4):** See page 41.

THE HATCHERY

As in the central chamber, the walls are lined with webbing, but there are no bones or debris after the first few feet. After a short distance, the tunnel opens into a moderately-sized, bell-shaped room. Three large masses sit in various parts of the room, covered in silky strands, but there is no other webbing per se.

Each mass is very bumpy, made up of balls roughly the size of a fist. A faint greenish color is visible through the thinner spots of the silk. These are egg sacs laid by the giant spiders, easily destroyed with little effort. As the explorers approach, one of the sacs hatches, releasing hundreds of spiders, each the size of a human hand, which erupt into the cave!

If the wanderers ignore this chamber or do not destroy the eggs, the other two sacs hatch overnight. This causes a near-literal plague of young giant spiders that the party (or the poor Parisian citizenry) has to exterminate.

🕷️ Spider Hatchling Swarm (1): See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

GIANT SPIDERS

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

Skills: Climbing d12+2, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Poison (-4):** The bite of the spider causes instant paralysis for those who fail their Vigor roll. It lasts for 2d6 minutes.
- **Webbing:** The spiders can cast webs from their abdomen that are the size of Small Burst Templates. This is a Shooting roll with a range of 3/6/12. Anything in the web must be cut or broken free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.
- **Wall Walker:** Spiders can move on vertical or inverted surfaces at their full Pace.

SPIDER HATCHLING SWARM

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

Skills: Notice d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** The hatchlings inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hit-

ting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in a Medium Burst Template.

- **Split:** If the heroes separate, the large swarm splits into two smaller ones (Small Burst Templates). The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by -2 (to 5 each).
- **Swarm:** Parry +2; the swarm is composed of hundreds of creatures, so cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round. Jumping in water also foils the swarm completely.



THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

THE Holy Roman Empire is a fragmented collection of largely independent states, including Austria, Bohemia, Saxony, and Brandenburg to name just a few. The Empire encompasses most of Austria, Germany, Italy, and even portions of Netherlands and France. Ironically, Rome was not part of the Holy Roman Empire for much of its existence. Nonetheless, it is a dominant force in central Europe and the primary defender of Europe from the Ottoman armies.

Several principalities exist within the boundaries of the Empire, each governed by a *Fürst*, usually a duke or prince-bishop. A legislative body called the Reichstag serves the Empire, divided into three groups. One of the groups, the Council of Electors, actually elected the Emperor to his position. During the time of Kane, the Emperors are no longer crowned by the Pope.

Emperors often are elected after the prospective candidate offered significant concessions of land or money to the electors. In spite of this elective process, for the entire 150 years preceding the time of Kane, the House of Habsburg has been the source of all Holy Roman Emperors.

Although the Empire is principally Catholic, Protestants were afforded some rights through legal edicts. This did not prevent open war between the religious factions from breaking out, but it did allow the majority of the citizenry to live without fear of persecution on religious grounds.

THE PATH OF KANE

BERLIN

The capital of the Margraviate (or Mark) of Brandenburg, Berlin is home to approximately 12,000 inhabitants. The city is still recovering from the ravages of the Black Plague during the latter part of the 16th century, when Berlin lost nearly 4,000 to the disease. The Spree river divides the city in two, with Berlin proper to the north and Cölln to the south.

Berlin's location north of the more mountainous regions of south-central Europe has made the city something of a crossroads for merchants traveling to and from the Kingdoms of Poland and Russia.

RUMOR

"There's a murderer on the loose in Zurich. I wouldn't go there for anything!"

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Timing is Everything**, on page 53.

Brandenburg, like many other German principalities, is primarily Lutheran in orientation. Catholics in the region are tolerated, but conflicts between the religious factions in the south led to the formation of the Catholic League in 1609 under the leadership of Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria. As a result, tensions in the Germanic states are rising to near a boiling point between the two faiths.

THE WILDER MANN

LEAD IN: As the party is traveling through Brandenburg or one of the other central Germanic states they encounter a small zoo on the edge of a village or city. A group of citizens has gathered at the entrance in anticipation of an announcement.

HOMEcoming

A group of hunters led by one Hans Schweitzer have returned from an expedition into the Riesengeberge, a small range of mountains to the southeast. Following rumors, Hans was looking to find and capture a beast known as the woodwose, a tall, furred creature that resembles a large ape. Schweitzer is popular and known for his strange travels in search of rare animals, which he captures and displays in a small zoo bearing his name.

A crowd has gathered at the entrance of said zoo, obviously awaiting an announcement of some importance. Although many are celebrating their return, some people seem to have a more melancholy view of the proceeding—a young lady openly mourns near the travelers.

Moments after the characters arrive, Schweitzer, a very large man with thick sideburns and shoulder length red hair, appears. In a booming voice, he addresses the onlookers.

"I regret to inform you all that for once I have failed in achieving a goal. We were unable to capture the woodwose, our stated purpose in the last expedition. It pains me to further announce that one of my best men, Josef Hillenmeyer, was lost to the beast as well. I will tell the tale at length later—in the tavern, of course—but for now, I wish to speak privately with Josef's betrothed, Bryn Larsen."

Several joyous reunions occur with other returning members of the expedition and the crowd moves to the nearby Zootaverne Inn. As the throng disperses, the heroes see Schweitzer speaking to the young woman the party noticed earlier.

DISRUPTED REVELRY

The scene at the inn is one of hushed rejoicing, becoming respectfully quiet when Josef Hillenmeyer's name comes up in conversation. It seems that Josef was Hans Schweitzer's second in command, a Norwegian who was boisterous and full of life. His death two weeks earlier was a huge blow to morale and the expedition ended shortly afterward.

Hans and Josef were alone at the main camp when the creature killed Josef. The men discovered Hans battered in the wreckage of their camp, his clothing in tatters from the beast's attack. Josef fared far worse, his body nearly torn to shreds by the ferocious creature. Hans and Josef had obviously put up a tremendous fight, but in the end, the creature was victorious.

The men say that Hans made an attempt to hunt down the woodwose and avenge Josef, but the creature seemed nearly invincible, shrugging off their weapons with little effort. It seemed to have a special hatred against Hans—possibly for surviving its first attack. After several dire encounters with the beast, Hans halted the attempts to capture it and ordered a hasty return to Berlin, intending to re-equip before returning to end the wilder mann's life.

If the heroes press for a description of the woodwose, all the hunters describe it as a large, hairy man-shaped beast, but its coloring varies from thick blondish-brown to a copper hue. The hunters note that the monster always attacked when they were in smaller groups.

Hans appears roughly half an hour later, seemingly in good spirits. He doesn't speak much of the tale or of Josef, only to say that he means *"to find that abomination and end its pathetic life."* He adds that he is truly concerned for Josef's betrothed Bryn, and intends to make her life as comfortable as possible. He openly considers even allowing her to stay in his residence while he explores. After all, he needs someone to take care of the place during his trips.

A scant few moments later, a strange, guttural howl is heard, and many of the expedition members visibly pale. Hans utters a half-whispered "no" before rushing out of the tavern, drawing his sword and heading down the road in the direction of the zoo.

LOVE REARS ITS UGLY HEAD

Halfway to the zoo, another howl is heard, followed shortly by a very human scream. Hans bursts through the now-broken gate as an echoing crash is heard from the far side of the grounds. In front of his residence just

BY ANY OTHER NAME

The German legends of the woodwose (or wilder mann) is one of many similar legends that dot the globe. Whether known as a Yeti, Abominable Snowman, Sasquatch, Bigfoot or one of the countless other names attributed to it, the creature retains the same basic characteristics of being impossibly large, incredibly strong, covered in fur and very reclusive. If you wish, this Tale can easily be moved to any area with their own indigenous myths of such creatures.

inside the gates lies the limp form of Bryn. Once a few of the other members of the expedition arrive, he demands they stay with her until she recovers, charging into the zoo.

The scent of blood and gore waft over the area, as many animals in the zoo have been horrifically mauled to death. By the light of the full moon the travelers can see some of the cages are badly damaged by whatever slaughtered the animals, with doors ripped asunder and iron bars bent. In a few of the cages of the more predatory animals (a bear, for example), a Notice role reveals some bits of light brown fur that don't match that of the animal.

Not all of the animals were killed, however. Some found freedom as their cages were ripped asunder. Illustrating this point is a pair of tigers, distressed and ready to fight. As the party rounds a corner, they stumble upon the duo. Not interested in being recaptured, the tigers waste no time in attacking!

🐾 **Tigers (2):** See page 45.

THE HUNT BEGINS

Once the tigers are dispatched, the adventurers hear shots ringing out from the north. Following the sounds, they find Hans on his knees, bleeding from a minor wound, pistol in hand. A portion of the zoo's iron fencing is flattened, enormous clawed footprints leading away from the menagerie and into the forest. Hans steadies himself, and addresses any and all near him.

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"It would seem that I have made an enemy of this wilder mann," he states breathily. "I do not intend to allow him to get away with attacking my home, the betrothed of my dead best friend, or the fine people of Berlin. We hunt him tonight. I welcome any able bodies of stout heart to join us. As one we will slay this abomination before it attacks again."

The carnage has quite an impact on the locals for surprisingly few others volunteer to help Hans hunt the beast. Even several members of his recent expedition slink off into the shadows. Assuming the wanderers offer their assistance, he divides the volunteers into two groups—the party comprises one, while he leads a handful of hunters in the second.

Initially both groups remain together, but about 10 minutes into the search, the tracks split in two directions. Clearly, the beast has come and gone this way several times in a short period. Hans insists that each group cover a different set of tracks, and allows the party to choose which set they follow. If none of the adventurers has Tracking, Hans assigns

one of his hunters to help them. Hans warns all the volunteers to remain with their group, or at least in the company of two to three others at all times, as the beast is ferocious and nearly unkillable.

Following the tracks are not difficult, even in moonlight, as the beast was moving quickly with no concern for stealth. A simple Tracking roll allows the heroes to stay on its trail. After about a half a mile into the thick forest, have the character using the Tracking skill make a Notice roll. On a success she notices that the footprints have grown steadily smaller until reaching a human size.

It takes five more minutes before they hear noise ahead of them. In the fading moonlight, they see the form of a young man, nude and wounded. He is moaning in pain as he lies on the ground at the base of a large tree. As the party approaches, he starts, but looks relieved when he can see the characters.

"Please, if you have any decency, any compassion in your soul, you must aid me," he cries. "I am Josef Hillenmeyer, and I need to stop an evil curse from ruining all I hold dear."

BETRAYAL EXPOSED!

Josef tells his tale if the party is inclined to listen. Once, he and Hans were best of friends. He agreed to go on Hans' hunt mainly out of loyalty, but also because he didn't believe the woodwose actually existed.

The night of the attack, Hans asked Josef to remain behind with him at the camp while the rest of the hunters searched for signs of the creature. Alone with Josef, Hans was blunt about many things. He felt Josef had taken too long in his courtship of Bryn, and he should step aside so that someone else could marry her. The argument became heated, and as Hans grew angrier, Josef witnessed a disturbing sight.

"His skin, it stretched and malformed, his hair sprouted longer and longer, joining until it became a pelt. His muscles rippled and extended, his fingers turned into sharp claws. Before I knew it, he set upon me, a slaving beast from the very pit of Hell. I fought him as best I could, but he was far too powerful for me."

"Later—I know not how much, though—I awoke to find myself in a shallow grave. My wounds had healed, but I don't believe that much time had passed. I tried to rejoin the group, but discovered a terrible curse had been placed upon me. Now, under the light of the full moon, I am transformed into a terrible creature—a mirror to the beast that slew me."

"I know now Hans intended all along to murder me and steal Bryn. I fear all is lost for me, but I cannot allow my beloved to be stolen by such a black-hearted soul as I have discovered Hans to be."

A sneering voice from the trees interrupts Josef's tale as Hans appears from the nearby trees. *"You're weak, always have been. You're too weak to realize that the curse you've been given is truly a gift. And now that you've told these people too much, it seems I must do what only the strong can do."* The party now gets to witness the event Josef described first hand as Hans transforms into the bestial hulk of a werewolf.

Unless the heroes are prepared, this promises to be a difficult battle. A single werewolf is more than a match for even an experienced party without silver. Furthermore, Josef is of little use in the fight. He is exhausted from his recent transformation and, unlike Hans, lacks the experience to change at will.

Determined not to lose, Hans makes it obvious it takes death to stop him. If the situation becomes too dire for the travelers, don't be afraid to allow the second group of hunters to arrive—perhaps one even has a silver crucifix or other item the wanderers can fashion into a weapon of sorts.

Once Hans is slain, a strange event occurs—Josef regurgitates bits of hair and blood, releasing a volume far in excess of what his stomach could hold. As the last bits drain from his mouth, his condition noticeably improves. Standing, he declares himself free of the curse.

Josef begs to be given clothes and taken to Bryn, stating that the last time he saw her, she was recoiling from his monstrous appearance. Once the party returns to Berlin, they are treated to seeing the two lovers reunited.

 **Hans Schweitzer:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



HANS SCHWEITZER, WEREWOLF

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

Skills: Climb d8, Fighting d12+2, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Tracking d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Fear -2:** Werewolves chill the blood of all who see them.
- **Immunity:** These monsters can only be wounded by silver weapons. Non-silver weapons can Shake them, but never cause wounds.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a werewolf has a 50% chance of rising as a werewolf himself. The character involuntarily transforms every full moon. He gains control of his lycanthropy only after 1d6 years as a werewolf.
- **Infra-vision:** Werewolves can see heat and halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking targets.
- **Size +1:** These creatures are slightly larger than man-sized.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Werewolves suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

TIGER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Tracking d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d8.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Tigers may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.
- **Low Light Vision:** Halve penalties for Dim and Dark lighting conditions.
- **Maul:** A tiger that succeeds in a Grapple attack has knocked its prey to the ground and may make a Fighting attack with no multi action penalty. So long as the victim remains prone, subsequent attacks are

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made at +2.

- **Pounce:** Tigers often pounce on their prey to best bring their mass and claws to bear. It can leap up to 6" to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action when performing the maneuver however.
- **Size +3:** Male tigers can weigh over 1200 pounds.

VIENNA

The capital of the Archduchy of Austria and current seat of the Holy Roman Emperor, Vienna is one of the most fortified cities in Europe. A safe haven for Catholics, Vienna is also teeming with transplanted nobles and mercenaries. A growing arts and music culture has lead to the upswing of Viennese balls, lavish events that could last from dinner to dawn. At its height, there are easily in excess of 200 formal balls in Vienna every year.

While many examples of beautiful architecture grace Vienna's streets, a visitor cannot help but be awed by the fortifications protecting it. After the city barely withstood an Ottoman siege in 1529, Vienna has undergone extensive construction to strengthen its defenses. These projects are still underway nearly 80 years later. A massive wall surrounds the city, supported by eleven bastions. Outside the wall lies a glacis and moat, with open, empty fields beyond providing clear fields of fire for the defenders.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

LEAD in: As the characters note the Western part of the town (where the public lodgings are) empties right before dusk.

A LITTLE INSPIRATION

One of Robert E. Howard's historical fiction stories, "The Shadow of the Vulture," is set during a time of conflict in 16th century Vienna. While not a Solomon Kane tale, it is, nonetheless, a great opportunity to see the city through Howard's eyes.

BACKGROUND

Karl von Backer was a much respected count from the outlying regions east of Berlin. All that changed when his daughter, Greta, was accused of being a witch. The count called in some favors and had his daughter admitted to a convent rather than executed. As a result, he was forced to accept a lesser position inside Vienna to retain his title.

The last Count von Backer and his son, Andreas, heard from Greta was a letter of apology to her father. With the letter, she sent a gift of a golden horseshoe as a symbol of respect for the wounds she had inflicted upon the family's reputation. Some of his household speculated that this act of reconciliation broke both the count's heart and spirit, as soon after he took ill, wasting away to his death in a few scant weeks.

In reality, the golden horseshoe was the catalyst for the death of Karl Von Backer, a cursed item sent by his own daughter. Accepting the gift of the horseshoe was in reality accepting the gift of a demonic steed. To materialize in our world, it slowly drained the life out of Karl.

AN ILL-FATED EVENING

While traveling through Vienna as darkness begins to fall, the wanderers notice around them windows being shuttered and doors barred. The once amiable citizens become suddenly muted, rushed and stressed. Within moments, the streets are clear.

One of the only establishments showing even the slightest signs of life is a nearby tavern. The main room is almost devoid of activity, with the only other customers being a small group of travelers (who appear to be mercenaries) taking up one table and an old man sleeping at the main bar.

When the characters begin inquiring as to the heightened security, the innkeeper says only that it is "for the best" that people stay off the streets. The mercenaries are less reticent to talk, openly engaging the characters.

A TALE OF TWO COUNTS

The leader of the four mercenaries introduces himself as Franz Behrendt, a Prussian by birth. He's a grizzled soldier, but very jovial and charismatic. He's more than happy to tell the story that brought him and his men to Vienna.

"The original Count von Backer moved here about a year ago. About two months ago, the man's health suddenly broke and he passed away almost overnight. Most folks believe it is a curse on the family of some sort, for not long afterwards, a black rider appeared and every third night has been hunting down anyone wearing one of these."

The mercenary points to a small crest of a green stag on a white field pinned to his clothing.

"The new count, young Andreas, has put out a call for able bodied men-at-arms to come to his aid—for a small fee, of course!"

If the characters express interest, Behrendt volunteers to put in a good word with the Count on the wanderers' behalf. However, he adds with a laugh, that since he and his men plan to put the rider to rest that very night, it's unlikely there will be any need for them. With that, he and his three companions move to the door and exit into the night.

FRIGHTFUL CHARGE

If the characters overtly attempt to follow the mercenaries, Behrendt gruffly tells them to *"Stay either back at the inn, or at the very least, out of my way. There's an extra bit of money in for anyone who can prove they've killed the horseman, and new friends or no, I'd rather claim the prize myself!"*

Assuming the characters shadow Franz's group through Vienna, they notice the city is eerily quiet. Franz's men move in formation and appear fairly disciplined. Should the characters come within 30 feet of his band, Franz turns angrily to confront them and order them back.

After five minutes pass have everyone make a Notice roll. With a success, they hear the sound of hoof beats rapidly approaching on the cobblestone streets.



ADVENTURE LINK

While it's not necessary, this adventure can be played as a follow-up to the **Savage Tale: The Witch's Gambit**, on page 59. Alternately, you can play that adventure after this one to provide an epilogue to the action here.

If you choose to link the two Savage Tales, it's not necessary to run one immediately after the other. In fact, it will likely enhance your group's enjoyment of these tales if you space them out a little, running other unrelated adventures between the two.

The mercenaries are just beginning to form up as the Black Rider suddenly appears. Before anyone can act, the Black Rider charges, skewering one of the mercenaries on its sword. Another is struck down by the steed as it rushes through the small group.

The horseman wheels about with an uncanny amount of control and speed, rearing up momentarily. At this point, the battle begins in earnest.

The demonic horseman ignores the characters—even if they attack him—so long as they do not have a Von Backer crest. Instead, it focuses its relentless attacks on the two remaining mercenaries. Although they are tough, the Rider cuts them down quickly without the intervention of the heroes.

Even if the characters intervene, the Rider ignores them, continuing to concentrate on the mercenaries. Only if one of the heroes actually attaches a von Backer crest to his clothing does the Black Rider turn its attention on him; simply holding a crest is not enough.

If the heroes somehow succeed in killing the Rider, he falls from his mount, which runs away. Once his body hits the ground, it slowly ashes and dissipates completely.

Once the mercenaries are all dead or dying, the Rider races back into the night, quickly losing any pursuers in Vienna's streets.

🐾 **Demonic Steed:** See page 50.

🐾 **Black Rider:** See page 49.

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♣ **Mercenaries(4, including Franz):** See page 50.

MEETING THE COUNT

Should the characters choose to follow up on the events of the evening, a Streetwise roll locates the current von Backer residence. It is a majestic home sitting on the outer edge of the plains which surround the city's outer wall.

When the party arrives, there are few servants in attendance. Once they enter the courtyard and head towards the main doors, they aren't challenged until nearly reaching the entrance. Even then, it is only a housekeeper, who brings the characters into a very humble audience chamber.

Adorning the side walls are several portraits of the various prior counts and countesses of the von Backer line, including Karl and Andreas. Between those two hangs a golden horseshoe on the wall, no inscription upon it. Sitting at the end of the room is Andreas von Backer, a young man in his late twenties. A recently healed bright pink scar mars his left cheek but does not detract from his proud, noble features.

The Count addresses the characters formally, assuming they are there to take commission as defenders of his house. If the characters relay the death of Franz and his men, the Count is overcome with frustration and anger. He damns the loss of more lives, visibly upset by what he considers a "matter of honor" which he cannot attend. He swears to end the foul creature's life once more, even if it takes his own.

THE CURSE OF THE BLACK RIDER

If the adventurers offer assistance, he accepts, but only on the condition that they be discrete about it. He tells the wanderers all he knows about the Black Rider, which turns out to be very little.

"Shortly after my father's death a few months ago, this demon began to plague my household. I know not from whence it came nor what devilish purpose drives it, but any wearing the von Backer crest are subject to attack by it. I myself have faced

it on more than one occasion—and, while I am a swordsman of no small renown, found it a match and more for my own skills." He points to the scar on his left cheek. "I know only two things seem certain about the Black Rider: It appears every third night and only attacks those wearing the family crest."

A grand Imperial Ball is coming in the next week and the Count hopes to contain any rumors so as to not bring further undue attention to his family name. The Count instructs the wanderers that they may stay inside his home until the Rider reappears. He also has them provided with von Backer crests, saying that honor demands they wear them while in his service. Those of the von Backer household do not shirk from danger.

After two days pass, Andreas gathers the party and thanks them for joining him on the quest to restore his family name. He arms himself in full plate, a slightly battered suit that bears the crest of the Von Backer family. The golden horseshoe is tied around his neck. Should any of the heroes ask about the horseshoe, he explains only that it is a token of his sister's love. He says little about Greta other than, *"For reasons of her own, she is no longer with us."*

When the characters are ready, he leads them toward a graveyard at the western edge of Vienna. He explains that he wishes to view his father's grave one last time, as he feels that after tonight, he will most likely join Karl in the afterlife.

THE BLACK RIDER RETURNS

Dusk begins to settle as the group reaches the graveyard, and Andreas heads straight for a very large, recently built crypt just inside the cemetery gates. Roughly 15 feet before he reaches it, the smell of brimstone fills the air, and a thin red smoke escapes from the crypt, swirling and coalescing into the form of a black horse.

The stallion paws at the ground with its hoof, and the mist returns, this time solidifying into the form of Karl Von Backer. A wanderer may make a Notice roll to observe that the hoof is unshod. The other hooves bear horseshoes.

The revelation that his father is the Black Rider causes Andreas to stand aghast, gaping as the final pieces of armor form solid around his father. As soon as the last piece of the helm materializes, the Black Rider attacks the nearest person bearing the von Backer seal.

Once the fight begins, Andreas does little more than defend himself, appalled at the thought of having to fight his own father's specter. Any hero wearing the von Backer crest can affect the Black Rider and its steed normally, but even so this should prove to be a difficult battle.

Only by killing the demonic steed can the wanderers end the curse. However, the Black Rider does not fight specifically to defend its mount. Felling the Black Rider forces the steed to flee, but in three nights it returns with its Rider to once again hunt the von Backer household.

If the party slays the demonic steed, the Black Rider immediately ceases fighting and drops his weapon. He turns to his son (if he is still alive) and solemnly salutes him before crumbling to dust. The black armor clatters to the ground lying there only a brief moment before dissipating into the same mist from which it was formed.

The Count, having to endure the death of his father twice now, sinks to his knees. He asks the characters to grant him solitude to mourn his father's end. Before bidding them farewell, he asks the wanderers to return to his home, saying that they are welcome there for the duration of their stay in Vienna.

♣ **Andreas, Count von Backer:** See below.

♣ **Black Rider:** See below.

♣ **Demonic Steed:** See page 50.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



ANDREAS, COUNT VON BACKER

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8,

Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Vow (usually to protect something)

Edges: Block, Command, Noble, Sweep

Gear: Plate corselet (+3), plate vambraces (+3), plate greaves (+3), full helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged shots), horse.

BLACK RIDER

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Riding d6

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 6/7, **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Gear: Black plate corselet (+3), black plate vambraces (+3), black plate greaves (+3), black steel helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged attacks)

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** The Lost Rider is immune to



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Fear and Intimidation.

- **Immunity:** This infernal entity suffers half damage from all magical and physical attacks.
- **Invulnerability:** If the Rider is destroyed by any means, it returns to life on the third night as long as the Demonic Steed (see below) lives.
- **Purpose:** If the Demonic Steed is ever destroyed, the Lost Rider immediately crumbles to dust.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called shots do no extra damage.
- **Von Backer Curse:** The Rider may only attack victims wearing the von Backer crest.

DEMONIC STEED

The demonic steed that is the true source of the curse is a massive coal-black animal with blazing eyes. Faint trails of smoke emanate from its nostrils and sparks strike from its hooves on the cobblestone streets of the city.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armored (+3):** The Black Rider's mount wears plate barding of the same ebony steel as his armor.
- **Fleet-Footed:** The steed rolls a d8 for a running die.
- **Immunity:** This infernal entity suffers half damage from all magical and physical attacks.
- **Kick:** Str+d6.
- **Size +3:** This creature weighs nearly 1000 pounds.
- **Von Backer Curse:** The steed may only attack victims wearing the von Backer crest.
- **Weakness (von Backer crest):** The demonic steed suffers normal damage from anyone wearing a von Backer family crest.

MERCENARY

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

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

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor)

Edges: Musketeer

Gear: Long sword (Str+d6), musket (Range 10/20/40, damage 2d8), shot & powder (20), leather armor (+1)

FAITH HEALING

LEAD In: The party hears of a priest in Vienna who can cure even the most severe illnesses by the touch of his hand. They seek him out either to heal one of their own or perhaps to alleviate a malady affecting someone close to them.

BACKGROUND

Edmund Brunner is a priest who came to the clergy at an early age, and has made his life one long dedication to the Catholic doctrine. Charitable and kind, Father Brunner has been known over the many years of his service to take in those ostracized by society, running an orphanage and school in Vienna with the assistance of several volunteers. The small chapel attached to the school suits Brunner's needs quite well, fitting his humble background.

For all his good deeds, Father Brunner suffers from one of the deadliest of sins. Ironically, his very humility has become a great source of pride to the priest. He secretly believes that his selfless service has elevated him above not only those whom he serves, but other members of the Church as well.

Sensing the priest's hidden weakness, a succubus used illusion and guile to mislead Father Brunner into believing he had been chosen to receive a spiritual gift to heal. In reality, he instead became the host to a terrible demon seed that will soon emerge to spread plague and disease throughout Vienna.

For now, through the machinations of the demonic entity growing within him, Father Brunner has begun to manifest a unique ability. When he lays his hands upon a sick or diseased person, the person appears cured, with all visible symptoms of the illness gone.



Word of the priest's miraculous ability has begun to spread throughout Vienna and beyond.

The Power of Faith

Should the party seek out Brunner (or should he be summoned to the Von Backer residence after the events of **Savage Tale: Noblesse Oblige**), they find him to be a solemn, pious man with a quiet intelligence and soft demeanor. Easily in his early 50s, Brunner seems to move as if he is unused to his size—indeed, his stomach is disproportionately large compared to his trim figure.

Brunner truly does seem to have an ability to cure, at least simple injuries. Merely laying his hands on someone is enough to eliminate Fatigue completely and restore people that have taken damage to a healthy state. He cannot truly cure disease, but his ability does alleviate the symptoms of the malady, leading the afflicted to believe they have been healed.

Each time he does this, he grimaces slightly, and if a character scores a raise on a Notice roll, they observe that his stomach seems to distend ever-so-slightly as he heals the afflicted.

When questioned about how his ability came to be, he says that he had retreated into the nearby forest to pray and reflect on the beauty of nature. In the forest he came across a small shrine to St. Catherine of Sienna, a 2' high wooden alcove containing a simple statue. Taking it as a sign, he prayed to her, and received a miraculous visitation.

St. Catherine appeared before him. Touching his face and above his heart, she charged him to go forth in her name and cure all the sick and infirm he encountered. Initially, he believed it to be a waking dream, but when he discovered his ability, he realized he had been given a great gift and immediately began administering to the ill.

The Trees Have Eyes

Should the party choose to investigate the site of the visitation, Father Brunner gives them adequate directions to a forested area

just outside of town. If the party asks others in the city about the shrine, they claim to have never heard of it.

A scant 20 minute walk is all that is needed to reach the general area, but the shrine is not readily visible. If they mention that they are looking for the shrine aloud, have the characters make a Notice roll. A success turns up the shrine just a few feet out of the way, somewhere the characters are almost certain they had looked. A raise lets the characters realize that the shrine really wasn't there before.

If the characters inspect the shrine, it seems quite ordinary, very much as plain as Father Brunner described it. Praying at the shrine (or indeed, just making it look like one is caught in prayer) yields a very different effect.

From out of the forest steps a woman who seems perfect in every way. She resembles very much the figure from the statue, even down to the stigmata on her hands. Very serenely and calmly, she walks forward towards the players and attempts to touch the one that appears to be praying on the heart while kissing his forehead.

Skin Deep

The form of St. Catherine of Sienna is an illusion, and in her natural form this succubus is a winged demon replete with grotesque face, leathery skin, and long claws.

The demon has already fulfilled her purpose—planting the seed of the plague demon. The wanderers are simply a potential complication to her plans—and a potential source of sustenance to her. She uses her Life Drain ability on any hero who allows her to kiss him.

Once the travelers attempt to resist her subtle attacks, she reveals her true horrific nature and attacks. The demon fights to the death. With her dying breath, she pronounces a doom on the party, *"You have slain my mortal form, but know my offspring will bring damnation to you all through one of your so-called holiest!"*

🐉 **Succubus:** See page 52.



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SON OF DEMON, SON OF MAN

Now that the party understands that this is a trap for the unwary, it's likely they rush back to Father Brunner. When they arrive, a sick pallor underneath the sheen of beaded sweat covers him. Obviously, the man has just finished a terrible bout of vomiting.

A success on a Notice roll will allow a character to observe that his stomach has shrunk back to a more appropriate size.

A vile pool of fluid at his feet is thick and red, splattered throughout with black tendrils and fragments of bone. Shifting before their eyes, the liquid solidifies and takes on the form of a short demon, replete with cloven hooves.

Standing only about 4' tall, the plague demon is compact and muscular. Its already terrifying features are further marred by the physical manifestations of virtually countless maladies and illnesses. The creature immediately attacks.

Once the creature is killed, it is clear that Father Brunner is Bleeding Out and in desperate need of medical attention. Without it, he dies within ten minutes.

After he is healed, Father Brunner thanks the party and acknowledges that he fell victim to his own pride. The priest shows no permanent ill effects from his ordeal, although he turns himself over to other clergy to validate this.

🐉 **Plague Demon:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



PLAGUE DEMON

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Magick d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** A thick, scabrous hide covers the creature.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must

make a Guts roll.

- **Kick:** Str+d4.
- **Spreading The Disease:** Any attack made by the demon that hits with a Raise will allow the demon to inflict a wasting disease on the hero. On a failed Spirit roll, the character loses one die type to their Vigor immediately and another each day until the demon is slain. If the victim's Vigor drops below d4, she succumbs to the illness and dies.
- **Powers:** Plague demons know the following spells: *barrier* (invisible wall), *dispel* (mystic sign), *fear* (evil aura), *obscure* (cloud of darkness), and *puppet* (hypnotic gaze).

RUMOR

"My brother went to Amsterdam to commission some pieces for the Ball we're hosting next month, but he's been gone longer than I thought."

This rumor can serve as a link to either the **Savage Tale: Judge Not** (page 10) or **Savage Tale: The Organ Grinder** (page 14).

SUCCUBUS

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d12+2,

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

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Demon:** +2 to rolls to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Life Drain:** These foul creatures have more than one way to kill. If a succubus kisses a victim, he must make a Vigor roll opposed by the demon's Spirit or lose one die of Vigor. If Vigor ever drops to zero, the demon has sucked out the victim's life force, killing him. Assuming the victim survives, lost Vigor returns at the rate of one die per day.
- **Lure:** Sometimes good looks aren't enough to lure prey to its doom. These demons can use the *puppet* power using their Spirit as



RUMOR

"Vampires? In Paris? You have the most colorful stories."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: What's at Stake**, on page 39.

their arcane skill. They suffer no Casting Modifier.

- **Very Attractive:** Succubi resemble stunningly beautiful women in their illusory form. They can assume the shape of any sentient being. Their illusory appearance gives them +6 Charisma.

ZURICH

Aristocratic and isolationist, Zurich is a free Imperial City—meaning that it pays taxes directly to the emperor and is not part of another kingdom or ruled by a lesser noble. It is a Protestant city-state, a position that led to a pair of hard-fought wars with other Swiss cantons in the last century. There is even a specific translation of the Bible produced in Zurich known as the Zurich or Zwingli Bible—after the original translator Huldrych Zwingli who was killed in one of the aforementioned wars.

Resting where the Limmat River outflows from Lake Zurich, the city is full of cobblestone streets that rise and fall over the many hills upon which it sits. Zurich houses many merchants and skilled laborers. Craftsmen shared in the city government, with the heads of the local guilds each having a seat on the city's Little Council.



Timing Is Everything

LEAD IN: A prized possession of one of the heroes requires repair. It may be an heirloom pocket watch, a favorite firearm, or any other complex device. A citizen recommends two skilled craftsmen—Manfred Zimmerman and Ewald Gebhard—as the best repairmen for such a task, both of whom reside in Zurich.

LOCAL HERO

On the road into Zurich, the characters encounter a grotesque scene just outside the city. Hung from a makeshift gallows is the body of a man who was hung at sunrise before being left to rot. A hand-painted sign around the neck of the dead man states "*This is the fate of murderers in Zurich.*"

When characters enter Zurich proper, they sense an atmosphere bordering on celebration. Should they ask any of the citizens, they're told the criminal left hanging was one Emil Eckehart, a foul villain who slew several young maidens in gruesome fashion.

A young constable, Chlodwig Muller, discovered Eckehart was behind the killings. Eckehart was well-known locally as an arrogant yet talented swordsman. Muller confronted him with evidence of his crimes. When Eckehart drew his sword, the young constable disarmed the murderer before turning Emil over for trial. The entire affair occurred in a busy square in the city, and as a result, Muller has risen to some prominence in the city.

THE CLOCKWORK GUARDSMAN

If the characters make it known they are seeking one of the master craftsmen, they quickly learn the local opinion seems to be that Manfred Zimmerman is the better of the two and far less ostentatious than Ewald Gebhard. Gebhard is always attempting to showcase some new (and often ill-fated) machine he has created. Any citizen asked



Adventure Link

The **Savage Tale: The Pied Bagpiper**, on page 22, can provide a great lead-in for this adventure by giving the party a reason to travel to Zurich in search of a skilled craftsman.



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gladly provides directions to the rival machinist's shops, with Gebhard's being on the route to Zimmerman's.

As the wanderers make their way through the city, they come across a gathering crowd near Gebhard's shop. Coming closer, they see what appears to be a poorly constructed statue of a man. The odd mix of scrap pieces of bronze and copper has iron plating rounding out smaller individual sections like hands and elbows.

Rising above the din of the crowd is the voice of a portly man with greasy, unkempt brown hair. This is Ewald Gebhard, shouting in a hurried, excited voice as he tinkers with a barely visible panel on the statue's back. When characters come within earshot, they hear the following in Gebhard's booming, bassy accent:

"...and he will move as easily as you or I! My creation, the clockwork guardsman, will be capable of performing not just simple actions—he will amaze one and all with his mechanical strength and precise movements! Never more shall we fear to walk our streets due to the likes of Emil Eckebart and his ilk! Once my spectacular clockwork guardsman begins patrolling Zurich, we're safe!"

With a triumphant flourish, Gebhard slams the panel shut. He wipes his hands on his soiled smock, tossing a wrench into a front pocket before producing a winding key from the same pouch. Gebhard quickly gives several turns with the winding key to a notch on the clockwork guardsman.

The machine whirrs to life with a great clacking and hissing of gears. The guardsman straightens itself fully upright, standing at just over seven feet tall. But when the guardsman attempts to take its first step, a loud BANG emanates from within its chest cavity, and thick, acrid smoke billows forth. In a matter of seconds, parts of the automaton begin falling off and it pitches forward to land face first on the cobblestones.

The crowd immediately begins jeering and laughing at the man. As they disperse, some of them bandy about such phrases as *"Another of Gebhard's failures!"*, *"Did you see him? He actually thought it would*

work!", *"He should have stayed a doctor!"*, *"Yes, but who wants a doctor that makes you explode?"* and other such dismissals.

As for Gebhard, he scowls at the crowd before pulling out a wrench and beginning to reassemble his invention. The heroes may make a Notice roll (–2) to hear him mutter to himself that *"it would have worked, if only I had a better pump, something better suited..."*

If the wanderers approach Gebhard to see if he is willing to make the repairs they need, he shoos them off unceremoniously. He claims such mundane items are beneath a man of his vision, and he has "far more important" tasks. Gebhard barely acknowledges the characters (or anyone else) from this point forward, as he starts taking pieces of his creation into his tiny storefront.

THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN

Manfred Zimmerman and his shop are completely contrary to the scene at Gebhard's. Zimmerman himself is a clean, neat older gentleman with short gray hair and a trimmed mustache that retains a hint of auburn. Although his shop features clocks and simple machines in various stages of assembly, everything is very subdued and organized.

Zimmerman speaks gently and surely, and when presented with the item for repair, he cautiously reviews the damage. After several minutes of evaluation, he states that although parts of the mechanism are very delicate, he should be able to have it repaired in just a few days.

He directs the characters to some of the town's attractions, recommending that they stay at the local inn Diamant Setaverne (literally "Diamond Lake Tavern"), run by one Fritz Muller and his wife Gertrude. Should the travelers ask about any relation between the inn's owners and the famous constable, Zimmerman tells them he believes them to be the young man's parents.



AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY

Assuming the travelers take Zimmerman's advice, they find the Diamant Setaverne pleasant and inviting with the innkeeper and staff very polite and hospitable.

A young man with an athletic frame is the center of attention in the common room of the inn. The characters learn that this is Chlodwig Muller. He is the constable who has obtained hero status due to his defeat of Emil Eckehart. He is as jovial as he is popular, and casually recounts his epic duel with Eckehart to anyone who asks.

After a few hours pass, a man rushes into the tavern, loudly calling for Constable Muller. Gasping for breath, the man informs Muller that something unspeakable has happened and urges everyone to follow him to the gallows. The young constable quickly leaves with the man, as do most of the locals.

If the characters tag along, they find that Eckehart's corpse has been slit from neck to waist. Allow characters to make a Knowledge (Medicine) or Healing roll. Those who succeed note that it appears that organs have been removed from the corpse. With a raise, the characters discern the heart is missing completely.

The constable orders some of the locals to bury the remains and vows to find whoever did this. He intends to make sure that they are jailed for defiling the body, as even a monster such as Eckehart deserved some dignity in death.

The mood is somber once the wanderers and locals return to the tavern. If by some chance the characters did not follow the crowd, allow them to glean the basics of the information from the previous scene with a Streetwise roll. Only on a raise, however, do they learn of the removal of the heart.

The rest of the evening is uneventful. If they had not already learned this, the party finds out that the tavern's owners are the constable's parents. They and their son stay in rooms on the lower level, while guests stay in suites on the second story.

DEAD OF NIGHT

An hour or two after the characters retire for the evening, have them make a Notice roll (-2). Those that make the test wake instantly, sensing something not quite right. After a few moments, they hear the distinct sound of splintering wood as the front door to the tavern is sundered. Any wanderers still sleeping are awakened by the cacophony below.

Heroes who rush out of their rooms catch a glint of metal as a large figure bursts through the open doorway and heads straight for the bedroom of Chlodwig Muller.

Muller rushes out of his chamber, but is swatted aside easily by the figure. A slight whirring of gears can be heard, and the identity of the assailant is revealed. Gebhard's clockwork guardsman is fully operational and seems determined to slay the constable.

Seriously injured by the first blow, the constable is unable to defend himself. Unless the wanderers intervene, the guardsman strikes him dead with a second blow. It then begins



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to attack the other residents and guests of the inn, focusing first on the women until someone intervenes.

 **Clockwork Guardsman:** See below.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

With the Guardsman defeated, Chlodwig asks the characters to bring Gebhard to justice. He has no inkling as to why the tinkerer would attack him, but adds that he is too dangerous to remain at large. Due to his injuries, he is unable to stand, much less perform his duties. His parents come out of their bedchamber to tend to his wounds.

Once the characters arrive at Gebhard's shop, they discover the shop has been destroyed. Gebhard is amidst the rubble and in dire straits himself. Conscious but in a great deal of pain, he admits to harvesting Eckehart's organs to repair his device. Apparently, some of the man's evil lived on after his demise. A few moments after he finished installing the heart, the mechanism came to life and assaulted him, destroying the shop.

The inventor makes one last statement about the heart "*being the perfect pump*," expresses remorse for his hubris, and dies shortly thereafter.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

CLOCKWORK GUARDSMAN

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 7, **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** The automaton is encased in steel plates.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from Shaken. No additional damage from called shots (except as noted). No wound penalties. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Improved Frenzy:** The clockwork guardsman may make two Fighting attacks each round at no penalty.

- **Iron Fists:** Str+d6.
- **Fearless:** The mechanical man is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Weakness (Heart):** If a called shot to the guardsman's heart causes a Wound, the guardsman falls to pieces and stops moving. Destroying the heart permanently kills Eckehart.

THE PAPAL STATES

 **The Papal States** are Italian territories under the temporal power of the Pope Paul V. The Pope maintains power through the decrees of 1059 (which allow only cardinals to nominate the pope, keeping the choice of power out of secular hands), the threat of excommunication (excommunicated Catholics lose any chance at salvation in a religious sense), and the power of the interdict (the ability to excommunicate an entire community, city, or nation, thereby causing the people to pressure their leaders to submit to the will of the pope). However, many Protestant critics are beginning to question the authenticity of many documents used by the Catholic Church to substantiate the pope's authority, proving several to be—if not outright forgeries—then certainly suspect in their provenance.

The Papal States have a military structured in a similar fashion to that of other Italian states, including obligatory service, career soldiers and the use of mercenaries. For example, a treaty with the Swiss allows 6,000 Swiss soldiers to defend St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The pope is as much a secular and military ruler as he is a spiritual one at this point in history. As in other Italian regions, military architects of the time are trained engineers in the Papal States. As such, they are in demand throughout Europe for their skills.

While the Papal States are nominally unified under one religion, this common ground does not mean all is peaceful within the borders. Internal conflict can—and does—still arise from time to time on a political front as various nobles attempt to court favor from the Holy See. Religion and science are also beginning to find themselves at odds, most recently as a teacher at the University of



Padua, Galileo Galilei, has published a paper suggesting that the sun, rather than the earth, is actually the center of the universe.

ROME

Rome is a city full of ancient architecture, some dating back more than 2,000 years. Situated on the Tiber River, it lies approximately 15 miles from the sea. Currently over 90,000 citizens populate Rome, with thousands more pilgrims visiting every year.

Although the current pope, Paul V, is more concerned with foreign diplomacy and defending the Catholic faith against the rise of Reformationists, tremendous strides have been made in making the city safer for pilgrims and citizens alike. Banditry within the city is now virtually unheard of and even nobles are not exempt from the law in Rome.

The city is bounded by the Aurelian Walls which were built in the third century and stretch over 12 miles. Although the Tiber is navigable for dozens of miles upriver, silting at its mouth has prevented ships from sailing upriver from the sea for centuries. Tiber Island, near the center of Rome, is home to the Hospital of Saint Bartholomew. Staffed by the Order of the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John, the hospital sits atop the ruins of a temple to the Greek god of healing.

Not just the center of religious power in Europe, Rome is also a major hub of commerce. The Silk Routes lead from Rome into Cathay and the Indies. The Mediterranean allows access to a variety of goods from Egypt and Northern Africa. Various cardinals and popes were great patrons of the arts, with works by such greats as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and others prominently displayed.

A Thread Unspun

LEAD In: While wandering the streets of Rome, the party happens across a famed hunter regaling a crowd with tales of one of his more dangerous hunts.

This adventure serves as a plot hook to lead the heroes to the **Savage Tale: A Stitch in Time**.

BACKGROUND

Girardus Bernerius is something of a hero in Rome, renowned as both an animal handler and “monster hunter” of sorts. He’s often called upon to prove that fantastical creatures imagined by the minds of others are really marmots or mountain lions or some ordinary animal. His taming and capture of ferocious beasts is a matter of legend, word of his exploits spreading far and wide.

It’s not too difficult to find him outside a bar or on a public corner, boasting of his deeds in a casual manner. He also talks at length about his lucky shirt, a fine blue silk garment donated to him by his patron and benefactor, Orlando Cissus. He believes that so long as the shirt is whole, he is invulnerable to harm, the “thrice-blessed” garment protecting him. In fact, Girardus rarely removes it, causing it to show some signs of wear.

FOOLS RUSH IN

When the party encounters Girardus, he is regaling some children with a tale of how he faced down a dangerous boar. In the middle of his story, a courier comes to him with a message from his patron—some merchants have spied a bull of truly horrific proportions trapped on a small street, and have requested that he intervene. Given that this is “only a bull,” Girardus invites all present to watch one of his adventures firsthand.

A small throng of onlookers follow Girardus through the busy streets of Rome, a short jaunt leading to a small merchant area. As the group approaches, they notice a great deal of chaos centered on a small alleyway. The bull chased a person into the alley. The animal’s intended target escaped by climbing a wall, but the alley is too small for the bull. In its thrashing to escape, the animal has gotten a horn stuck on a window ledge, trapping it in the alley. All attempts to free the bull from behind have proven unsuccessful.

Girardus proclaims he’ll enter the alleyway, free the bull, and clamber out again. He again states that this is “only a bull.” Making a huge show of climbing the small wooden fence, Girardus drops down into the alley with the bull.

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Allow the wanderers to make a Notice roll—on a success, they see Girardus' shirt catching on a nail, forming a small rip. Girardus turns with a big grin and a wave before he frees the animal's horn. Once the bull is free, he spins on his heel and leaps for the fence, only to go through the fence as he is gored from behind.

The crowd parts instantly as the enraged bull charges anyone near! Should the party intervene, the animal focuses its attacks on them. If the bull becomes Shaken, it tries to flee the scene, galloping out of town as quickly as it can recover.

The spectacle is far from over, as Girardus' limp form lies directly in front of the adventurers. He's dying, and as he expires, a blue light suffuses him before it gets sucked in to the shirt, which changes to a deep blood red. The courier gasps, and begs the party to assist him in taking Girardus back to his benefactor.

 **Enraged Bull:** See below.

SOUL REMNANT

The courier assists the adventurers in taking Girardus back to his patron's villa, a successful merchant named Orlando Cissus. The man is distraught when he sees Girardus, but even more so when he sees the new crimson hue of the shirt. He spits out a curse, and asks if anyone saw what caused this.

If the party tells him that the garment was torn—if the heroes don't mention it, the courier does—Cissus takes a step back. He thanks the party for their assistance, but answers no further questions on the matter. As the party is escorted out, they overhear Cissus tell the courier to call for a priest to administer last rites.

Roughly two hours after the party leaves the villa, the courier returns to them with a request from Cissus to meet once again. When the wanderers return, Cissus tells them of the history of the shirt.

"I obtained the shirt from a master tailor in Hindoostan. He spun a lively tale for me about how the garment was thrice-blessed, but that it must not be worn if it were ever damaged. I found the story a fanciful

diversion, but Girardus took it to heart, maintaining the shirt was the source of his successes.

"Now, the priest who came to administer last rites has told me he believes Girardus' soul has been trapped within the garment, unable to pass from this world to the hereafter. If this is indeed the case, I do not wish to see my friend's immortal spirit suffer. I have a caravan already scheduled to travel to Hindoostan. It is a small matter for me to convey this shirt there along with it."

Given their prior involvement in the matter, he believes the wanderers may be receptive to further assisting him. By all accounts they handled themselves well against the bull that felled Girardus and he wants to hire the party to join the caravan with the sole purpose of guarding the garment and getting it safely to Rajan Shreeyash, a tailor in Bombaim.

If they accept, he makes it absolutely clear that he considers the repair of the garment more important than the rest of the caravan. He entrusts the garment to their care, adding that if they need to separate from caravan, he understands—so long as the garment is properly repaired and returned to him.

The trip to Bombaim is not easy. The garment has now become cursed, and as long as it holds the soul of Girardus it attracts bad luck and supernatural activity, leading to any number of encounters for the caravan as it travels to Bombaim. Feel free to incorporate any number of side adventures and Savage Tales while the caravan is en route.

Once the wanderers reach Bombaim the **Savage Tale: A Stitch in Time** (see page 198) resolves the repair of the cursed garment.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

ENRAGED BULL

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Notice d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10



Special Abilities

- **Horns:** Str+d6.
- **Gore:** The bull uses a Charge maneuver to gore its foes. If it can move at least 6" before attacking, it adds +4 to its damage.
- **Size +2:** The bull is a large creature.



POLAND AND LITHUANIA

ALSO known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, this kingdom is the largest single monarchy in Europe during the early 17th century. Poland at one point even included the Kingdom of Sweden. There is a high percentage of nobles among the populace compared to the rest of Europe. Nearly one out of ten citizens is some form of nobility (szlachta).

Ahead of its time in many ways, the Kingdom of Poland is an elective monarchy. Known as the Noble's Democracy or the Golden Freedom, the power of the throne is checked by a legislature known as the Sejm, which is in turn populated by nobles. The nobles choose the new King and negotiate bills of rights and other promises with the king-elect. Further divided into three voivodships, each region governs itself with a fair degree of autonomy.

Currently, Poland is enjoying a fair amount of success in its war with Russia and threatens Moscow itself. This is largely due to Poland's elite Hussar heavy cavalry, known as the most effective forces in the region. Additionally, private armies are often found employed by cities or nobles and may number between several hundred to several thousand soldiers.

A bulwark of thought and philosophy, Poland is extraordinarily tolerant of race and religion. Although generally Catholic in persuasion, Jewish, Musselman, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox communities coexist and even thrive in the Commonwealth. Scores of poets, dramatists, mathematicians and more come from Poland, often embracing the ideals of Sarmatism.

Sarmatism is the prevalent cultural backbone of Poland, combining chivalric and cultural values. Its tenets of religious belief,

courageous deeds, honesty, equality and freedom help make Poland in some ways the most progressive nation in Europe.

WARSAW

Located on the Vistula River, Warsaw lies near the midway point between Krakow, the capital of Poland, and Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. Due to its location, it was chosen for the seat of the new commonwealth by King Sigismund III Vasa at the turn of the century. Since then, the city has begun an unprecedented period of growth.

Originally a walled village, Warsaw is rapidly expanding in its new role. Nearing 20,000 inhabitants, the vast majority of its citizens reside outside the old walls. This has led to several independent districts, each governed by its own laws and aristocracy. The king has invested heavily in building projects, including enlarging the existing Royal Castle and founding the Jesuit Church.

Due to the influx of nobles and foreign diplomats, Warsaw is becoming known as the "Second Paris."



THE WITCH'S GAMBIT

LEAD In: While traveling through Poland en route to Warsaw, the characters encounter a badly beaten man, near exhaustion, on the road.

BACKGROUND

Greta von Backer was once a Viennese noblewoman, dabbling secretly in the black arts. Her father, Karl von Backer discovered her foul practices and sent her away to a convent in the hopes that a life of religious contemplation might save her soul. She escaped the convent and fled the country, but not before enacting revenge for the betrayal on her family.

Hiding away near the city of Warsaw, Greta has begun her evil practices once again. This time, she has employed her feminine wiles to recruit a lackey, the large but dull-witted Tomasz Bednarski. They have been preying

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on travelers in the area for several months now, to provide both an income and new victims for Greta's black arts.

Their actions have drawn the attentions of Father Maciej Kursa, an experienced and kindly priest. Father Kursa, recognizing the signs of witchcraft, has reopened an old church in the area to revitalize the community and serve as a base for his investigations into the dark practices. As yet, he is unaware of Greta's presence, but she realizes he poses a dire threat to her.

ROAD WEARY

The party comes upon a wounded man beside the road. He's obviously received a severe beating. An area near the back of his shirt is soaked as blood flows from a circular wound and multiple tiny cuts line his face, arms, and clothing.

When they approach the injured man, he stirs, in need of some medical attention. A bit of a brute, he's heavy and strong, which makes his condition all the more curious. It would take either a number of people (or one very competent fighter) to do damage this severe. If asked, he confirms that, claiming he was attacked by several bandits.

The injured man gives his name as Tomasz, and frantically asks the adventurers not to take him into Warsaw, instead directing them to a small side road. This leads to a cottage set in the woods.

Once there, the characters are greeted by a slim young woman whom Tomasz calls Greta. She reacts with fluster at the intrusion until she realizes the characters are bringing Tomasz to her for help.



ADVENTURE LINK

This adventure is linked to the **Savage Tale: Noblesse Oblige**, on page 46, and can be played either before (as a lead-in) or after (as an epilogue) that tale. However, either adventure can be run without need to incorporate the other if you choose.

As she tends to Tomasz's wounds, the woman discusses local events with the party. She informs them that she is grateful for their good hearts and gracious assistance. She tells them the nearby borough on the outskirts of Warsaw has been overtaken by a foul wizard who disguises himself as a clergyman.

"Fearing for our own lives, we have avoided the city since his arrival. Many who enter the city by this road are never seen again. Rumor has it that the diabolic sorcerer has captured the unwary travelers, sacrificing them in foul rites to his dark master."

"Tomasz is a brave and strong man, but he is no match for Kursa or his henchmen. You seem a courageous and pious lot, no doubt with the Lord on your side. I beg you to slay this man and lift the curse on our people."

If the heroes agree, she further cautions them to strike quickly, before Kursa can summon allies—either from this world or another.

AN ORDINARY DAY

As the characters near Warsaw, they find nothing seems out of sorts. Coming in on the same road where they found Tomasz, a few locals throw up a sign of warding and shy away. Most, however, are not as reserved, greeting the wanderers openly and warmly.

If the adventurers take the time to speak with the townsfolk, allow them to make Streetwise rolls. If successful, the inhabitants tell the wanderers that fewer and fewer travelers are making it into town. While initially most thought it was a result of the usual ebb and flow of trade, recently bodies have been found slaughtered by the roadside. The people mostly assume it is the work of highwaymen, but hunting parties have had no luck.

Should any of the characters mention Tomasz, the locals say that he is something of a handyman, but note he's not overly bright. A Streetwise roll reveals that he is also prone to the occasionally shady act as well. No one questioned knows anything of Greta. In fact, most have not even heard of her before the party asks about her.

MEETING THE FATHER

There is a small church near the Krakow Gate. Clearly it was once in a state of disrepair, yet signs of improvement indicate recent care. As they approach it, the wanderers hear hammering. A look up brings them face to face with the repairman.

Steadily reattaching a cross and several damaged roof tiles is an older man, albeit one in fairly good physical condition. Seeing the group below him, he waves and introduces himself as Father Maciej Kursa. His salt-and-pepper hair and thick mustache seem to mark him as a man of confidence and compassion, and unless the heroes attack immediately, he greets the characters warmly and without any air of malice.

REASON PREVAILS

If the party takes a rational approach and speaks with him, they find the priest quite open and friendly. If questioned about his work, or just left to his own devices, Father Kursa begins to speak of his mission in the area.

"Prior to coming here, I had heard that many people in Warsaw were suddenly growing ill or missing. I began to suspect witchery and asked to be transferred here in hopes that, with the Lord's assistance, I might counter it."

"Twice daily I walk the perimeter of the borough, praying to God to protect and deliver the townsfolk. I'm not sure that I've been incredibly effective, though. I've yet to uncover the source of this plague, although—thank the Good Lord—the maladies here within the parish have diminished somewhat."

Although he likely does much of the talking, Father Kursa is quite perceptive. Quickly noting the adventurers' apparent interest in his actions, he gently questions them about their interest. Should they mention Tomasz Bednarski, he tells them of his own recent encounter with the man.

"Why, just earlier today as I returned from my morning walk," he mentions, "I caught him atop the church, apparently trying to rip the cross from the top of my church. Tomasz

THE DIRECT APPROACH

Hopefully, the party does not take Greta's advice to heart and immediately attack the good Father. If they do, he does not fight back, but his cries attract the attention of the nearby residents who quickly summon the city guard. Unless the wanderers immediately flee the area, they soon face overwhelming numbers of well-equipped guardsmen!

Town Guard (20+): See page 323 of *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*.

makes his living as a handyman and I suppose he was trying to drum up some repair work for himself. Anyway, I startled him, and he fell there," the Father points to a pile of lumber. "He refused to let me help him, instead running off into the forest."

If the party mentions Greta, Father Kursa, like his parishioners, has no knowledge of her. He is disturbed by the fact that she portrayed him as an evil sorcerer and flatly denies it. The Father stops short of calling Greta a liar, instead suggesting that perhaps she is confused in her facts. He asks the wanderers if he might accompany them back to speak with her and perhaps put her mind at ease.

CONFRONTING GRETA

When the party returns to Greta's cottage, they spot Tomasz outside with shovel in hand, apparently fully healed. A Notice roll spots several patches of ground that have been dug up—some recent, some older—but all are roughly 6' x 3' in dimension.

What happens at this point depends on whether the characters return alone or in the company of Father Kursa.

Should they have denied the priest's request and returned alone, Greta greets them at the door and asks if they succeeded in defeating Kursa. If they tell her what the priest said, she becomes angry, claiming the man was obviously lying to buy time to prepare his defenses.

"Did I not caution you to attack him immediately? Clearly, he has confused you with the words of a serpent. He practices the dark

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arts—why would you think he speaks the truth? I have nothing to gain by slandering a godly man, but everything to gain by the death of a blasphemer. Do not waste my time if you are not willing to act in a righteous manner on the behalf of innocents!”

If the party takes her at face value again, Greta continues to play them for dupes and sends them once again to slay the “sorcerer.” If they return a second time without evidence of the priest’s death, she loses patience and attacks them (see below).

THE ACCUSER EXPOSED

On the other hand, if they return to the cottage with Father Kursa (or fail a second time to murder Father Kursa), Tomasz rushes into the cottage and bars the door behind him. Within moments, they hear Greta chanting from inside the cottage, and a foul smell will permeate the air. The priest wryly remarks at this point, *“It appears that we have found the source of the witchery that plagues my charges.”*

GRETA’S JOURNAL

If you are linking this adventure to the **Savage Tale: Noblesse Oblige**, allow the travelers a Notice roll once they’ve defeated or driven off Greta. On a success, they find a journal belonging to the witch. The journal identifies her as a former Viennese noblewoman, Greta von Backer.

It details her initial forays into the dark arts, her discovery by her father, commitment to the convent, and her escape from the nuns. It ends noting that she has already set into motion “a plan of revenge that will deny my dullish father the peace of the grave, and ensure my brother will never know rest.”

Furthermore, even a cursory search of Greta herself finds an ornate ring adorned with a green stag on a white field.

From the upturned areas of soil, the reanimated remains of several of Greta and Tomasz’s previous victims pull themselves up. Father Kursa recoils at the sight of the undead clawing their way from the grave. The unnerving scene requires a Guts roll from the adventurers as well.

Once he recovers, Father Kursa, realizing this is a situation better solved by warriors, retreats to Warsaw from the fight. Should things go terribly awry in the coming battle, you may choose to have him instead summon the watch from the nearby city to rescue the heroes.

SIEGE

The zombies immediately attack and Greta casts spells at the heroes from within the cottage through the windows. Tomasz remains in the house, protecting Greta should the characters manage to enter.

While the characters are engaged with the zombies, she casts *boost/lower trait* and *fear* to support the zombies. Once the party defeats her undead minions, she casts *summon beast* to call up a Medium swarm of flying insects (taking 3 rounds to do so in order to reduce the casting modifier to –2).

Neither Tomasz nor Greta have any intention of coming out, as Greta can adversely affect the party from inside. The adventurers should come upon a siege breaker, whether it’s breaking down the door or setting the building on fire. Once the two opposing sides come into direct conflict, characters observe that Greta is now wearing robes with a heraldic symbol of a green stag on a white field upon them.

The door to the cottage can be broken open with a Strength roll (–4). Alternately, a character may clamber through one of the small windows with an Agility (–2) roll. Even if the Agility roll is successful, unless the hero manages a raise on it, Tomasz gets a free attack on him as he struggles through the small opening.

Once the heroes manage to enter the cottage, she casts *viper weapon* on the weapon of the most dangerous combatant and then other spells as you see appropriate. Tomasz

fighters to the death to protect Greta. Should Greta fall, Tomasz slumps in defeat and surrenders.

Greta, having been granted leniency the first time she was caught practicing the black arts, does not hesitate to surrender if it appears that she cannot escape. However, this time she does not have her father's influence protecting her. If taken into captivity, Greta and Tomasz are executed within the week.

🐉 **Greta von Backer:** See below.

🐉 **Tomasz Bednarski:** See below.

🐉 **Zombies (2 per hero):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



GRETA VON BACKER

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Magick d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: +4

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

Hindrances: Mean, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), Attractive, Charismatic, Noble, Strong Caster

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4).

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, curse, deflection, dispel, fear, fly, obscure, spirit servant, spirit ward, summon beast, summon spirit, viper weapon, zombie.*

Treat Greta as a Seasoned character.

TOMASZ BEDNARSKI

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d6

Charisma: -2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Illiterate, Mean

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Axe (Str+d6).

ZOMBIE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called Shots do no extra damage.



RUSSIA

THE "Great Bear" to the east is so large that it stretches from Eastern Europe over 1500 miles into the vastness of the Asia continent. Within its borders lies a varied topography: coniferous forests (taiga), mixed and broad-leaf forests, grassland (steppe), the intolerantly frigid tundra, even semi-desert ringing the Caspian Sea. Generally, Russia is comprised of dense woodlands to the north, vast plains to the south. Ample rivers run through Russia leading to the Baltic, Black, and Caspian Seas as well as the Arctic Ocean.

Russia is in the middle of a troubled time. The country is embroiled in constant military conflicts with the Kingdoms of Poland and Sweden. The Polish-Muscovite War, which began in 1605, sees frequent forays by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth into a Russian Tsardom torn by civil wars. Alliances shift as agendas change—even among the Russian factions—which fight against the Commonwealth one battle and for it the next. Sweden, which entered the war in 1610, also vacillates between opposing and allying with Russia, depending on the aims that range from minor border adjustment to claims to the Russian throne.

Recently, Ladislaus IV Vasa, the son of the king of Poland, was elected tsar of Russia by a group of boyars in accordance with a treaty. However, as ascending the Russian throne would require Ladislaus to convert to Russian Orthodoxy, his father, a devout Catholic, strongly opposed it. At his request, Ladislaus IV is instead ruling as a regent for the moment.

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The largest Russian faction, led by a man claiming to be the son of Ivan the Terrible, enjoys a fair amount of popular support. "Tsar" Dmitry Ivanovich first surfaced in 1607 and was the second such person to claim to be Ivan's youngest son. He has enjoyed considerable support from the Cossacks and has threatened to capture Moscow itself on more than one occasion. However, in the face of opposition from both Poland and Sweden, Dmitry and his forces are sorely overmatched.

The nation's chief faith is Russian Orthodoxy, an independent branch of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Moscow sees itself as the "third" Rome (the now Muslim-controlled Constantinople was the "second"). The Russian Orthodox clergy is very leery of Western contamination and maintains itself as a distinct entity. Within Russia, the Eastern Orthodox Church also has its own Patriarch, but despite growing popularity, has not had a successful relationship with the Tsars, who are often Christians only in the political sense.

MOSCOW

Moscow has been the capital throughout Russia's several historical incarnations. Located on the Moskva River in the nation's European side, it is one of the main gateways

RUSSIAN SUPERSTITIONS

Breaking a mirror is considered bad luck in Russia, as is looking at one's reflection in a broken mirror.

It is a bad omen to return home for forgotten things. If you must, you should look in the mirror before leaving the house again.

It is a taboo to step over prone bodies.

It is good luck to trip on your own left foot.

Removing one's coat and then putting it back on with one's off-hand helps ward off hexes.

Pinning a brooch inside one's clothing helps avert the curse of evil eye.

RUMOR

"I would never think of going to the mountains of Cathay. I heard there is a big blizzard smothering that region that is worse than the worst of Russian winters, if you can believe that."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Breath of the Yeti King**, on page 182.

between the continents of Europe and Asia. In spite of the ongoing conflicts, Moscow's population remains nearly 200,000.

Moscow is a city known for inspired architectures, particularly religious sites. The most prominent is Saint Basil's Cathedral built to commemorate the capture of the Khanate of Kazan. It is world-renowned for its elegant, colorful onion domes. The city's road system centers on the Moscow Kremlin, Russia's fortified political citadel, and radiates outward.

The Kremlin, currently occupied by Polish forces, sits on a peninsula between the Moskva and Neglinnaya Rivers. A 100'-wide moat separates it from the rest of the city. It hosts a total of four cathedrals, two churches, and four palaces, plus twenty towers and the enclosing Kremlin Wall. The Ivan the Great Bell Tower in the Kremlin's Cathedral Square, recently augmented to a new height of 266' in 1600, stands as the tallest building in the city.

Immediately south of the Kremlin lies the Pozhar Square, the main marketplace for the city. Surrounding it is Kitai-Gorod, the principle trade district for Moscow. Kitai-Gorod is itself protected by 20' tall walls and 13 watchtowers. (As a side note, although Kitai is the Russian word for Cathay, the name of the district has nothing to do with Cathay, and instead most likely refers to the walls surrounding it.)

Summers are warm and tolerably humid in the city. Winters, however, are long and freezing cold. The temperature rarely climbs above 30 degrees Celsius for the whole season.

Uprisings and invasions have plagued Moscow of late. The Crimean Tartars attacked and sacked the city in 1571, with only the Kremlin escaping the burning. The Polish then invaded in waves, the first from 1605-1606, the second from 1607 till late-1609, when Poland finally and formally declares war on Russia, culminating in the Polish forces entering Moscow in 1610 with the help of pro-Polish Russian factions.

A WITCH, A VAMPIRE, AND A CITY BETWEEN

LEAD IN: A series of brutal slayings in Moscow draws the wanderers' attention. Several young women have been found dead, their bodies little more than desiccated husks. The presence of Polish invaders and the ongoing civil war have the city in turmoil, and there are precious few guardsmen to investigate the strange deaths.

BACKGROUND

Koschei Bessmertny, or Koschei the Deathless, is a nearly immortal being of terrible evil, feeding off the life force of young women to preserve his own existence. Legend has it that Koschei has hidden his soul away to further stave off death. As long as it remains safe, he can never be truly killed.

He recently came to Moscow in the hopes the recent chaos will allow him to cull his victims from the city's vast population undetected, enlisting the aid of a band of ghouls in his efforts. The legendary monster's campaign of terror has not gone unnoticed, however. Baba Yaga, a powerful cannibal witch, loathes the encroachment and is determined to banish the intruding undead lord from *her* territory.

Koschei and his ghoul minions plague the citizens of Moscow, sometimes killing and feeding on as many as a dozen a night. The wanderers may choose to take up the fight on their own and go on patrols to uncover the murderers. Alternately, you may have the party simply stumble across a band of the ghouls as they attack a resident of the city.

GHOUL HUNT

Out on the streets of Moscow one night, whether actively hunting or simply returning from a tavern, the heroes catch sight of a small group of figures breaking into a theater. Two ghouls enter through the front windows after smashing them with rocks, while the rest break off the lock on the back door and cut off the performers' escape from backstage. The undead then douse the oil lanterns in all corners and split up to flank the stage.

A small group of terrified performers who had been finishing one last rehearsal are huddling on stage. If the heroes failed to catch a glimpse or sign of the undead breaking in (a Notice roll), the troupe's hysterical screams should draw their attention.

The theater has bench seating to accommodate an audience of about 60. As the ghouls have extinguished all the lamplights, there is no illumination. Unless they brought light sources, the theater is dark, giving the adventurers a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

The ghouls fight until reduced to less than half their original number. They then attempt to flee, leaving behind any potential captives. The wanderers can try to follow them by making a Tracking roll (-2). If the attempt is successful, the ghouls lead the party to Koschei's bell tower; see **Third Time's a Curse**, on page 66.

 **Ghouls (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 69.

 **Theater Troupe Members (6):** Use the Citizen profile on page 69.

KOSCHEI IN FOLKLORE

According to Russian legend, Koschei hid his soul in a needle, which is in an egg, which is in a duck, which is in a hare, which is in an iron chest, buried under a tree on an island in the ocean.

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SECOND ENCOUNTER

Should the heroes fail to locate Koschei's hiding place after their first run-in with the ghouls, they soon get a second chance. The ghouls target an orphanage just two nights after the preceding encounter. Mere moments after the caregivers put all the children to bed, the ghouls swarm the two-story building through doors and windows on all sides and both levels.

The first floor has a common chamber, kitchen, and three private rooms for each of the three caregivers, one of whom—Sister Natalya—has an orphaned baby in a crib in her room. The second floor has four bedrooms, each with orphans in three small beds.

Again, either while on patrol for the creatures or merely by happenstance, the party comes across the ghouls as they begin their attack. When combat starts, two ghouls are already on the second floor. Two of the ghouls on the first floor deal with the caregivers while the rest rush upstairs for the children.

As before, the ghouls fight until more than half their number have been defeated. At that point, they once again flee. This time, one of the creatures carries a girl with it, which slows its escape considerably. A Tracking or Notice roll (+2) is all it takes to follow the creature back to Koschei's lair, detailed in **Third Time's a Curse**, below.

🐾 **Ghouls (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 69.

🐾 **Orphans' Caregivers (3):** Use the Citizen profile on page 69.

THIRD TIME'S A CURSE

Koschei has hidden himself in an abandoned bell tower on the north side of Moscow. The ghouls drag select victims—young females—from their attacks to the basement for Koschei to feed upon. If the wanderers were unable to track any of the creatures back to this lair, you may have them learn of it through a vision or dream—possibly even sent by Baba Yaga. Or a rare victim

who managed to escape that they've located through a Streetwise roll may be able to tip them off.

The upper floors of the tower are abandoned and show little use. The door to the stairs down to the basement has long been missing. The damp, dark lair assaults the nostrils with pungent scent of blood, rotted entrails, and dead flesh. The explorers hear noises of scuttling feet as they descend the steps.

Several large dusty, cobwebbed shelves have been toppled over to provide good cover for whatever hides in this windowless chamber. Any heroes going into the basement must make a Notice roll (at -4 unless they have means of illumination) opposed by the ghouls' Stealth. The creatures have Surprise on those who failed. Wanderers who manage a raise on the roll may warn their companions to negate the surprise for them as well.

The lair is 10"x10", with a 1"-wide section curtained off along the western side. Behind the curtain rests Koschei Bessmertny, who initially deems the wanderers beneath his attention. The ghouls fight fiercely to try to divert the characters from approaching anywhere near the curtain.

KOSCHEI'S WRATH

Once the heroes have defeated more than half of the ghouls, Koschei makes his appearance. Koschei is a tall, dark-skinned man with scraggly white hair and a long, but sparse beard. His flesh is drawn tightly over his bones, giving him an almost skeletal appearance. He wields a large curved sword as he wades into the battle.

Any wanderer making a Knowledge (Occult) roll immediately recognizes him as Koschei the Deathless. Allow any characters of Russian origin a +2 bonus to the roll.

Thanks to his immortality, he is likely an overpowering opponent for the party. He flaunts his superiority, sparing dying characters, even dismissing them as non-threat.

Even on the off chance that the adventurers manage to defeat him and exercise any conceivable method to ensure his death (burning, decapitation, even a stake through

the heart), the effort is at best temporary and ultimately futile. Koschei does, however, become a lasting enemy, likely to shadow them from now on, striking at the most inopportune times.

Regardless of the outcome of the fight, the ultimate goal is for the heroes to eventually realize Koschei cannot be destroyed by any conventional measures.

After the fight, a hero making a Knowledge (Occult) roll recalls that according to folktale, Koschei hid his soul in an object of some sort. Unless that item is located and destroyed, the monster cannot be permanently killed. With a raise, the character recalls the information found in the **Koschei in Folklore** sidebar on page 65.

🐉 **Ghouls (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 69.

🐉 **Koschei:** See page 70.

AN UGLY HELPING HAND

Shortly after their disastrous battle with Koschei, the wanderers are visited by a withered crone. She introduces herself as Abbagaya and tells the party she knows of their encounter with the undead. She adds that she has information that they need to defeat the monster.

If the adventurers question her motives for helping them, she claims she has the best interests of Moscow at heart, but that she is *“only a helpless old woman who knows a secret or two...”* However, the hag does not take insults lightly; rude characters may quickly find themselves recipients of a hex (such as *curse*, *fear*, or *lower trait* spell).

Speaking only to the hero showing her the greatest courtesy or cooperation, she asks if they have heard the original lore surrounding him. Whether or not they are familiar with it, she tells them that while Koschei did in fact bind his soul to a needle, the legends are wrong. Koschei himself is responsible for them, hoping to mislead any who would seek to defeat him.

Actually, the needle is embedded in a coin in a chest, wrapped in a magical cloth. Furthermore, although he can never handle

BABA YAGA

In Russian folklore, Baba Yaga is portrayed as an ancient and powerful witch. She most often resembles an old crone and is known for her particularly unpleasant habit of eating children. According to legend, she resides in a hut capable of walking about on chicken legs, surrounded by a fence made of human bones.

On occasion, she has been known to help petitioners with great quests, but usually only when it serves her own purposes as well. She and Koschei are long-time foes and their feud always rekindled when one of the two infringe on the other's territory.

it himself due to the sorceries he placed on it, Koschei keeps the bundle close and has hidden it somewhere under the city.

Abbagaya pauses to enjoy the heroes' fret for a bit, before telling them her divination has narrowed the proximity to near *“a place where speech can be seen.”*

It is quite apparent that she speaks of the formidable lich as a peer. However, her tone and posture exude the intense disdain she clearly holds for him. She refuses to discuss anything about herself or why she is helping the heroes, but it's obvious to anyone making a Notice roll that an ulterior motive is present.

A raise on a Knowledge (Occult) roll allows a character to realize they may be dealing with the mythical witch, Baba Yaga.

🐉 **Baba Yaga:** See page 69.

WILD LOCKBOX CHASE

A Knowledge (Area Knowledge: Moscow) or Streetwise roll turns up that the witch's cryptic comment likely refers to the Moscow Print Yard, a printing company owned by the government. The small publishing house is located in Kitai-Gorod, the business district south of the Kremlin.

Gaining access to the sewers is an easy task, either by outlet pipes that dump into the Moscow River or through surface access

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points. Once inside, the accumulated filth requires a Guts check vs. nausea. A hero falling or knocked into the sewage has to succeed a Vigor check or suffers a level of Fatigue and a -2 penalty on all Trait rolls for one round.

To find the lockbox, the heroes must succeed a Notice roll at -4. Once they do, they discover it chained to a lantern 8' above the sewage. That accomplished, they still have to open the bundle and all its wards to reach the needle hidden inside.

Chain: The chain is welded closed and requires Strength roll (-2) to break. Alternately, the heroes can break the chain by defeating its Toughness 8 with a cutting weapon.

Cloth: The lockbox is jacketed entirely in a dark blue seamless cloth. The fabric is magical and extremely sturdy with Toughness 12. It is only affected by cutting and piercing attacks.

Lockbox: The lock is very intricate and requires a Lockpicking roll (-4) to defeat. Whoever opens the box receives a face full

of a deadly poison vapor sealed inside, and must make a Vigor roll (-2) to avoid suffering an immediate wound. The trap can be detected with a Notice roll (-2), but the character must specifically look for it prior to opening the box. Once located, a simple Lockpicking roll renders the trap harmless before the box is opened.

Coin: The coin must be smashed or broken apart to get the embedded needle. Destroying the coin is simple—it has a Toughness of only 2 and can be damaged by any attack, even bending it with bare hands. However, there are dozens of coins in the box! Finding the right coin requires a round of searching and a successful Notice roll (-2). Once the coin is broken, the needle falls free. Unless the heroes take precautions beforehand, an Agility roll is necessary to avoid dropping it into the sewage. The needle can be snapped in half with a Strength roll. Doing so immediately ends Koschei's undead existence.

DROP IT!

Koschei is not oblivious to the wanderers' actions. He keeps close tabs on his one weakness. As soon as the heroes free the bundle from the lantern, he and several of his remaining ghouls appear from the shadows to attack!

Initially, the undead seek to kill or rout any heroes near the bundle. The creatures focus their attacks on anyone who seems to be making progress toward opening the bundle.

Koschei himself cannot touch any part of the bundle, from the cloth all the way to the needle. However, his ghouls can; if possible, one will attempt to snatch the bundle by winning an opposed Agility test vs. the hero in possession of it. If it succeeds, it flees into the sewers while Koschei and any remaining minions prevent the heroes from following.

Once the needle is broken, Koschei falls lifelessly to the bottom of the sewer, crumbling to dust as he does. His sword clatters to the ground as well, but does not disintegrate. Any surviving ghouls flee into the tunnels if possible.

🦇 **Koschei:** See page 70.

🦇 **Ghouls (1 per hero):** See page 69.

Then There's The Witch...

After the heroes finish the vampire, they may turn their attention on Baba Yaga and her cannibalistic ways. The witch has already anticipated this and, although she does not believe the heroes pose any actual threat to her, has already departed the city. After all, they did manage to defeat Koschei...

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



BABA YAGA

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d12+4, Spirit d12+2, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Occult) d12+4, Magick d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10, Throwing d10, Tracking d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (4)

Charisma: -2

Hindrances: Enemy: Koschei Bessmertny, Ugly

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Sorcery), Hard to Kill, Harder to Kill, Improved Rapid Recovery, Improved Strong Caster.

Special Abilities:

- **Armor+4:** Her skin is as hard as stone.
- **Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Fearless:** Baba Yaga is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Immunity:** The legendary witch is unaffected by any poison or disease.
- **Invulnerability:** Baba Yaga takes no damage from non-magical attacks.
- **Mental Resistance:** +4 to resist any mind-affecting spell or ability. Even if she fails, she can roll a Spirit roll each round to throw off the effect.
- **Spells:** Baba Yaga knows every spell available to sorcerers in *The Savage World of Solomon Kane* book.

Treat as a Legendary Character.

CITIZEN

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge

ARTIFACT: KOSCHEI'S SWORD

The sword wielded by Koschei is large and curved slightly, not unlike a scimitar. Due to its weight (10 lbs) and balance, only someone with a Strength of d10 or greater can wield it in one hand. Others must use two hands.

The sword, while imposing in appearance, is no more effective than a regular longsword, doing Str+d8 damage. However, it is the bane of all sorcerers, witches, shamans, and the like—evil or not. The sword ignores 2 pts of magical armor. Furthermore, it grants the wielder a +2 bonus to any roll to resist spells or spell-like abilities cast on him. The weapon can damage creatures immune to normal weapons.



(one trade) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances & Edges: —

Gear: Knife (Str +d4), tools of the trade.

GHOUL

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

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

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Infravision:** Ghouls halve penalties (round down) for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Keen Nose:** Ghouls get +2 to Notice and Tracking rolls against living targets.
- **Paralysis:** Victims of a ghoul's claw attacks must make a Vigor roll at -2 or be paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.

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KOSCHEI BESSMERTNY

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d12, Spirit d12+2, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Magick d10, Notice d8, Stealth d12+2, Swim d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11

Hindrances: Arrogant, Enemy: Baba Yaga

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), First Strike, Level Headed, Improved Strong Cast-er

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** Koschei is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Frenzy:** Koschei can make two attacks each round with a -2 penalty to each.
- **Invulnerability:** Non-magical attacks with the exception of fire and wooden weapons have no effect on him.
- **Spells:** Koschei knows every spell available to sorcerers in *The Savage World of Solomon Kane* book.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called shots do no extra damage; Immune to disease and poison; No wound penalties.
- **Undying:** Koschei the Deathless cannot die by any conventional means. Reducing him to Incapacitated status forces his retreat, but never unconsciousness. Breaking the needle containing his life force is the only way to kill him—instantly, in a heap of crumbled ashes.
- **Wall Walker:** Koschei can move on vertical or inverted surfaces at full Pace. Treat as a Heroic character.



RING OF DEATH

LEAD In: Traveling through Moscow, the heroes hear cries for help from a nearby alley. When they investigate, they see a young woman being accosted by several thugs.

BACKGROUND

Pavel Petrenko organizes a death-fight ring in Moscow for a powerful local gang. The vicious melees happen in an abandoned church, at least once a month over the past



ADVENTURE LINK

The **Savage Tale: Blood Bids**, on page 330, can be used either as lead-in to this adventure, as Petrenko's henchman seek to acquire new competitors for the games from exotic markets in Persia.

three years. The fights have lined Petrenko's pocket with rubles off the frantic wagering, even after the gang's cut.

The gangsters, in return, exert influence on his behalf in collecting unpaid bets, mitigating any official scrutiny, and recruiting prospective fighters. Numerous local boxers, wrestlers, and street brawlers have been secretly coerced to enter Petrenko's illicit arena at one time or another. Some blood-thirsty thrill-seekers, convinced this is their new calling, have permanently joined.

Just when the gamblers thought combat couldn't get more brutal, the operation received a present. Petrenko upped the stakes by having each night's most successful fighters face off against a trained bear he purchased from the hinterlands. So far, the bear has proven virtually invincible, and no fighter has managed to so much as inflict more than a minor wound. Its opponents, on the other hand, have been slaughtered without exception—much to the delight of the spectators.

What none of the bettors or other participants knows is that the "trained bear" is actually Vasili, one of Petrenko's bodyguards. Vasili is a werebear, a secret of which no one besides Petrenko and a few of his most trusted associates is aware. His near-immunity to physical attacks gives him an incredible edge—on top of the obvious one of being an enormous bear, that is.

While this killing machine has spiked interest in the fights tenfold and inspired huge gambles on longshot contenders, it is quickly decimating the rank of available quality opponents, as all ring encounters with the monster invariably turn fatal.



A CRY IN THE DARK

As the heroes are traveling through Moscow, they hear a distinct cry from help come from a nearby alley. Rushing to the aid, they discover a young woman with her clothing in disarray being shoved around amongst a group of tough-looking characters. Upon the wanderers' arrival, one of the men turns to them and says, *"This is none of your business. Keep moving and there won't be any trouble—for you, anyway."*

Unbeknownst to the party, the apparent assault is actually the bait for an ambush and the "victim" is actually a prostitute hired to play the role of damsel in distress.

If the adventurers move to intervene or even just refuse to leave, the men push the girl to the ground, draw their weapons, and advance on the party. The men fight until at least half their number has been defeated and then attempt to flee. The "victim" uses the distraction from the fight to make her own getaway.

After the battle, a successful Intimidate roll against one of the thugs (assuming any are conscious) reveals only that they are members of a local gang of criminals. Before the party can interrogate them further, the city watch arrives and takes them into custody. Under no circumstances, even threat of death, do the criminals reveal the identities of other members of their gang.

🗡️ **Enforcers (1, plus 1 per hero):** See page 74.

COERCED

A day or so after the fight in the alley, the wanderers are approached by a group of men. The leader introduces himself as Pavel Petrenko. He briefly explains the fighting ring. He adds that he has heard of their prowess and would like to invite them to compete. (If some of the characters are less combat-oriented, Petrenko omits them from the invitation.)

He offers prizes and notes that side betting is not only allowed, but encouraged. If pressed, he says fighters win £10 for each

about they win, with a grand prize of £100 to any participant who ends the night undefeated.

Should the heroes refuse, Petrenko informs them that he has taken the young lady captive they fought so hard to save earlier (or another ally of the party, if you're using that method to involve them in the adventure). No harm will come to her, he promises, as long as the adventurers agree to fight in his ring. Of course, this is another ruse, but it is unlikely that the party is aware of that at this point.

If the wanderers accept the invitation, they are given directions to an alleyway where they are to meet at sundown in two days.

Detaining or killing Petrenko at this point only delays the operation briefly until the gang finds a replacement for him, as well as serving to sign the death penalty of the "captive." Petrenko explains this as well as the fact that the gang also takes it as a declaration of war—one that the heroes probably can't afford to fight simply for the personal losses that will surely ensue.

🗡️ **Petrenko:** See page 74.

🗡️ **Enforcers (1 per hero):** See page 74.

OTHER STARTING POINTS

We've provided a generic beginning to this Savage Tale that doesn't require any set-up on your part. However, if the wanderers have gained some renown as fighters and one of them has an ally or relative in Russia, there are other options for how you draw the party into the **Ring of Death**.

Perhaps the gang has captured an ally and uses them to coerce the hero into fighting in the ring. Or, if the ally is a capable fighter himself, perhaps the wanderers are drawn into investigating the fights in an attempt to locate and free him.

THE PATH OF KANE

PREP TIME

In the interim, the party may try to learn all they can about the fight ring. Simply asking around (no roll necessary) they learn the fights have been going on roughly once a month for the past three years. They also learn that it is not unheard of for the bouts to go to the death of one of the competitors.

A Streetwise roll on the subject warns them that Petrenko has recently added a trained bear as the main attraction. No one has yet defeated the animal—it hasn't even been seriously wounded in a fight. A character who hears the description of the animal and makes a Knowledge (Occult) roll realizes it is possible the bear is actually a lycanthrope.

A second Streetwise roll (–2) along with a £10 bribe reveals the location of the fights, an old abandoned church on the west side of the Moskva River. Visiting the church before the night of the fight finds it empty; Petrenko and his enforcers only use the place on the night of the fights. During the rest of the month, it sits vacant.



BLIND PASSAGE

At the appointed time and place, any heroes planning to fight are met by a group of enforcers who confiscate their weapons and blindfold them. Those refusing to relinquish their weapons or be blindfolded are left behind in the dark alley. The enforcers then load them onto carriages going to the church.

The enforcers monitor the group to make sure no one removes his blindfold. Anyone attempting to sneak a look must win an opposed Stealth roll vs. the enforcers' Notice. If they've not yet learned the location of the church, the characters can try to commit the route to memory with a Smarts roll (–2). If the roll is failed, all the wanderers can determine is that at some point in the journey the carriage crossed a river.

🗡️ **Enforcers (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 74.

FIGHT NIGHT

At the church, the gangsters remove the adventurers' blindfolds once they are escorted past the raucous crowd inside, to a back room serving as the waiting quarters. Any non-participating heroes are dispersed among the onlookers.

The interior reveals that the building was a church of rather impressive size. A hole has been cut into the floor, revealing a room beneath that serves as a fighting pit. Spectators surround the edge of the pit.

The crowd, easily over 50 in number, is extremely boisterous in support of their respective favorites, particularly during the pre-fight wagering and arrangements of private bets between one another. They are curious about the newcomers and their credentials and try to get information any way they can from bystanding characters.

Any adventurers participating in the bouts find they are not alone in the spacious waiting chamber offstage. There are six armed enforcers and a dozen others slated to duel that same evening. The fighters usually have their own unique approach in preparations

for their battle; some meditate, some warm up with extensive calisthenics, some shadow-box, etc.

MORTAL COMBAT

Petrenko and his assistants set the betting lines and handle wagers for a fight any time up until the participants' introduction. Any fighters not involved in a bout are free to observe the matches from the hallway, providing that is their sole interest.

A locked iron gate bars the end of the hallway from the actual fighting pit. It remains locked until the match is over; the only escape (or entrance) in the interim is to climb the walls of the pit with a Climbing roll.

The wanderers face the following bouts over the course of the night. If more than one hero is participating, each one faces the first and second round alone and is then paired with any other remaining heroes for the third round.

The odds for each round are listed as well; Petrenko takes bets at the stated odds, but the adventurers may be able to swing better pay-offs from other gamblers with a Persuasion roll. Allow them a +2 bonus if the characters had the foresight to downplay their friends' skill before the matches begin.

First Round: The first fight the hero faces is a simple, unarmed bout against a single brawler. Odds: 1:1.

Second Round: Petrenko ups the stakes in this round of the match, pitting two brawlers against the wanderer. The fight is supposedly another unarmed match, but once the round begins, one of the brawlers reveals he's armed with a dagger. After the bout, Petrenko claims that the other fighter smuggled the weapon into the ring without his knowledge. Odds: 2:1 against the character. Once the dagger is revealed, the odds jump to 3:1 against him for all new bets.

Third Round: The wanderer is allowed to choose one of his melee weapons, but he must face two of the more successful experienced fighters still alive. If more than one character is participating in the fights,

SCALING THE FIGHT

A fight against a werewolf may simply be too much for some parties—particularly if they're not prepared for it. If you're worried about overwhelming the wanderers with this encounter, feel free to make Vasili just a large bear. After all, being stuck in a 25' wide pit with a ravenous bear is probably a pretty tough fight all by itself.

If you want the final bout to be a little tougher without throwing the party to a slathering lycanthrope, you can equip the bear with patchwork leather and metal armor giving it +2 Toughness. Or, to make it even more formidable, you can always make the bear a Wild Card—and give it armor!

they are teamed together, but Petrenko adds another two opponents for each additional hero. Odds: 3:1 against the wanderer(s).

🐾 **Brawler (see above):** See page 74.

🐾 **Experienced Fighters (see above):** See page 74.

THE MAIN EVENT

The night climaxes with a showdown between Vasili and any of the heroes who remain undefeated. Petrenko explains to the participants—if they did not already know—that they must face the “mighty war bear” or forfeit their winnings, and of course, the young lady/ally he holds captive.

Petrenko has such confidence in the werewolf that he readily agrees to nearly any stake and any kind of melee combat within reason. If asked, he even provides the heroes with any additional melee weapons they request (non-silver, of course) to ostensibly level the playing field—and drum up the odds.

Vasili is kept alone in a separate chamber. Prior to leaving his ring, he shifts to his bear form. Two enforcers “herd” him down the hall, while he plays up his ferocity. The crowd goes wild when he enters the pit.

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The werebear is likely a very difficult fight for the heroes unless they have prepared for it beforehand. Vasili is quite bloodthirsty and offers no quarter. Neither he nor Petrenko can conceive of him being defeated, so surrender never occurs to either of the two.

 **Vasili:** See below.

AFTERMATH

Should the wanderers beat the werebear, Petrenko holds to his end of the deal and pays out any prize money as well as covering any bets. If the heroes haven't guessed, the "captive" is revealed to be a willing party to the ruse at this time.

Furthermore, Vasili's defeat cripples the operation for some time to come, since Petrenko stands to lose a tremendous portion of his and the gang's fortune in paying off all the bets. No arrangement is made to transport the characters back into the city—the gang is reeling from the blow they've just suffered with the loss of the werebear.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

BRAWLER

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Greedy

Edges: Brawny

Gear: None or Dagger (Str+1d4).

ENFORCERS

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: None

Gear: Club (Str+d4), flintlock pistol (Range:

5/10/20; RoF 1; Shots 1; Damage: 2d6+1, AP 1), shot & powder (10).

EXPERIENCED FIGHTER

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: -4

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

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Greedy

Edges: Block, Dirty Fighter, Quick

Gear: Short Sword (Str+1d6).



PAVEL PETRENKO

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

Skills: Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6

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

Hindrances: Obese

Edges: Command

Gear: Wheellock pistol (Range: 5/10/20; RoF 1; Shots 1; Damage: 2d6+1, AP 1; 2 actions to reload), shot & powder (20).



VASIL, WEREBEAR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Bear Hug:** Like a normal bear, Vasili can attempt to use his weight to pin his prey and rend it with his claws and teeth. A foe is pinned if hit with a raise. The opponent may only attempt to escape on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.
- **Claw:** Str+d6
- **Immunity:** Vasili suffers only half damage from non-magical attacks.
- **Size +2:** As a werebear, Vasili stands at 8' tall and weighs over 1000 pounds.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Werebears suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

SPAIN

SPAIN is in a spiral of decline from their previous position as the most dominant European nation. Although once unified, Spain has splintered further and further, first losing its unification with the Holy Roman Empire, then watching as the United Provinces rebelled to become the independent nation of the Dutch Republic. The great plague at the turn of the century decimated its population, killing between 600,000 and 700,000 Spanish citizens.

Furthermore, the Spanish Inquisition is in full swing. Unlike the previous Papal Inquisition, the Spanish Inquisition is driven by political goals as much as a religious ones. Previously accepted by the Spanish Crown, Jews and Protestants are facing new repression under the Inquisition and Musselmen have fled en masse. Although the Spanish Inquisition only has rights over baptized Christians, it is instrumental in driving non-Christians (and even Catholic converts of Jewish or Moorish descent) from Spain.

Losses in previous military actions and the occupation of Portugal and portions of the Netherlands have nearly bankrupted the crown. Fortunately, its colonies remain one of its greatest strengths, as Spain controls large regions in the southern portion of the New World. This made gold and other resources from the New World vital to the failing Spanish economy.

The perils of returning these goods from the New World were great, as Barbary pirates fill the coastal waters. A Spanish convoy often had to deal with these

RUMOR

"Don't purchase cattle from Dover, there's a horrible disease running through their livestock."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Newly Turned**, on page 19.

SPANISH SUPERSTITIONS

Carrying a small piece of white glass brings good fortune.

Never change the name of a horse or a ship.

Tuesday the 13th is a very unlucky day.

Touching a black butterfly will kill you.

Eating many grapes on the New Year will bring you many gifts throughout the year.

boring kingdoms, making some voyages as much of a loss as a profit.

Despite all of these setbacks, the Spanish are known as a hardy people that have the resilience to return stronger than before. In spite of the current intolerance, the previous coexistence between the various social and religious groups gives it a strong multicultural background, benefitting Spanish arts and sciences. Furthermore, the Inquisition has not fully ended Spain's reputation as a haven for alchemists and sorcerers. This may well be because, paradoxically, many Inquisitors consider it heresy to believe in witchcraft as much as it was to practice it, so accusers may well be tortured alongside the accused!

MADRID

Madrid, the capital of Spain, sits near the geographic center of the country. King Philip III briefly moved the capital to Valladolid at the beginning of the century, but returned it to Madrid after only five years. While vestiges of influence continue to exist in other Spanish cities, the base for all political power in Spain is found in Madrid.

Unlike many other European capitals, Madrid serves primarily as the home of the Royal court. Although it lies on a major river, the Manzanares, there is little in the way of commerce in the city. The population is largely dependent on supporting the activities of the court and there are few other economic concerns of any importance in the city.

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There is an aura of fading glory reflected in Madrid, and the common folk live in constant fear. Whether from war, witchcraft, the Inquisition, or the excesses of the nobles, danger of some form is always present for the average person. After all, currently, in Spain simply believing that something *might* exist can be persecuted with torture.



JACKALS AMONGST THE WOLVES

LEAD In: The heroes' reputation has preceded them and drawn the attention of more than one member of the Inquisition. Unlike his brethren, he sees them as allies in the fight against the darkness, but realizes that not all of his order shares these views.



ADVENTURE LINK

This Savage Tale, while short, serves to provide the travelers with a potential ally within one of the most dangerous organizations in Europe at this time.

Further, it serves as a plot hook leading into the **Savage Tale: Duquesa Roja**, on page 80.

UNDER WATCH

As the wanderers arrive in Madrid, they're greeted by several men in long, black robes. An oval seal is present on each robe near the chests, the center showcasing a wooden cross with a branch to its left and a sword to its right, unmistakably members of the Inquisition.

Rumors of the adventurers' activities had spread before them, and an audience has been "requested" with prominent Inquisitor Filipe Alonso. The Inquisitors make sure that the "request" is understood to be, in reality, a demand, instructing the party to follow. The robed group surrounds the wanderers as they walk.

Resisting the Inquisitors is ill-advised. Although they outnumber the party, their real power lies in the vast authority of their office. Entering combat with Inquisitors—in Madrid, no less—is tantamount to issuing a death sentence on themselves. If the party throws caution (and common sense) to the winds, the Inquisitors resist the heroes for two rounds before fleeing to summon the city watch.

🔱 **Inquisitors (2 per hero):** See page 325 of *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*.

🔱 **City Watch (10):** See page 323 of *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*.

A CURIOUS BENEFACTOR

The party is guided through town to the city's center, the magnificent Puerta del Sol ("Gate of the Sun"). This area was once part of the city gates before being converted into the governmental center. Now, immense buildings rise to all sides of a bustling square. The hub of all activity in Madrid, there is rarely a time of day when the area isn't busy.

The wanderers are taken to one of the smaller buildings and led to an office inside. A man with shoulder length black hair awaits inside, a finely waxed and prominent moustache offering lines of grace to a face otherwise wrinkled and weathered.

Father Alonso sends the other Inquisitors away and requests the party walk with him. He leads them to a large library, excusing the librarian before closing the door. Indicating that the group should sit at a large table towards the back of the room, he paces around the table as he speaks.

"You are all most curious as to why I have asked you here, yes?" he starts. "We are not dissimilar, you and I. We both seek to stamp out the black stain of witchcraft on this continent. Here in Madrid, there is no permanent tribunal, so those who move with all due haste can leave before arousing too much attention.

You, however, are becoming more and more well-known. So I ask you this plainly—no matter what you find, you must denounce it as being the folly of humans who believe that witchcraft exists. Never publicly reveal

your adventures, nor relay the things that you have seen and fought. The moment you begin to call attention to yourselves is the moment that you will see many of my brethren coming to silence you."

Father Alonso pauses at this point, defusing the concept that he is threatening the group if one of them mentions it. He is quite sympathetic, believing his warning of caution an attempt to protect the party from harm. He absently pulls a tome from one of the wall shelves, flipping through it as he continues.

"The Inquisition is strong, a deadly weapon that can cut with precision and skill. Even so, there are some armored against our righteous steel. Often the false venerability of nobility hides their sins, or foists them upon others. Should you encounter such, destroy them completely and leave no trace, or bring the evidence to me. I can prevent the public eye from finding you and assure that God's will be done."

Father Alonso spends only a few moments addressing any questions the party has before dismissing them, saying he has other pressing duties to attend. Curiously, he leaves first, placing the book he was reading on the table. Should the characters look at the book, it is a biography of a notable Spanish Duke—Duke Alejandro de Dominico and his wife, Duchess Isadora de Dominico.

CONTINUED RELATIONS

Having established the ground rules of the party operating in Madrid, Father Alonso tries to veer the Inquisition away from the wanderers. Should the characters bring Father Alonso enough evidence (even if it is in the form of their testimony) to arrest someone, he does so.

Be careful not to have him become a police force that assists the characters, though. No matter what evidence the adventurers provide Father Alonso in regards to Isadora de Dominico, he refuses to prosecute, stating he is prevented from interceding with her affairs. He half-heartedly warns the party away from the Duchess, but subtly lets them know he hopes they continue to investigate her, hopefully leading them eventually to the **Savage Tale: Duquesa Roja**, on page 80.

THE LAST VIGILANT

LEAD In: The fortress Alcázar of Segovia was the palace under King Phillip II. Recently, it has been converted into a prison. A small group of criminals are attempting to make the area appear haunted by the ghost of a Knight Templar in order to ease an escape attempt by their leader currently incarcerated there.

RECRUITMENT DRIVE

As the wanderers are passing through Segovia, a small town a little more than a day north of Madrid, they notice posters proclaiming that the state prison the Alcázar is looking to commission guards. When the characters pass the Puerta del Sol, they see a small crowd gathered around a few military officers crowded onto a makeshift stage. The crowd is mostly belligerent, jeering at the soldiers.

At the head of the unit is a strong-looking figure trying desperately to be heard. He barely gets a word in edgewise, as the crowd shouts back at him phrases like *"How do you guard a ghost?"* and *"If your own men have been scared away, why would we do their jobs?"* and so forth.

In exasperation, the officer throws his hands in the air and ends the meeting. The crowd departs, leaving only five men standing. One of the men approaches the officer and asks to be signed up with his four friends. Allow the characters to make a Notice roll. On a success, they note that the man was one of the vehement detractors. If the heroes mention this, he strongly denies it.

The officer, Captain Marco Hernandez, sees the party and calls them over to him. He explains that he only needs reinforcements for a week. After that, a new regiment arrives to support the guard group.

If pressed, he admits that there have been reports of a ghostly horseman, strange lights and unusual sounds in the areas around the prison. This caused his shortage of guards, as many deserted in fear of the ghost or that the incident would draw the attention of the Inquisition. As he is becoming desperate, the pay is generous (the equivalent of £5), and

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includes lodging in the barracks and food for the duration. Marco doesn't accept offers of aid that do not include the one-week enlistment period.

PRISON LIFE

Assuming the heroes accept the commission (if they don't, the adventure is over!), they are taken to the prison. If they don't have mounts of their own, they may ride on the back of the cart with the five other recruits. The trip to the Alcázar of Segovia, regulated by the pace of the cart, takes about an hour.

A small village surrounds the castle, which sits at the top of a rocky crag where the Eresma and Clamores rivers join. The prison is unusually shaped—it looks very much like the bow of a ship, cutting through the Guadarrama mountains. Having been a royal palace at several points, the fortress has been restored repeatedly. Although currently a prison, the grandeur of the kings and queens who made this their home remains.

Life for a guard at the prison is somewhat simple—patrol, eat, sleep, repeat. It quickly becomes evident that Russell Swafford, a recently captured English pirate, is a charismatic and driving force with the other prisoners. He is scheduled to be marched to the royal palace in Madrid to be executed once the support garrison arrives. The five other guard recruits take a sort of glee in baiting Swafford, something the villain takes coolly.

On the second night, the wanderers hear rumors from some of the remaining original guards about a ghostly knight. Several of the guards state they've seen a figure on horseback wearing the regalia of a knight with a red cross on a white background, his horse making no sound. They speculate this shade was a Knight Templar who died outside the castle, now doomed to keep an unholy vigil over fellow heretics, avenging criminals and attacking those who guard them.

As new recruits, the heroes immediately draw night watch. While walking their routes, they also see odd-colored lights far off in the distance. The lights seem to come from the wooded areas inland or between the join of

the two rivers. Should any of the wanderers investigate the area at night, the lights wink out before the characters reach them.

During daylight hours, little can be revealed as the exact location is hard to pinpoint without the lights for reference.

A BAD KNIGHT

Around dusk of the fourth day, the adventurers see a figure on horseback in full mail outside the town. The armored man appears to be oddly backlit in green. The distinctive red cross on a white background of the Knights Templar is visible even from a great distance.

The knight turns towards the castle, raising its sword, and then begins galloping inland, around the castle and towards the mountains. The more superstitious guards drop their weapons right there, despite the shouted orders by Hernandez to maintain their posts.

Finally, the captain shouts that someone needs to catch this horseman and put a rest to the speculation. He orders the party to chase down the strange figure as none of the original guards will leave the safety of the prison. However, by the time the wanderers reach the area where they saw the knight, he is long gone.

Any character may make a Tracking roll to find the trail. If he does, he notices that the horse's feet don't make normal impressions; they're somehow indistinct. A raise on the roll tells him this is because something has been wrapped around the hooves to silence them.

As the characters continue to track, they are led on a circuitous route that doubles on itself frequently. A Smarts roll tells the adventurers that it appears that the rider expected pursuit, and acted accordingly—odd behavior indeed for a ghost.

Eventually, they end up at the riverbank, and if they proceed carefully, they catch a very interesting sight. A horse has been tied off to a tree, and a lantern lies on the ground, giving off a warm green glow due to painted glass. The overcoat with the symbol of the Knights Templar lies in a small rowboat, and

from this distance, appears to be shoddily made. Off to one side is a man removing armor—one of the five guards who signed up with the party!

At first, he hastily tries to re-don the armor and reach for the sword, which sits in the boat. The adventurers can easily prevent the guard from reaching his weapon. If they do so, the guard surrenders. At that moment, a small group of armed men emerge from the woods, pistols drawn!

Even if left unattended, the surrendering guard does not join the attack. The ambushers—pirates from Swafford's crew—are cut from a sterner cloth and fight to the death. One of the new arrivals, apparently incensed at the cowardly guard's behavior, shoots his former compatriot.

🏴‍☠️ **Pirates (1 per hero):** See page 80.

THE GHOST EXPOSED

After the heroes defeat the two attackers, it is obvious the gutshot guard is dying. Before he expires, a Persuasion or Intimidation roll convinces him to reveal everything to the adventurers.

He and his friends are seaman who serve under the pirate Russell Swafford. They concocted a false ghostly legend as a cover for their rescue attempt. The dinghy was to be used to hold the armor and be brought back upriver each time the Knight appeared, the horse walking in the shallows behind the boat, making the trail "disappear" entirely.

Tonight is the night of the breakout. After his ride, the guard was to meet his comrades where the base of the castle meets the river, as they needed this and another boat to carry everyone. Only moments after finishing his tale, he coughs blood and expires.

INTERCEPTING SWAFFORD

The adventurers can either head directly back to the castle itself, or travel downriver to the rendezvous point via boat. Regardless of the route they choose, by the time they arrive, the breakout has already occurred. If the party searches through the castle, they find that most of the remaining guards have been locked up without their weapons, a few

slain here and there. The other new turncoat recruits caught the remaining garrison by surprise and forced their way out of the castle.

Swafford and his men have already made it to the bank. They are waiting on the second boat to return for them. If the party proceeds by boat, they have cut off Swafford's escape and can face the pirates there. On the other hand, if they left the boat upriver, the pirates are waiting in vain for their transportation. Either way, when they reach the riverbank Swafford directs his men to fight before attempting to make a break for it in the remaining boat.

The pirates are devoted to Swafford, but most not so much that they will sell their lives for him. If the numbers become overwhelming they attempt to flee, fighting only if they cannot escape. Swafford, knowing his death comes with surrender, fights to the death.

Assuming the wanderers prevent Swafford's escape, Captain Hernandez is thrilled. Not only have the heroes debunked the ghost story—and saved an uncomfortable visit from the Inquisition—but they have also prevented the escape of the notorious pirate. He gladly pays the characters for their work and happily dismisses them.

🏴‍☠️ **Captain Swafford:** See below.

🏴‍☠️ **Pirates (2 per hero):** See page 80.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



CAPTAIN RUSSELL SWAFFORD

Russell Swafford is a born leader who has taken to a life of piracy in order to satisfy his craving for adventure and gold. Recently caught while attempting to take down a Spanish treasure ship, he has been tried and awaits execution.

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

Skills: Boating d10, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Swimming d4

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Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Curious, Greedy

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Hold the Line, Level Headed, Natural Leader

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry).

PIRATE

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Illiterate, Mean

Edges: Dirty Fighter

Gear: Cutlass (Str+d6), knife (Str+d4), flint-lock pistol (Range: 5/10/20; RoF 1; Shots 1; Damage: 2d6+1, AP 1), shot & powder (20).



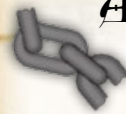
DUQUESA ROJA

LEAD In: While traveling through Madrid, the characters find that several cemeteries have been defiled, with bodies dug up and apparently stolen.

BACKGROUND

The Duke Alejandro de Dominico and his wife, Duchess Isadora de Dominico, had long been favored by the Spanish court. Known for their manners, wit, and extravagance, they had become quite popular with all of the power players, even hosting the daughters of several nobles to instruct them in all areas of life as a noble.

In reality, this is just a sinister cover for the Duchess' predilection of preying on younger women and girls. Her husband had somewhat tempered her more extreme proclivities but with his passing, there is no moderating influence on her depravity. Rumors have begun to surface about all manner of strange things happening in his manors, just blocks away from the royal residence at the Palacio Real.



ADVENTURE LINK

The **Savage Tale: Jackals Amongst the Wolves** serves as an excellent starting point for this adventure.

The party can also connect to this adventure through the **Savage Tale: The Organ Grinder**, wherein bodies and body parts are shipped back and forth between this address and Dr. Gibson in Amsterdam. If you play this adventure first, the crates in the underground chamber provide a clue to the goings-on in Amsterdam.

On the other hand, if you run the other **Savage Tale** first, Dr. Gibson has fled here to seek refuge in the Duchess' household.

GRAVE ROBBERS

While passing through the outskirts of the city at night, the wanderers witness a trio of men digging up a grave. Upon closer inspection, they discover the men are covered with intricate tattoos that seem carved into their very skin. A pale reddish glow emanates from the tattoos. (If the party has played through either **The Organ Grinder**, on page 14, or **The Lady in White**, on page 30, they recognize these tattoos from those encounters.)

The three men do not respond to any questions or commands to stop. If the party acts to prevent the men from disinterring the body, they turn and attack. The grave robbers use their shovels as clubs and do not surrender or flee. They remain eerily silent throughout the battle, not even appearing to breathe hard from the exertion.

After the heroes dispatch the two men, the reason for their silence becomes clear. The grave robbers weren't alive, they were corpses somehow reanimated by foul magicks!

🦋 **Zombies (3):** See page 82.

A SECRET DOOR

Once the battle is over, have the characters make a Notice roll. Any who succeed spot a second group of men who are carrying a



large object (another corpse). They enter a crypt in the back of the graveyard, an area reserved for the wealthy or high-born. Investigating the tomb reveals that it appears to be a fairly recent construction and belongs to Duke Alejandro de Dominico.

A Common Knowledge roll tells the party that the Duke died not too long ago. His wife, the Duchess Dominico is known for her beauty and lives on an estate not too far from the cemetery.

Entering the tomb, the heroes find it strangely empty. Inside there is a single room with no other exit. The sarcophagus is undisturbed but how the men got out is a mystery.

Any wanderers searching the crypt thoroughly may make a Notice roll (-2). With a success, they discover that a wall sconce near the door is loose. Rotating it opens a secret door in the floor that leads to an earthen-walled tunnel.

Inside the passage, torches line the wall at key points, but they are not lit. The rough hewn passageway continues down, and empties into a corridor branching in two directions.

CHAMBER OF THE DEAD

Following the left passage brings the characters to a large, cool natural chamber. There is a small pile of bodies in various states of decomposition in the center of the room. Any adventurer examining them immediately sees that most are horribly disfigured by the tortures under which they perished. Others appear to have been recently disinterred.

This room serves as a storage room for both the victims of the Duchess' cruel tortures and cadavers for Dr. Gibson's experiments. If the party has not yet encountered the doctor, this is a staging area where the corpses are held prior to shipping them to Amsterdam. If the doctor is present in Madrid, this is simply where he keeps the bodies until he is ready to work on them.

Also in the room are several roughly man-sized crates stacked to one side. Stamped on each are the words "B. Jackson, Amsterdam". These crates are (or were, if you've already run the **Savage Tale: The Organ Grinder**)

used to ship "supplies" to Dr. Richard Gibson in the Dutch Republic. The name on the crates is that of his assistant.

BEHIND THE WALLS

The right-hand passageway is much longer than the left, as it leads back to the Dominico estate. Eventually the tunnel becomes more well-constructed, with masonry replacing the natural cave walls. At select points, a small riser allows one to step up and view the room on the other side of the wall through small peepholes.

If they look through the peepholes, the adventurers first see a chamber where young girls (and a few boys) are being kept, all in various stages of neglect. Continuing on, the next chamber viewable is one that looks much like a surgeon's operating room, medical instruments and body parts strewn all over. In the final room, they come across the scene which highlights the debauchery of Isadora.

Scattered everywhere about the room are various implements of torture, the center of the room containing a very ornate bathtub. Here the characters can view the duchess bathing in a red substance being poured over her by two teenage girls. The girls are bound and gagged, having free use of only their legs beneath the knees, their hands tied to pitchers.

As they empty a pitcher over Isadora, they move to a side of the room, almost out of view, where a man takes a tube from the body of another girl and allows it to drain into the pitcher. Two guards remain in the room, their backs turned and facing the chamber door.

If you led into this adventure with the **Savage Tale: The Organ Grinder** on page 14 and Dr. Gibson escaped, he is here instead. In this case, the doctor is inscribing his necromantic tattoos onto the girls and drawing the blood directly from those wounds.

To the right of the viewing hole is a secret door allowing entrance to the room. The mechanism to open it is clearly visible from this side.

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IMMEDIATE ACTION

If the heroes take a direct approach and intervene, springing through the secret door allows them to take their foes by surprise. There are also a few of the strangely tattooed zombies in attendance. But, with only the few undead and the doctor to oppose them initially, the combat should end quickly.

The Duchess grabs a large knife and attacks as well, nude but covered in blood. She also screams a loud warning when she recovers from her initial surprise, alerting the rest of the household. The Duchess is quite insane and fights to the death unless the party finds a method to restrain her.

The exit to the house proper is barred from inside the room, which gives the characters some time to consider their next move after combat before more reinforcements arrive. A Notice roll finds another door leading to the chamber where the children are kept, allowing a rescue attempt.

Whatever the wanderers decide, they must act quickly. The door to the room holds for only 5 minutes after the initial combat ends, before breaking and allowing another 20 guards to rush into the room.

If the characters succeed in killing Isadora, then they are approached by Father Alonso as they leave Madrid. He leads them in prayer, and then thanks them without specifying why.

🦋 **Zombies (4):** See below.

🦋 **Duchess' Physician:** See below (or use Dr. Gibson's stats on page 18).

🦋 **Duchess Dominico:** See below.

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

If the wanderers have already met Father Alonso (see the **Savage Tale: Jackals Amongst the Wolves**), they may be tempted to enlist his aid at this point. With knowledge of the secret entrance and viewing holes behind the walls, Father Alonso can swiftly bring the might of the Inquisition down on the Duchess—and Dr. Gibson if he's present.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



Duchess Dominico

Isadora de Dominico is vile through and through, but her youth, beauty, and wealth blind most to the depth of her insanity. Among her many depravities, she has become convinced that bathing in the blood of young virgins will preserve her youth.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d12, d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: +6/+2

Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Command, Natural Leader, Noble, Strong Willed

Gear: Concealed knife (Str+d4)

Duchess' Physician

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Healing d8, Knowledge (Medicine) d8, Notice d6, Shooting d4

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Greedy

Edges: —

Gear: Scalpel (Str+d4)

ZOMBIE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; Parry: 5; Toughness: 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called Shots do no extra damage.

THE DARK CONTINENT

Africa is a mysterious and foreboding place to those who travel there. The land is filled with unseen danger from exotic animals, ruined civilizations, fierce native people and more. The majority of Robert E. Howard's stories of Solomon Kane take place here.

Stretching across the equator into both the northern and southern hemispheres, Africa contains a number of rare species of animals and plants. The extensive waterways such as the Kongo River, the Niger and the Nile, are a boon to trade, feeding into four major bodies of water: the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Such easy access to shipping routes to and from Europe and Asia made the African coasts ideal locations for shipping merchants.

With such prosperous trade, however, also come those who would steal from others for a living. Piracy runs rampant in areas such as the Barbary Coast, the many small islands which populate the coastal territories, and Madagascar. Ottoman Corsairs make a habit of capturing and slaving non-Musselmen of all races and creeds, and various Christian orders and European powers attempt to break the sway of the Barbary pirates.

On the surface it appears that Africa is a land of living chaos. However, several areas are as well-organized and governed as their European or Asian contemporaries. The Ottoman Empire owned territory through the Sinai Peninsula to northern Africa and Egypt. African kingdoms have built great cities on the edges of the savannas and jungles, often along the great waterways for the benefit of travel and trade.

An interesting note is that most of the civilizations of Africa are monotheistic in nature, often having one primary god that ruled over

the world, occasionally with an evil counterpart, mirroring Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. That's not to say that polytheistic groups don't exist, but that it was far more likely to find a group in the service of one deity instead of several, and tribal shamans and juju men abound.

Far more so than in his tales from Europe, Howard populated this area with fantastic creatures, both natural and arcane. Semi-intelligent creatures often took on sinister (and sometimes, sympathetic) roles as they meted out vengeance. Cultures that were ancient long before written history live on in virtually inaccessible areas, isolated from the outside world. In short, Africa is the perfect place to set a campaign in the Savage World of Solomon Kane.

NORTHERN AFRICA

BORDERED by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, a vast savanna to the south, Asia to the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Sahara desert claims the majority of North Africa. An arid, desolate region the further inland one goes, this is a harsh territory.

The Ottoman Empire claims Egypt and most of the northern coast of the continent, but much of the region is largely ungoverned. The Barbary pirates operate largely at will from the central and western portions of the coast. Fierce Berber tribesmen roam the deserts and comprise a formidable force for the few leaders powerful enough to forge them into unified groups.

Primarily used as an overland trade route between the Mediterranean and central Africa, the inhabitants of this region are clustered on the coastal and oasis communities that

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flourish as trade centers. Wandering tribes inhabit ancient structures only to abandon them again when water or food runs scarce. Outside of a few waterways, the Sahara rules over all, its sands consuming all who are unprepared.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

THE Ottoman Empire holds sway over much of northern Africa, reaching as far west as Algiers, but the jewel of its possession here is Egypt. Although Egypt exists as a conquered state of the Ottoman Empire, in the past it has suffered from a lack of authoritative centralized government. The military recently rebelled, overthrowing the ruling Ottoman Pasha. The coup was short-lived, with the Empire quickly retaking its holdings and appointing a new Pasha. Not surprisingly, the leaders of the coup were executed, but most of the rank-and-file were exiled to the western coast of the continent.

Islam is the de facto religion of the Empire, but in practice, Egypt maintains a tolerance for many belief systems, encouraged by its extensive foreign trade. Even with a blind eye turned, it is still far healthier for the common man to maintain an appearance of devotion to Islam, as that is one of the few groups not regularly extorted from and pressed into service by the military.

ALEXANDRIA

Once the capital of Egypt, Alexandria has been supplanted in both size and influence by Cairo to the south. It is now little more than a small town surrounded by the ruins of

a once-great city. Named for Alexander the Great, at one time this city also housed large communities of Greeks, Jews and Egyptians. This cultural variety influenced the city's architecture in ways that are still seen centuries later. Home to many landmarks and wonders of the old world, ancient ruins and treasures are still found by the fortunate.

While but a shadow of its former glory, Alexandria is host to one of the largest seaports in the area and a quick overland trip could reach areas on the Red Sea. Underneath the city lie the remains of a vast network of canals and cisterns that fed the city with fresh water from the Nile. The construction stretches over twenty miles of tunnels and has many vaults that are nearly cathedral-like in architecture and size.

THE LOST LEGION

LEAD In: The adventurers' visit to Alexandria is soon disrupted by the appearance of men bearing the arms and armor of the ancient Roman Empire.

BACKGROUND

Over 1500 years ago, a small group of Roman legionnaires were ordered to guard a tomb near Alexandria. The site marked the final resting place of a bastard son of the Roman emperor at that time. Although the emperor loved the boy greatly, he kept the child secret out of the interests of the Empire. When the child succumbed to a deadly snakebite, he opted to bury his son in traditional Egyptian fashion, in a manner suited to royalty.

To protect his secret, he ordered all the workers involved in building the tomb executed. He then chose his most loyal and reliable soldiers to guard the tomb, tasking them to protect its treasures from any grave robbers or thieves. The men stood their watch for several years, until a terrible dust storm swept up from the desert and buried the mausoleum and all within it, hiding them for generations.

Recently, winds uncovered the forgotten tomb and a merchant caravan stumbled across the ruin. Word reached Al-as Nasser,

RUMOR

"You know, I think I've heard of you - the son of the Pasha in Cairo has been asking around about you."

This rumor leads to the **Savage Tale: Night of the Poisoned Shadows**, on page 91.

an antiquarian in Alexandria, and he led an expedition to extract what knowledge—and riches—he could from the burial site. Unknown to all, however, the ancient Roman soldiers still hold to their vow and have begun to hunt down the defilers of the boy's tomb.

The Dogs of War

The recently arrived party has found room and board at Abbada's, an inn of standard fare. The air in the establishment is thick with incense and exotic tobacco smoke from hookahs. It is the evening, shortly after sundown, and the wanderers are enjoying the fares of the inn when their rest is violently interrupted.

A local man bursts into the common room, his features frozen in terror. He scrambles backward through the wreckage of the group's table, crying out and holding his hands upward in pitiful attempts to ward off his fear. A small band of soldiers steps into the doorway behind the frightened man. The lantern light reflects off the bronze armor and brandished swords of Roman legionnaires.

The first barks out something in Latin and points his weapon at the terrified man on the floor. If any of the heroes speak the language, they hear, *"There is the thieving dog! Marius, ask him politely where his fellows are hiding."* Another soldier steps forward and in the light of the main room his grim visage becomes horrifically apparent. He is a walking corpse.

The approaching soldier grabs his quarry by the robes and growls in Latin, *"You heard the man, swine, where are the rest of you? Tell me now!"* When the man doesn't answer, the legionnaire drives his naked blade into his whimpering captive to the hilt before the party can act.

If the party attacks, the soldiers fight back fiercely and without quarter. However, if the heroes do not take action, the legionnaires simply depart. Should the wanderers attempt to follow them, they lead the party into the canals underneath Alexandria where they lay an ambush for the adventurers.

 **Tasked Legionnaires (1 per hero):** See page 88.

The Tasked

The Tasked are a type of undead who have been cursed to dwell upon the land forever, constantly driven to complete some final undertaking. They have risen from the grave through the power of their own will. Some bear an undying hate or desire for unfulfilled justice. Others have pulled themselves up from the earth for matters of honor or even love.

These are tragic figures, unable to complete the one thing that will give them peace. As long as the Tasked's driving goal remains unfulfilled, the undead is bound to the world of the living and cannot be permanently destroyed.

We've provided you with all the information you need to run these creatures in this tale, but for more on the Tasked, see *The Savage Foes of Solomon Kane*.

It's Not Over Yet

No one has any explanation for the strange occurrence. Speaking to locals quickly uncovers word of a similar event happening just last night across town. Should any of the characters ask, the previous attack killed a doctor, while the most recent victim's occupation was as a guide.

A Streetwise roll reveals that both men had recently been associated with an expedition led by locally famous historian Al-as Nasser. It seems that Nasser and his men had discovered a solitary mausoleum in the desert.

The heroes have little time to follow up on this information as, scant moments after the party has gathered this information, a call of alarm from the city guard sounds out. A mule driven cart races wildly through the city streets, its driver slumped over with a javelin piercing his side.

Not far behind the runaway cart, giving chase, are several other undead Legionnaires, who in turn are being followed by a

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contingent of four men from the city guard. One of the legionnaires shouts in Latin to the guards, "*Halt by order of the Emperor. I am Titus Morellus, sergeant of the 27th Legion. I command you to stand down!*"

The adventurers are faced with a choice: assist the guards or chase down the cart!

The wounded man in the cart yet lives, but he is not long for this world. The best that can be done is to ease his discomfort. A city guardsman says that the man is Rahmlah, the owner of a merchant caravan.

Rahmlah spits out a throat full of blood as he gasps for air one last time. Reaching up feebly, his fingers brush the nearest party member and he sighs "*Nasser...*" as the light fades from his eyes. A Notice roll finds a contract for transportation services signed by Al-as Nasser, tucked away in a scroll case under the seat of the mule cart.

🗡️ **Tasked Legionnaires (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 88.

🗡️ **City Guard (4):** See page 87.



SAGE ADVICE

Following up on the clues pointing to Nasser leads the party to a weathered two-story building. A knock on the door is answered in a few moments by a middle-aged man with a graying beard who pokes his head from a second story window. He confirms he is Nasser and asks the party their business.

Al-as Nasser is quite confused and fearful once recent events are relayed to him. He eagerly offers up information to the party, confirming that the victims were all part of the expedition. He tells of a lone mausoleum about seven miles out of town to the southwest, which had only recently been discovered by a merchant caravan. Nasser gathered a team and headed to the site as soon as he learned of it.

Inside the simple tomb of Roman origin were but a few artifacts: a full set of ceremonial armor and weapons, purple cloaks with golden threaded trim, a few works of art, and the small sarcophagus of a youth. The sarcophagus itself bore the decorative nature of ancient Egyptian royalty. The explorers also found several sealed scrolls which are currently being translated by a few of his associates. Nasser believes the scrolls contain the story of the tomb's resident.

As he tells his story, have the wanderers make a Notice roll. A success alerts them of two more legionnaires watching from an alley across the street. Sensing they've been spotted, the undead Romans turn and flee, retreating into a canal entrance. Any pursuit is quickly rendered moot due to the labyrinthine nature of the subterranean canals.

The appearance of the legionnaires at his own home makes Nasser extremely nervous. He offers to lead the group to the artifacts which are currently hidden away, but only so that he can enjoy the protection of the armed characters.

THE EMPEROR'S HEART

Following Nasser, the party makes its way to a storehouse near the edge of town. There, they find a grisly sight. More of the undead Legionnaires have arrived before the party.

THE DARK CONTINENT

The associates of whom Nasser spoke have been murdered, hacked to pieces by their assailants, who are removing the artifacts out of the storehouse.

As the group approaches, the Romans put down their cargo and draw their weapons. Before combat begins one of the legionnaires calls out in Latin, which Nasser can translate if none of the party speaks it.

"Halt! Come no further, as you have no business here. We are agents of your Emperor and I command you to turn and—no wait, that one!" The legionnaire speaking points at Nasser. *"He is the perpetrator of this crime! By the Emperor's authority and mine own as commander of the 27th Legion, I order you turn him over to us!"*

If the heroes refuse, the one who spoke adds, *"It matters not what happens in this battle. Our vow is to the Empire, and like justice, is eternal. We shall enact our duty no matter how long it takes!"* As before, any fight with the soldiers is to the finish. The legionnaires do their best to slay Nasser during the melee.

If the wanderers instead choose to parley, they need to make a Persuasion roll to avoid violence. A success avoids violence unless the party attempts to prevent the legionnaires from reclaiming the artifacts. With a raise, they learn much of the information presented in the background of this adventure.

Should the party defeat the Legionnaires, all is well until the next evening when they return. Their vow makes them able to sense the location of the artifacts, although not Nasser specifically. The only way to stop them is to return the artifacts to the tomb. Until this is done, they return every night, stepping from the sands and following the canals under the city to cover their movement.

🐉 **Tasked Centurion:** See below.

🐉 **Tasked Legionnaires (2 per hero):** See page 88.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

ALAS NASSER

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (Area Knowledge: Egypt) d8, Knowledge (History) d8, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Curious, Yellow

Edges: Scholar

Gear: Knife (Str +d4), various scrolls, maps, and writing instruments.

CITY GUARD

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

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

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4), musket (Range: 10/20/40; Damage: 2d8), shot & powder (10).



TASKED CENTURION

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Vow (Protect the Emperor's Treasure)

Edges: Block, Command, Fervor, Quick Draw

Gear: Plate corselet (+3), plate vambraces (+3), plate greaves (+3), full helm (+3), short sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), javelin (Str+d6, Range 6/12/24).

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** The Tasked are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Invulnerability:** If a Tasked is destroyed by any means while its purpose remains unfilled, it returns to life the following morning.

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- **Purpose:** Each Tasked has a specific goal that keeps it tied to the world of the living. The legionnaires guard the treasures of the mausoleum from theft. Destroying those artifacts ends the focus of their purpose and the Tasked immediately crumbles to dust.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No wound penalties; Called Shots do no extra damage. Treat as a Veteran character.

TASKED LEGIONNAIRE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Notice d4, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Vow (Protect the Emperor's Treasure)

Edges: Block, Quick Draw

Gear: Plate corselet (+3), plate vambraces (+3), plate greaves (+3), full helm (+3), short sword (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry), javelin (Str+d6, Range 6/12/24).

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** The Tasked are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Invulnerability:** If a Tasked is destroyed by any means while its purpose remains unfilled, it returns to life the following morning.
- **Purpose:** Each Tasked has a specific goal that keeps it tied to the world of the living. The legionnaires guard the treasures of the mausoleum from theft. Destroying those artifacts ends the focus of their purpose and the Tasked immediately crumbles to dust.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called shots do no extra damage. Treat as a Seasoned character.



PRIDE OF THE WAVES

LEAD In: Barbary Coast slavers have taken a person important to the party as a captive, and unless the party can catch them before they hit open water, their ally may be lost forever.

THE VALUE OF FREEDOM

While the wanderers are in Alexandria, they hear word that one of their allies or contacts has been taken by the crew of the *Silver Scimitar*, a notorious Barbary slave ship. Worse, a Streetwise roll tells heroes that the ship's captain, Sayed Ali, is known for doing horrible things to his slaves before selling them in Morocco. The *Silver Scimitar* is known to often call on the port at Alexandria.

Locating the *Silver Scimitar* is the easiest portion of this adventure, but reaching the vessel is probably the most difficult. After the party reaches the docks of Alexandria in search of the ship, a Streetwise roll reveals that it set sail earlier in the day, bound for Morocco to sell its human cargo.

Although it may appear that the party has arrived too late, their frustration does not last for long. As they wander away from the docks, a turbaned and robed figure walks alongside the party for a few moments before whispering to the closest member of the party. *"Your friend has been taken, as has ours. We have much in common. If you act quickly, we may yet save them. Follow me."*

THE ZEPHYR

The figure leads the heroes to the westernmost edge of the port, to where a small galley is docked. The vessel is in preparation for disembarking, and as the figure turns up the plank to the deck, he motions for the party to follow. The other sailors on the vessel are also covered from head to foot—a Notice roll determines that the crew hastily disguised themselves. The party's guide leads them directly to a larger man commanding the others.

"These stalwart souls have lost a friend to Sayed Ali. They were eager enough to retrieve their comrade that they came directly to the docks, perhaps even to storm the Silver Scimitar itself."

The other man laughs, a deep, quick chuckle. *"So, you'd take on the infamous Sayed Ali? You're either a brave lot, or a foolish one—either way, we need the extra swords. We're going to stop the Scimitar in*

the water and re-take the members of my crew they have. I'm Captain Hamilton, and although we may be disguising ourselves so as not to draw too much attention, we are your friends. Care to help us reclaim those who have been wrongfully taken?"

If the characters agree, Captain Hamilton tells them he intends to shove off within the hour. He's confident that the *Zephyr's* speed can overcome the larger, but slower galley of Sayed Ali. The *Scimitar* is sailing without its full complement of oarsmen and is more dependent on the wind than the fully manned *Zephyr*.

The characters are allowed to retrieve any personal belongings they may have left in the city, provided they do so with great haste and without drawing unnecessary attention to themselves. The ship sets sail immediately after they board.

A SWORD AGAINST THE WIND

The *Zephyr* is a vessel designed for speed. Within minutes, the port of Alexandria is fading in the distance as the ship heads eastward at a breakneck pace.

Once they're out of eyesight, the sailors begin removing their outer garments, revealing themselves to be Europeans. Several wear a red cross with eight points, flanked on either side by golden lilies. The adventurers quickly learn that the *Zephyr* belongs to the Order of Saint Stephen, a noble order based out of Italy that openly combats the advances of the Barbary Coast pirates. They have been tracking the *Silver Scimitar* for quite some time, hoping to end their villainy.

Nearing twilight, the watch calls out "*Ship ho, fore and starboard!*" Captain Hamilton takes the deck, drawing out a spyglass, then shouts, "*Scimitar ahoy! Battle stations, men!*" The well-seasoned crew springs into action readying the vessel's cannon.

As the *Zephyr* closes on the *Scimitar*, Hamilton gives an order to fire. Although the galley is lightly armed, sporting only a total of eight cannon, the men of the Order are clearly well-trained in their use. The first tears the main mast of the *Scimitar* into splinters.

In moments the battle is joined and the heroes are able to board alongside the crew. The crew tosses grappling lines across to the *Scimitar*. Scaling the lines to the pirate ship requires a Climbing roll (+2). Captain Hamilton remains aboard the *Zephyr* directing his crew.

Allow the party to control the members of the Order as Extras. The battle is furious, the slavers knowing that they'll not receive any quarter should they be captured. In the middle of their ranks is Sayed Ali, noticeable by his bejeweled turban, a ruby in its center clasp.

Early in the fight, the cannons of the *Silver Scimitar* fire, ripping apart the hull of the *Zephyr*. Captain Hamilton does his best to save his ship, but its fate is obvious. Within less than an hour, it is doomed to sink. Retreat no longer an option for either side, the fight turns even bloodier as the remaining crew of the *Zephyr* scramble aboard the *Scimitar*.

GALLEYS

Due to the relatively calm waters of the Mediterranean, galleys remain very popular here, particularly among Barbary pirates—and those who hunt them. The banks of rowers enable the ships to maintain speed without falling prey to the frequent lack of wind that often stills purely sail-driven merchantmen sailing the Atlantic coasts.

The average galley is between 120' to 150' long and 15' to 20' wide. Galleys tend to carry fewer cannon than the larger sailing men-of-war, and usually mount no more than 8 to 16 cannon total. The most common tactic for inter-ship combat amongst pirates is to rapidly close with their target and swarm over the other vessel with superior numbers. Given that the normal complement for a galley may be over 100 soldiers and sailors—not counting more than 100 oarsmen. This was frequently all that was necessary to capture small European merchant vessels crewed by less than two dozen!

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Once Sayed is captured or killed, the remaining pirates admit defeat, several attempting escape via dinghies or simply diving over the side of the vessel. Captain Hamilton leads the remaining crew from the *Zephyr* aboard the *Silver Scimitar*.

Free to search the slavers' vessel, the adventurers soon find their ally, along with dozens of other captives, locked below decks, somewhat worse for wear but safe. As reward for their assistance, Captain Hamilton volunteers to transport the party to any port in the Mediterranean, including back to Alexandria if they so choose.

🐉 **Knight of Order of St. Stephen (5):** See below.

🐉 **Zephyr Marines (25):** See below.

🐉 **Slavers (50):** See below.

🐉 **Sayed Ali:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF ST. STEPHEN

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6

Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Vow (Order of St. Stephen)



ADVENTURE LINK

This adventure can lead to the **Savage Tale: The Wasting of Baia di Stefano**, on page 96.

If so, once the heroes capture the *Silver Scimitar*, Captain Hamilton sets course instead for Baia di Stefano.

Edges: Block, Noble

Gear: Long sword (Str+d8), chain hauberk (+2).



SAYED ALI

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

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

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean

Edges: Command, Dirty Fighter, Florentine
Gear: Knife (Str+d4), cutlass (Str+d6), pistol (Range 5/10/20; Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP1), shot & powder (20).

SLAVER

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Illiterate, Mean

Edges: Dirty Fighter

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), cutlass (Str+d6), pistol (Range 5/10/20; Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP1), shot & powder (20).

ZEPHYR MARINE

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Steady Hands

Gear: Long sword (Str+d6), musket (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d8), shot & powder (20). Soldiers typically have plate corselets (+3) and steel helmets (+3).



THE DARK CONTINENT

CAIRO

Cairo, located about 100 miles south of the mouth of the Nile, is the capital of the Ottoman province of Egypt. Its location on the banks of the Nile make it an important thoroughfare for military operations and trade deeper into Africa. Likewise, Cairo is close to many of the antiquities of Egypt including the legendary pyramids, Saladin's Citadel, the Sphinx, the ruined Greek city of Heliopolis, the Babylon Fortress and even the former home of the Coptic Pope in the Hanging Church.

The city is currently home to over 150,000 people, but unlike many European cities, Cairo's population has shrunk markedly over the past few centuries. The plague has struck particularly hard here and accounted for nearly 200,000 deaths since the 14th century. Since the discovery of a southern route around the Cape of Good Hope, Cairo's importance as an international trade center has greatly suffered. In addition, the Ottomans treat Egypt as simply another outlying province, further diminishing the city's prominence.

Its history with military regiments and its importance in several campaigns means that there's always a heavy complement of soldiers in the city proper. The precursors to high-rise tenements are found in Cairo: shop fronts and stores on the bottom two levels of the building and small apartments extending several floors higher.



NIGHT OF THE POISON SHADOWS

LEAD In: As word of their heroic deeds has spread, the party is invited to stay at the Pasha's palace. A guest of Emin, the Pasha's son, they are encouraged to regale him with tales of their exploits, much to his Vizier's dismay.

THE PRICE OF FAME

When the party arrives in Cairo, they are greeted in a way to which they are not accustomed—with fanfare!

Approached openly on the street by a delegation of the Pasha's retinue, they are told that they are to be the guests of honor at a dinner hosted by the Pashazada Emin, the son of the Pasha. Having become somewhat (in)famous in certain circles due to their exploits, Emin is anxiously awaiting the arrival of the wanderers to hear accounts of their adventures.

RUMOR

"Did I hear those three men at the bar last night correctly? They said they sold eggs a foot wide in Baguirmi."

This rumor leads to the **Savage Tale: The Most Precious Treasure**, on page 103.



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The party is led to the sprawling residence of the Pasha where they are brought to the “small dining room”—a chamber capable of hosting a hundred guests. Brightly colored tapestries and rugs adorn the room and entertainers of all sorts weave their way through the small crowd.

Moments after the food arrives, the Pashazada, a young man with an eager face, makes his grand entrance. Two paces behind him is an older man dressed nearly as regally as the Pashazada. As soon as the young ruler takes his seat, the old man begins to speak.

“As Vizier to the Pasha, it is my honor to introduce you to Emin Pashazada, your host for this evening. The Pashazada is pleased that you have accepted his invitation and is...honored by your presence. Please, enjoy. Afterwards we will—”

The young man interrupts, saying, “Please, Ismet, let us not trifle them with the formalities. Instead, let us relax and enjoy this evening. I would hear much of your trials, but I would expect that the telling of tales is always better on a full stomach.”

Throughout the dinner, Emin is gracious and gregarious, often offering his own opinions on the foods and entertainers. He is genuinely interested in the party, but wistfully pushes off tales of their adventures until after the feast, preferring small talk. He avoids topics such as governance or politics altogether, to the apparent chagrin of Vizier Ismet.

Allowing the characters to speak as long as they wish, he regretfully ends the discourse only after several prompts from the Vizier about duties he must attend the next day. Retiring, he insists that the explorers stay as his guests, providing the adventurers with their own adjacent rooms down the hallway from the Pashazada’s suite.

DEATH IN THE SMALL HOURS

Hours pass after the group becomes comfortable with their sleeping arrangements. Have each member of the party make a Notice roll. Those who succeed are startled awake but may act normally. Characters who fail are dealt no cards in the first round of combat.

Inside their room are several figures, dressed in black clothing and brandishing scimitars. As the characters awake, the assassins attack.

There is one assassin for every hero. They fight to the death and offer no mercy.

Once the party has dealt with their individual assailants, they hear a commotion in the hallway—no Notice roll necessary. Rushing from their rooms, they see two of the Pashazada’s guards lying slain in the hallway. The rooms to his suite are open, and figures can be seen locked in combat through the doors. More armed assassins (two per hero) are poised to enter the young man’s bedchamber.

After the adventurers have eliminated their opponents, they hear Emin calling out to his guards. When Emin enters the room, he gasps in shock at the carnage. *“It is just as Ismet said. I draw too much attention by entertaining foreigners. One of my father’s many rivals must be striking against him through me and my guests.”*

On a successful Notice roll, the party locates a set of orders on one of the assassins. (If the wanderers don’t do it on their own, Emin suggests that they search the dead.) The orders detail a strike to kill the Pashazada and his guests, removing their bodies and leaving their weapons in Emin’s bedchambers. The orders are not signed, but Emin recognizes the handwriting instantly—his father’s Vizier, Ismet.

🗡️ **Assassins (Total of 3 per hero, as above):** See page 93.

A TRAITOR’S FATE

More guards enter Emin’s chambers, and upon hearing his proclamation, rush to arrest the Vizier. Half an hour later, they return with Ismet, alive and roughly handled, reporting they found him attempting to flee.

Ismet curses the wanderers and the Pashazada. He claims that it was only a matter of time before Emin’s fascination with infidels would ruin his father’s house. Emin orders Ismet gagged before turning to the party.

“Ismet would have sullied your legend as the perpetrators of my demise. He acted against you when you were my guests. As



such, I find it only appropriate that I place this dog's fate in the hands of those he offended. His punishment is yours to decide. What shall we do with this traitorous cur?"

Emin takes the party's judgment to heart, ordering it to be enacted the next morning. Exile, imprisonment, and execution are the most likely choices, but Emin faithfully agrees to whatever form of justice the heroes select.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

ASSASSINS

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal (to Ismet)

Edges: Alertness, First Strike, Thief

Gear: Envenomed scimitar (Str+d6), dagger (Str+1d4), chain shirt (2, torso and arms only).

Special Abilities:

- **Poison:** The assassin's blades are envenomed with a potent poison. Any attack that achieves at least a Shaken result requires the victim to make a Vigor roll at -2 or take an additional automatic wound.



THE SPECTRE OF AVARICE PAST

LEAD In: This Savage Tale is not set in any city, rather taking place as the characters wander through the desert climes of Northern Africa. Caught in a sudden and violent sandstorm, the party finds the harsh winds have drastically changed the landscape when the storm abates.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

The deserts of North Africa are not a hospitable place to be, with natural hazards everywhere. One such hazard, a sandstorm,

takes the explorers off of the beaten path to seek shelter. The sandstorm quickly gains strength, advancing at an unholy pace towards the group. Racing to find shelter, they barely beat the storm to the refuge of a large rock formation jutting from the desert sands.

The deadly maelstrom lasts several hours, settling down near dusk. Once it abates, the explorers find their surroundings no longer familiar. Where the land was mainly rolling dunes before, they now find themselves on the end of a valley. Steep slopes of sand rise all around, and their rocky shelter now sits near the bottom of a large butte.

Exposed at the base of the valley are manmade stone walls with sepulchers of an ancient necropolis lying within their boundaries. The winds continue to howl as the heroes survey the eerie cityscape in front of them.

The storm has also exposed a path down from their makeshift shelter that leads towards the burial ground's gates—the only way out of their shelter. Approaching the entrance to the necropolis, have the party make a Notice Roll. Those who succeed notice the sand near the path is shifting, preventing those characters from being surprised as two giant scorpions erupt from the ground and attack.

The scorpions dispatched, the path lies open to the necropolis itself. Having no other viable path, the party steps forward through the massive gates.

 **Giant Scorpions (2):** See page 94.

CITY OF THE DEAD

The city is a winding maze of low walls, tombs, broken masonry and pits of sand. The architecture is unfamiliar, neither Egyptian nor Roman in design. Navigating is difficult, as often the wanderers must double back to circumvent some obstacle or dead end. The characters are on edge, as they get the feeling the place just isn't right. Gates close, odd footsteps echo from behind, but nothing ever seems to be the cause.

After the sun's last rays retreat before night's approach, a low moaning sound can be heard on the wind. At first, it is but a single

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voice, but then another joins and another. The eerie symphony builds in intensity as the party is surrounded by ghosts rising from the sands. Everywhere around them the shades shamble, unfocused and muttering. The wanderers must make a Guts roll.

Soon distinct words can be heard – “*Did we get enough water?*” “*Where are the shovels?*” “*What’s that—the Tomb of Mehet Tu?*” “*Look at all this! We’ll be rich!*” The specters do not attack and seem to be of all origins. These spirits are all that remains of countless explorers, merchants, and travelers who fell prey to Mehet Tu, the creature that rules this hidden valley. As long as it survives, the ghosts cannot find peace.

The phantasms appear listless and distracted—some standing on the very spots where they died, bones jutting up from the ground. However, as the wanderers move forward, paths are suddenly blocked, gates shut and locked from the other side, all forcing the characters towards the center.

Though they may not realize it, the heroes are being herded by the ghosts, hoping that the adventurers can destroy Mehet Tu and release them.

BUGS!

The path to Mehet Tu is inevitable as the spirits of the necropolis force the characters in one direction. Reaching the center, the wanderers see a small temple at the far end of the valley, hieroglyphs decorating the outside. Although humble, it is the largest structure in the strange valley. Beyond, the party catches a glimpse of the open desert on the other side.

Approaching the temple seems to be easy, but a hidden trap awaits. Stepping on the 5’ sandstone pavers that lead to the temple prove otherwise—the first two collapse, releasing one of Mehet Tu’s defenses. Two large swarms of beetles erupt from the sand, attacking everything in sight!

Each swarm covers a Medium Burst Template and attacks everyone within. The swarms do not overlap each other, however.

🐞 **Scarab Beetle Swarm (2):** See page 95.

ANCIENT ENMITY

Once the party overcomes the beetles, they discover the conflict has brought the attention of a much greater foe. Flanked on either side by skeletal guards, the mummified remains of Mehet Tu emerges from the open air temple. Eyes glowing with supernatural rage, he raises a desiccated arm and addresses the party.

“All who wander here are lost, and all that is lost belongs to me. Forfeit your lives, and your final moments will be without pain.”

Mehet Tu follows the skeletons, moving as a unit with Mehet Tu at its center. They attack the nearest character, brutally assaulting any who come near until either they or their opponents have fallen.

As Mehet Tu falls, so does the city that was bound by his will. The necropolis begins to crumble and the explorers need to make a mad dash to escape. The quickest way out is directly through the temple, which now only holds an empty sarcophagus in its center. There are rooms on either side of the main, open-air chamber, filled with rotted provisions and equipment—along with some very real treasures. Greedy adventurers can grab a small amount of wealth before the temple collapses. All told, the party can scavenge £500 worth of valuables weighing 50 lbs.

Making it into the open desert lets the characters turn and watch the destruction. As the city shatters sandy walls surrounding it fall, burying it once again. The ghosts of the slain fly free. Several stop and thank the characters before dissipating entirely, free from the thrall of their undead master.

🐞 **Mehet Tu:** See page 95.

🦴 **Skeleton Guards (3 per hero):** See page 95.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

GIANT SCORPION

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

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Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d12

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous hide.
- **Improved Frenzy:** A scorpion may make two Fighting attacks each round at no penalty.
- **Pincer/Stinger:** Str+1d4.
- **Poison:** Scorpions do damage with their sting, but may inject deadly venom. A character hit by a sting must make a Vigor roll at -2. With a success, the area of the sting swells and becomes numb. The victim becomes Exhausted until healed. With a failure, the victim becomes incapacitated and must make a second Vigor roll or die within 2d6 hours.
- **Quick:** Scorpions are notoriously fast. They may discard action cards of 5 or lower and draw another.
- **Small -1:** Giant scorpions are the size of a large dog.



MEHET TU, MUMMY

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (2)

Gear: Scale armor (+2), Scimitar (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing this beast must make a Guts check.
- **Shuffling Gait:** Mehet Tu rolls a d4 running die.
- **Slam:** Str.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; No wound modifiers; Immune to disease and poison.
- **Weakness (Fire):** The chemicals used in his preservation process means Mehet Tu takes +4 damage from fire.

SCARAB BEETLE SWARM

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

Skills: Notice d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to

everyone in a Medium Burst Template (victims in completely sealed suits are immune).

- **Split:** These 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 lowered by -2 (to 5 each).
- **Swarm:** Parry +2; Because the swarm is composed of scores, hundreds, or thousands of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round.

SKELETON GUARDS

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), scale armor (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged shots).

Special Abilities:

- **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fearless:** Skeletons are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.

BAIA DI STEFANO

Baia di Stefano, or Stephen's Cove, is a small village nestled in very hostile territory. Originally discovered by a group of shipwrecked Italian seamen, the settlement lies along the Moroccan coast opposite Spain. Recently, Baia di Stefano was claimed by the Order of Saint Stephen to use as a hidden resupply base right in the heart of the Barbary Coast.

The cove is sheltered by a rocky outcropping that hides the small harbor from all but the most careful observers. Unlike conventional seacoast towns, the outpost of Baia di Stefano is actually a few hundred yards from the shore in a small valley that conceals it even from ships inside the cove.



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There are few inhabitants in the village—all men—as Baia di Stefano exists solely to support the Order's raiding vessels. A small contingent of soldiers and a handful of craftsmen are the only full-time residents. The settlement is usually well-stocked with foodstuffs, gunpowder, spare sailcloth and wood, to best service any ships in need of repair or resupply.



THE WASTING OF BAIA DI STEFANO

LEAD In: The party comes upon a surprisingly European village near the heart of Barbary Pirate territory. Many of the inhabitants seem to be suffering under a type of the plague.

BACKGROUND

Marooned in the middle of the Barbary pirates' territory, the original shipwreck survivors made a pact with a local juju man by the name of Grindybows to protect them from their ruthless neighbors. The magician agrees to rid them of the pirate threat, but in return they must pay him a monthly tribute. In truth, the location of the cove was far more effective in hiding them from the seawolves, but Grindybows claimed the credit—and his tribute—greedily. In time, the sailors made their way home, but Grindybows never forgot his bargain.



ADVENTURE LINK

The **Savage Tale: Pride of the Waves** (page 88) can serve as an excellent lead in to this adventure. If you choose to use that Tale, Captain Hamilton sets course for Baia di Stefano after the capture of the Silver Scimitar. The captain can also provide the heroes with the origins of the village as well, although he makes no mention of the juju man, Grindybows.

Members of the Order of St. Stephen learned of the hidden cove and realized its potential to their own mission. When the Order arrived to build its resupply base near the original settlement, the juju man approached the knights to demand tribute. Righteous and indignant, the Order chased the old magician from Baia di Stefano, ordering him to never return under pain of death.

Grindybows fled to a nearby sea cave and swore a vow to avenge himself upon the knights. A few days ago, the juju man crept into the outpost and laid the foundation for the destruction of Baia di Stefano, placing a curse that would cause all its inhabitants to sicken and die, only to rise again as his servants.

SALVATION

Upon arriving in Baia di Stefano, the wanderers are immediately struck by its remoteness. If they are traveling overland, it is only by rare chance that they stumble across the small outpost hidden amongst the rocky valleys of the coast. Only ships of the Order of St. Stephen have the cove plotted on their maps, but if they arrive via one of those (see the **Savage Tale: Pride of the Waves**), the cove is surprisingly well concealed, and even once within its waters, there is little evidence of the nearby outpost. The ship moors safely in the calm waters, but there are no dock facilities; the ship's boats must be used to reach the shore.

In the settlement, the buildings appear more appropriate to the coast of Italy or southern France than northern Africa. The inhabitants as well are obviously of European stock and the heroes quickly discover Italian to be the common language. However, the characters can't help but notice that many of the villagers seem to be fatigued or even suffering from some ailment. Many are unusually thin, with their flesh seeming to hang from their bones, and have an unhealthy pallor to their skin.

If the wanderers approach any of the villagers, they readily explain the founding of the settlement. If the heroes arrived aboard the



Silver Scimitar, Captain Hamilton can do the same. However, any mention of Grindylows is avoided.

Moments after the party has gotten its bearings, a scream rings out from a nearby cottage. A man runs from the home followed closely behind by another pale-skinned and drooling man. The pursuer is obviously ill, with deathly pale skin, blackened rings under his eyes, and dry crusted lips. Spotting the heroes, he turns from his intended prey and attacks them instead!

🦋 **Zombie (1):** See page 99.

An Unholy Affliction

After the heroes dispatch their attacker, his undead nature becomes apparent. His original victim explains that the man had been suffering from the same strange illness as many of the other inhabitants. He laid down to rest, seemingly fatigued, and arose moments ago ravenous and violent.

No one has any clue as to the nature of the illness or from whence it came. The locals note that it seemed to fall upon them almost overnight only a few days ago.

The villagers urge the wanderers to make haste to the garrison of the Order of St. Stephen to report the occurrence. Although many within Baia di Stefano are suffering from the strange malady, this is the first victim to succumb to it. The Order, they say, must take action quickly!

The soldiers are quartered in a medium-sized stone building that serves as barracks to the men of the Order. If any of the heroes try the door, they find it is locked, apparently from within. Knocking on the door or calling out does not result in the door opening, but the party can hear sounds of stumbling movement inside. Should they choose to try to force the door or any of the shuttered windows, it requires a Strength roll (-2).

As soon as the door is open, a small horde of zombies pour out and attack! Their torn and tattered white tabards with eight-pointed red crosses leave little doubt these undead creatures are all that remain of the defenders of Baia di Stefano.

🦋 **Zombies (2, plus 2 per hero):** See page 99.

Source of the Plague

After the battle, an investigation of the barracks allows the heroes to make a Notice roll. On a success, they observe a strange series of glyphs inscribed on the doorframe. A character who succeeds on a Knowledge (Occult) roll can't decipher the exact translation of the glyphs, but does gather that they are some sort of curse. A raise on the roll also identifies a necromantic element to the curse.

The sounds of the battle drew the attention of the rest of the locals who arrive as the party finishes its investigation. However, none of the other men in the settlement recall seeing the glyphs before and all doubt that any of the soldiers, all pious men, would have placed them there. An older man steps forward from the group and identifies himself as Donato Rossi.



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"I was with the crew that found this cove. There was an old juju man who'd set up his camp near here and told us we'd have to pay him tribute. Apparently, the original sailors who'd settled here had some unholy bargain with the scoundrel. The Order would have no truck with such devilry, but before we chased him off, I got a look at some of his scribblings and they looked a lot like those on the doorframe."

Rossi has no idea where Grindylaws may have gone after he was forced out of the cove. Another man in the group volunteers there are several sea caves in the area that could shelter the magician.

At this point—if the wanderers haven't volunteered already—the men ask for the party's assistance in finding the juju man and ending the curse. The strange affliction has so weakened them physically that few, if any, would be able to contribute any real effort to a search of the coast.

Should the heroes have arrived via the *Silver Scimitar*, Captain Hamilton states he has complete confidence in the heroes' ability to defeat the juju man. He and his crew remain to tend to the sick in the outpost and guard against any raids in the event the magician has enlisted the pirates as well.

FINDING GRINDYLAWS

The coast near Baia di Stefano is rugged and littered with cliffs and inlets. Simply crossing the terrain is taxing; actually searching it thoroughly is exhausting. Each day spent crisscrossing the hills and precipices requires a Fatigue roll from the adventurers.

Combing the nearby area allows a Tracking roll (–2) each day. On a success, the characters discover a narrow trail leading to the cave entrance where Grindylaws has laired.

If the heroes ask, the men of the outpost can provide them with a small boat. Using the boat, the party can avoid making Fatigue rolls and spotting the cave from the sea is actually easier. In this case, each day the wanderers can attempt a simple Notice roll to find the entrance to the cave.

After each day that the adventurers search unsuccessfully, they return to discover more victims have succumbed to the plague. Worse, at the end of the second such day, they find they are beginning to experience some of the signs of the wasting themselves—pale skin, mild listlessness, and the like.

INTO THE CAVE

The explorers enter the cave through a foreboding maw riddled with jagged rock outcroppings and low hanging stalactites. The entranceway is about thirty feet wide and only ten feet high surrounding a tidal pool which is slowly draining due to the tide going out. From deep within the cave flickering torchlight can be seen dancing off the far walls, slightly illuminating short, broken walkways wide enough for one person.

The party ventures straight for about a hundred yards, coming to a natural rock wall. A scone holding a lit torch is attached to the wall. A Notice roll reveals bubbles rising from where the water meets rock in the center of the wall, indicating an underwater tunnel that leads into the wall. The tunnel leads all the way through and is filled with sporadic air pockets, hence the bubbles. (Experienced players may think this a trigger for a secret door—no such luck! The torch is to guide the swimmer out.)

Navigating the tunnel requires three minutes. The water counts as rough (requiring a Swimming roll each minute) due to the tide falling. See the rules on Drowning in *The Savage World of Solomon Kane* if the heroes fail any of these rolls.

HE THAT SLEEPS

The tunnel opens into a large chamber lit by torches. The water here is very deep, the pool easily fifty feet long and thirty feet wide, framed on three sides by solid rock. The fourth side, directly opposite the tunnel opening, has a sloped stone outcropping that acts as a beach. The back of this ledge has a passageway leading into the rock, torchlight beckoning from it.

Crossing the water toward the outcropping, they see large reptilian eyes open in the darkness of the passageway as a giant,



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half-rotten sea snake slithers from his resting place into the water, rushing directly at the party—an appropriate time for a Guts check. This monster's approach is accompanied by cackling laughter and mad taunts that emanate from the tunnel and echo through the chamber:

"Hab! Heroes, they have sent heroes against me! Hab-bab-bab I call you fools, FOOLS and fodder for He That Sleeps! I have blessed you all and you deny it, now die!"

This battle should be fairly difficult as, unless they took special precautions, it's likely any gunpowder is soaked, rendering the characters' firearms useless. Also, fighting the creature in the deep water is quite difficult. Heroes cannot use two-handed weapons and are limited to the lowest of their Fighting or Swimming skills until they reach the beach.

🦋 **Undead Sea Serpent:** See below.

VILLAINS REVEALED

After the wanderers defeat the undead serpent, the necromancer steps from the passageway. With him are several zombies he has reanimated from the bodies of drowned pirates and sailors. The undead attack, trying to remain between the party and the juju man. If given the opportunity, the zombies drag characters into the water in an attempt to drown them.

Grindylows does his best to stay under cover and away from the party, using his magic from a distance. If the fight goes badly, Grindylows attempts escape by diving into the water and swimming for the tunnel.

Investigating the area allows the explorers to find the necromancer's quarters at the end of the left tunnel. It's little more than an alcove with a makeshift table, a sleeping mat and a locked chest. Opening the chest they find a full coin purse of gold (£50) and several necromantic fetishes and scrolls.

A successful Investigation or Knowledge: Occult roll on the scrolls allows the party to find the proper rituals for removing the curse. The ritual does not restore life to any zombies, but it does reverse the effects on those still living.

In gratitude, the men of the outpost open their stores to the wanderers, allowing them to refill their own supplies and replace any damaged gear.

🦋 **Grindylows:** See below.

🦋 **Zombies (1, plus 1 per hero):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



GRINDYLOWS

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Spirits) d10, Shamanism d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d8, Taunt d8

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Mean, Vengeful

Edges: Arcane Background (Shamanism), Improved Strong Caster

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), fetishes.

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, curse, deflection, fear, obscure, puppet, smite, spirit ward, withering curse, zombie.*

Treat as a Veteran character.

ZOMBIE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called Shots do no extra damage.

UNDEAD SEA SERPENT

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d6

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



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Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Large:** Attacks against the serpent are at +2 because of its large size.
- **Size +4:** The Sea Serpent is nearly 25' long.
- **Swallow:** If the creature scores a raise on a Fighting roll with a bite attack against an opponent of Size 2 or smaller, it swallows its prey whole! The victim suffers Str+d8 damage each round until crushed to death by the powerful muscles or freed. A victim may try to break free, either with an opposed Strength roll or by using a small weapon to cut himself free, but all physical actions are at -4.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.



CENTRAL AFRICA

THE heart of the continent, this core region has a humid tropical climate. Home to dense rain forests in the center interspersed with savannas to the north, and arid steppes and deserts to the south, this area is hot year round. The Ubangi and Kongo Rivers pour through the region, allowing for nomadic people and animals to sustain themselves. Great lakes provide supplementary water to its inhabitants, with areas like Lake Chad easily being amongst the largest lakes in the world at the time of Kane.

The people of central Africa are diverse, ranging from Islamic sultanates and indigenous kingdoms to nomadic tribes and fishing communities, each with their own customs and cultures. Conflict is a regular way of life, as kingdoms constantly attempt to expand and slavers look for new captives to sell.



THE HALF-GOD'S SCORN

LEAD In: Travelling south across the Sahara desert, the wanderers find a young teenage boy, almost dead in the sands.

THE VICTIM'S TALE

A trip through the Sahara is a perilous one even on the most traveled trade routes. Not only do the explorers face an extremely harsh environment, the region has also been suffering the predations of raiders. Bandits and raiding tribesmen attack the caravans crossing the region. Wary for such events, the party instead spots the form of a young Ottoman boy sprawled almost lifeless on a distant sand dune.

Investigating the situation, they find that the boy can be revived. He has obviously been at the mercy of the desert, but he also has deep scratches along his back and legs. Once tended to, he awakens, terrified and very weak. He immediately begins to babble of monsters. Settling him down to get his story requires a Persuasion roll. After he has been calmed, the boy tells the party his name, Al-Yasa, and his tale.

"I was traveling with my uncle, a prominent merchant—when we were attacked by raiders wearing the heavy robes of desert nomads. Easily two dozen of them swarmed our caravan killing my uncle, his guards, and most of the rest of our band. I and a few other younger members were taken captive. I assumed we were to be sold as slaves, but I was wrong.

"They dragged us to a cave near a hidden oasis. It was filled with stolen goods, gold, and treasures. Once inside their lair, the men removed their outer robes. Underneath, I saw that the left half of their bodies was dead and blackened! They dragged one of our number into the center of the room and there, they fell upon him, ripping his flesh to pieces and devouring him while he yet lived! It was...the most terrible thing I've ever seen."

Al-Yasa goes on to explain that during the feeding frenzy he was able to slip his bonds and escape. He has been running since, lost in the desert for two days before the party found him. He has no idea if the other prisoners still live, but he is pretty sure he can lead the party to the raiders' hideout if they wish.



The Oasis

With Al-Yasa helping to guide them, the wanderers make it to the raider's lair in a little over a day's travel on foot. Arriving there they find the location to be as Al-Yasa described. A ring of rocky hills surround a small pond of water. The pond is quite muddy, but it's also the only water source within over two day's travel.

While the boy does not know this, there are two sentries guarding the oasis. If the party openly enters the area, they raise the alarm immediately, summoning an additional five ghouls to aid them.

If the heroes take the time to survey the area before entering, allow them to make a Notice roll. On a success they spot a sentry posted near a small pool of water that lies off center of the area. A raise on the roll reveals the location of a second sentry hidden amongst the rocks.

Should the characters move more stealthily into the oasis, have them make Stealth rolls. The sentries are actively watching for intruders, so allow them to oppose the party's rolls with Notice checks of their own. If the ghouls win the opposed roll, they raise the alarm as above.

 **Ghouls (2):** See page 102.

Lair of the Half Men

Making it past the sentries (either by evasion or combat), the party finds an entrance hidden behind a large boulder. The caverns reek of decay, and there is little in the way of natural lighting, forcing the characters to choose either to risk giving away their position with a lantern or to stumble about in near darkness.

The tunnel is large, easily able to accommodate several people walking abreast. The earthen floor is well packed from heavy travel, making the route somewhat easier in the dark.

The tunnel opens up suddenly in front of the wanderers. Sputtering torchlight barely illuminates an expansive cavern. Human remains litter the floor on the far side, but they appear to be much older than Al-Yasa's

story indicated. There are no signs of any other captives—and no stores of treasure or stolen goods.

The only item of value is a shield sitting on a crude stone altar at the back of the cavern. Even at a distance its surface almost shines with a golden glow in the torchlight—or at least half does. The other half is dull black and almost seems to absorb light into itself. On its surface is the depiction of a face divided in half, one side is beatific and the other demonic and scarred. In place of eyes are gemstones—the golden half a diamond while a jet adorns the other.

As their eyes adjust to the dim lighting, the adventurers notice there are several ghouls sleeping about the room. Some are still clad in heavy robes, but a few have shed them, revealing the horrible half-scarring Al-Yasa described.

As the group begins making plans for how to handle the situation, Al-Yasa suddenly screams in apparent horror. The creatures awake and focus immediately on the party. Al-Yasa sheepishly slips to the back of the group.

As one, the ghouls arise and attack. Al-Yasa retreats into the tunnel once the ghouls attack, appearing to flee the battle. In reality, he uses the commotion to creep around the perimeter of the cavern to the altar at the far side.

 **Ghouls (4, plus 1 per hero):** See page 102.

Best Laid Plans

Once the heroes have defeated the ghouls, they find Al-Yasa beside the altar, beaming gleefully. The façade of a frightened boy has fallen from his features, replaced by wanton avarice. Grabbing the shield in his left hand, he aims a mock salute at the party with his right.

"Thank you," he shouts to the party. "I never would have made it to the shield without your assistance. I will sell this in Basenya for a king's ransom! No more will I scrape by on the paltry sums I steal from

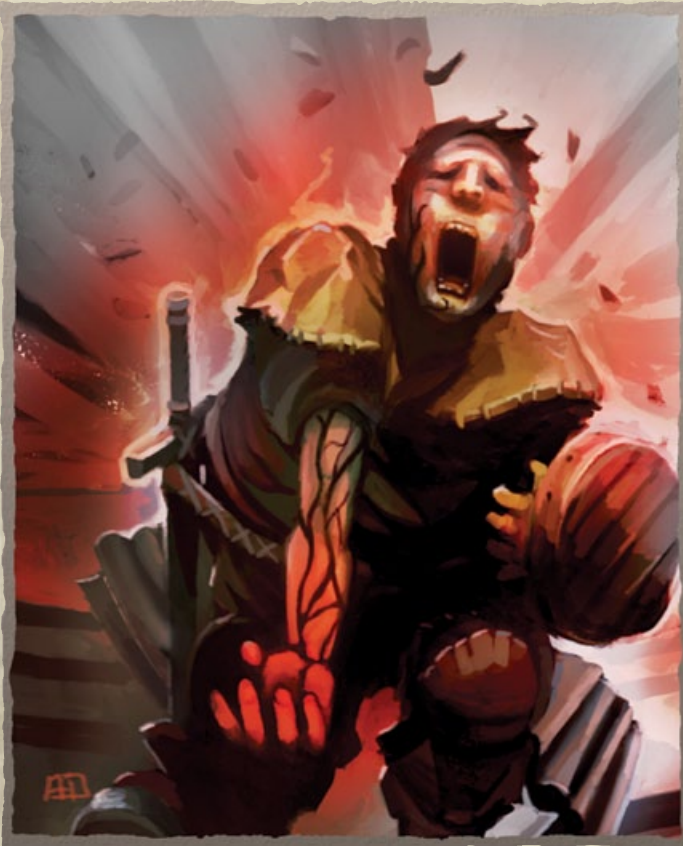
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the pouches of merchants. I am as rich as the pasha and poets will sing songs of my daring!"

His smile drops suddenly, however, as inky black veins begin crossing up his arm, covering his entire left side. Strangely, he does not release the shield as he begins writhing in agony and screams, "Wait...what...no, the pain, it...AAGH!"

Al-Yasa tumbles from his perch and the shield falls back to rest neatly on the altar. As he plummets to the ground, the transformation completes. The thief becomes one of the bizarrely scarred ghouls like those that laired in the cavern.

Losing all vestige of his humanity, he attacks. Once the wanderers have dealt with the creature that was once Al-Yasa, the shield thrums with foul magical power. As the wanderers watch, its half-visage seems to smile wickedly at them.



Any hero foolish enough to pick up the shield must immediately make a Vigor roll (-2) or immediately suffer a wound. The wound cannot be soaked. Each round he continues to hold it, he must make the Vigor roll again. Once picked up, the shield is not easily released. A Spirit roll (-2) is necessary to drop the foul device.

Wrapping the shield in cloth or a similar tactic does allow it to be taken without damage. However, the next morning the characters find the hideous thing gone, returned to its evil shrine while they slept.

🦋 **Undead Al-Yasa (1):** Use the stats for Ghoul below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

AL-YASA

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Lockpick d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Greedy, Small

Edges: Alertness, Thief

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4).

GHOUL

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

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

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Infravision:** Ghouls halve penalties (round down) for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Keen Nose:** Ghouls get +2 to Notice and Tracking rolls against living targets.
- **Paralysis:** Victims of a ghoul's claw attacks must make a Vigor roll at -2 or be paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover

from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.

BAGUIRMI SULTANATE

The Baguirmi Sultanate is a relatively new kingdom to the southeast of Lake Chad. Baguirmi is currently a vassal state to the nearby Kanem-Bornu Empire. Umar, the current ruler of the sultanate, holds the dual title of Sultan and Mbang, the local dialect's word for "king."

Shortly after its creation, the kingdom adopted Islam and began using the judicial and administrative processes of other Islamic kingdoms. This has strengthened its position and allowed it to gain powerful foreign allies. Like most central African nations, Baguirmi is militaristic in nature; were it not, it would soon fall to its warlike neighbors.

MASSENYA

Massenya is the capital of Baguirmi and where the royal palace sits. It is sandwiched between the Sahara to the north and the dense jungles of central Africa to the south. It lies on a fairly arid plain and more than a day's ride from a non-seasonal waterway.

Also the home to the many officials of the government, the city often hosts diplomats and envoys from neighboring kingdoms. Although not the center for trade in the region, it does have quite a few unique and esoteric merchants who use the frequent visits by foreigners as an opportunity to sell off all manner of goods and curiosities collected by (and from) the surrounding kingdoms and tribes.

There are a few impressive structures in Massenya—the palace, in particular—but most of the buildings are humble affairs. The average building is a single story with only a few rooms. Roofs are usually of thatched construction which more than suffices for the limited rainfall the city experiences during most of the year.



THE MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE

LEAD In: Upon arriving in Massenya, the wanderers are given the gift of a rare egg. Unbeknownst to them, the egg was stolen from a group of akaana, who've now come looking for it.

WELCOMING GIFTS

As the party enters the city of Massenya, one of the first things that draws their attention are small groups of local men laboring to repair the roofs of a few nearby huts. Should the travelers take interest in the construction, allow them a Streetwise roll. On a success they learn that the city has been plagued by "shadows" that come in the night, sometimes snatching victims from inside their very homes!

As the party watches, a well groomed man dressed in expensive robes approaches. The man is followed by a small retinue of attendants. Smiling broadly, he introduces himself as Samir Ibn Ilan, advisor and administrative official in service to the court of the Mbang/Sultan. He welcomes the party to his city stating that it is customary to offer travelers gifts as a sign of hospitality and accommodation. *"To ensure your prosperity, my friends."*

He presents the party with a bundle of incense, a flask of water, and a large and oddly colored egg. He explains to the party the significance of the gifts, representative offerings of air, water, and life.

After presenting his gifts Samir repeats the welcomes on behalf of the Mbang and then takes his leave to return to his duties. He avoids any questions, apologizing profusely as he excuses himself, secretly anxious to distance himself from the egg, which he believes cursed. If the characters openly doubt his intent, they may make Notice rolls to determine that Samir is being false in some way. He obsequiously denies any allegations of that kind, but under no circumstance does he accept the gifts back, implying that the Mbang will take that as a great insult.

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Examining the gifts, the wanderers find all but the egg to be rather commonplace and inexpensive. The egg is strangely colored, bearing spots ranging from orange to yellowish-green and purple over its surface. Its size is roughly that of an ostrich egg. A Knowledge (Biology or similar animal handling lore) roll tells the party the egg is still viable and not of reptilian origin. A raise allows the character to determine that it is not of any recorded avian species either—a rare treasure indeed!

Despite Samir's warm greetings, the heroes find most of the locals to be somewhat xenophobic, avoiding conversation beyond simple courtesies. Asking any of the residents about the egg is met with either ignorance or abject fear. Either way, no one provides any useful information regarding the strange object.

In The Night They Come

A few hours after sunset, the adventurers come face to face with the “shadows” plaguing the city. Outside, the adventurers are easy prey for the dark, airborne attackers. If inside a building, they hear a great screeching and clatter as something begins to tear away at the roof. (The thatched structures in Massenya slow the attackers a single round.)

A group of akaanas attack from on high, ripping and tearing through any obstacle that bars their path. After only a few moments of fighting the creatures, it becomes obvious what they want—the egg given to the party earlier. The akaanas single out the character holding the egg and focus most of their attacks on her. If the party moves away from the egg, a few of the akaanas veer off to try to recover it.

If the akaanas retrieve the egg, the creatures fly away with their prize. Otherwise, they fight until half their number are slain, flying away into the night. The attacks repeat nightly until the flock is destroyed (there are 20 in the flock) or the egg is recaptured.

The simplest solution, once the heroes determine what the akaanas are after, is to simply relinquish the egg. It could also potentially be used as bait to attempt to capture or kill an akaana. Finally, if the characters destroy the egg, the akaanas become enraged, pursuing the group unto death.

Regardless, ending the threat of the akaanas brings the party some renown in Massenya—unless they decide to confront Samir, who is, in fact, an administrator for the Mbang. Doing so quickly results in them being ousted from the city (or worse).

🐉 **Akaana (8):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

AKAANA

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d6

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Leathery skin.
- **Bite/Talons:** Str+d6.
- **Death From Above:** An akaana that hits with a raise causes damage as usual. In addition, the thing grasps its prey in its claws, and swoops into the air, moving the remainder of its flight pace. The next round the creature drops its prey to the ground (see falling damage). Characters on Hold or who have not yet taken their action may attempt to hold on by making an opposed Strength roll. If successful, the prey continues to struggle. With a raise, the victim forces the creature close enough to a landing spot to jump free without taking damage.
- **Flight:** Flying Pace of 12”.
- **Infravision:** Akaanas halve penalties for Darkness against living targets.
- **Size +1:** Akaanas are taller than humans.

SAMIR IBN ILAN

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Obese.

Edges: Charismatic

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), fine robe.

THE DARK CONTINENT

How the Wind Howls

LEAD In: Traveling on the savannah, the party enters a village to learn a young child was badly mauled by jackals.

Bad Dog

While passing through a small village, the wanderers hear news of a jackal that mauled a young child from one of the outlying farms. A small hunting party went looking for the beast, but found nothing. If the heroes chalk it up to the dangers of living in central Africa, they are in for a rude surprise when they leave the settlement.

About an hour out, the characters may make a Notice roll to figure out that something is stalking them from the tall grass. If they ignore it and continue, it follows for about twenty minutes, then bounds in front of them, snarling menacingly. It's a jackal and there are two gaping wounds upon the back of the animal at the shoulders. The creature is clearly starving—perhaps due to its wounded state—and this, no doubt, is what has motivated its courage in confronting the group.

The jackal darts back, growling and snapping, but never engaging in combat directly. Suddenly, it howls, a long and haunting sound. In the distance, the howl is answered, and the group gets the sudden impression they may have fallen into a trap.

A tense few moments pass as the party scans the grasses around them looking for the other members of the jackals pack. Another Notice roll gives away the location of the pack—above them! These jackals (actually mlularuka) have wings and are bearing down on the party, swooping in for a series of quick attacks. Their injured packmate stays out of the fray, yipping about the fringe.

The mlularuka are not uncannily brave. After four of their number have been felled, they retreat to the skies, circling a few times before howling to mourn their lost. The wingless jackal howls out as well before it departs, hoping to scavenge food elsewhere.

Mlularuka (4, plus 2 per hero): See page 106.

For Love of Money

Once the party has begun to move on their way, they again sense a nearby commotion. A few moments later, a pair of men emerges from the grass a few hundred feet away. Scanning the clouds and talking excitedly, they do not notice the adventurers right away. Their conversation stops short as soon as they see the group, and they cautiously pull back, waiting for the group to either hail them or move on.

If the wanderers attempt to communicate, the pair is terse and short, trying not to reveal much. They claim that they saw the attack begin, and had only hoped to aid anyone who might have been hurt by the beasts.

A Knowledge (Central Africa) roll identifies them as members of a rival tribe of the local inhabitants. A Common Knowledge or Knowledge (Heraldry) roll (–2/–4 for non-Africans) tells the characters the same thing. If confronted with this, they become very defensive and attempt to leave. They are well



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aware that they are on another tribe's land and quite fearful of being discovered taking game there.

If they are pressed by the adventurers with a successful Persuasion or Intimidation roll, one of the men caves. He admits that his name is Ngarta, and that he and his partner Kimbereta have been hunting the mlularuka—specifically to take their wings. Ground up, they are reputed to be a heady aphrodisiac, the pair making a sizable sum off of the two wings they cut from an injured one just a few days earlier. Removing the wings doesn't necessarily kill the creatures, but the men make it clear they have no concern for the mlularukas' well-being.

As if on cue, the wounded jackal returns with its packmates in tow, making a beeline straight for the two hunters. As the poachers are not as adept at fighting as the party, the jackals make short work of them without the adventurers' interference. They have no interest in fighting the characters, and attempt to pivot away to stay out of reach.

The characters now have a decision: choose to aid the poachers or allow the animals revenge upon those that maimed one of their packmates. Either way, the local tribe would be quite interested to hear the likely reason why children have been mauled recently.

🦋 **Mlularuka(1, plus 2 per hero):** See below.

🦋 **Poacher (2):** See below.

RUMOR

"Those ivory traders were very strong. Next time we'll be better prepared, though."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Sentry of the Ivory Graves**, on page 120.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

MLULARUKA

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Flying:** Pace 8.
- **Size -1:** Mlularuka are small creatures.

POACHER

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: —

Basic Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry) bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (20).

AROCHUKWU

Founded by slave traders, Arochukwu borders the southern portion of central Africa, part of a loose alliance of powerful city-states. The union has created a strong network of trading and economic domination throughout the hinterland, absorbing smaller communities into the kingdom. Although a significant military power in its own right, the Aro people often employ mercenaries from other tribes, including the Akpa who, unlike most of their neighbors, are armed with European firearms.

Slaving is such an integral part of their society that travelers here must be constantly on their guard. A common trick of slavers is to chase people into local shrines, where custom dictates that if the person prays for help, they become an osu (or juju slave) to the deity of the shrine. The slavers then purchase the osu from the local priest and

begin the process of transporting the hapless victim to the coastal regions for sale, often to Portuguese traders.

Trade is the seed by which this confederation is spreading through the central African jungles. Aro merchants are often the first wave of an independent village's assimilation into the growing alliance as they spread their trading monopoly.

Arochukwu is also home to the priests of the Long Juju oracle, also known as the Ibini Ukpabi. The priests hold a monopoly on one of the most respected oracles in the region. Most inhabitants of the region consult the oracle prior to any serious undertaking, and since the Ibini Ukpabi priests work hand-in-hand with Aro traders, this has helped further spread the influence of Arochukwu.

SHACKLED KINGS

LEAD In: The wanderers enter a village that claims to be being terrorized by inhuman, man-eating lions. A village elder entreats the party to hunt down these vicious beasts.

BACKGROUND

Atachu is a newly established small settlement. A seasoned chieftain named Namase has founded the settlement, hoping for it to become the next hub of trade for the Arochukwu. This settlement is ideally located along a trade route that leads all the way to Alexandria, something Namase intends to play to his advantage.

Populated mainly by younger warriors sworn to Namase, they feel in a position of strength when dealing with outsiders. Although medium-sized groups with superior arms are treated with more reverence than solo travelers, the ruthless warriors proudly trick, fight, or subvert anyone they can into slavery. Although the town has not yet built a shrine, several priests of the Ibini Ukpabi are working to create one.

Recently, the village has set its sights on a tribe of werelions as targets for slaving. Understandably, the werelions have taken issue with this, but Namase and his warriors have thus far been winning the battle, having

discovered the creatures' weakness to silver. Shortly before the travelers arrive in Atachu, the werelions have conducted a retaliatory raid of their own.

A VILLAGE UNDER SIEGE

While traveling through the region, the heroes begin to note they are apparently being stalked by lions. The predatory creatures remain just out of direct sight, but occasionally one of the adventurers catches a glimpse of one shadowing the group. Fortunately, just as twilight begins to fall, the party encounters a small village.

A few of the outlying huts, while newly built, show signs of damage and new repairs. The residents refer to both themselves and their settlement as Atachu. As a whole, the locals seem to be somewhat hardened, somber, and slightly cautious of the wanderers. Any questions are directed to the village elder, an old warrior named Namase.

Namase greets the party with skepticism at first, but should the party show even the slightest bit of concern for the village, he enthusiastically begins relaying a tale of woe. It seems that the Atachu have drawn the ire of several fierce lions that have been attacking the village at night, driven, he says, by foul magic from the nearby rival village of M'Pau. The M'Pau have even recently taken his daughter, Malo, and he has lost many of his bravest warriors trying to retrieve her. He begs the party to use their more lethal weapons to defend the village and end this horrible threat.

As he finishes speaking, cheers break out in the village as three young men return, a woman bound and gagged between them. They proudly boast that even though they were unable to find Malo, they were able to capture one of the witches of M'Pau, hoping this prevents future attacks on the village. A hero who makes a Notice roll observes that the young men are armed with spears pointed by particularly polished tips. A close examination reveals the heads are actually silvered.

Namase informs the party that it is growing too late to plan an assault on M'Pau, and that the capture of the witch should afford

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them some safety. Posting guards around the perimeter, he has the warriors take the captive to his hut and retires for the evening. He advises the party to stay in the village for the evening regardless of their decision as the African wilderness is dangerous after dark, even without the magics of the M’Pau.

HUNTERS IN THE DARKNESS

Late that night, a cry erupts from the far side of the village opposite the party. A fierce growling leads to a deep roar, shaking even the staunchest of sleepers awake. As the characters rush to the growing sounds of conflict, a very large lion tears through a nearby hut, the severed arm of a warrior hanging from its maw. It circles the party warily, but does not attack unless the heroes provoke it.

After a round or two of combat—or a few moments if neither side advances—a roar resounds from behind the group. A lioness erupts from Namase’s hut, bolting past the party and headed straight out of the village. The lion retreats, disengaging from combat to flee alongside her. And as suddenly as it began, the attack ends.

🦁 **Werelions (2):** See page 109.

MOONLIGHT PURSUIT

Namase emerges from his hut, angry and unharmed. He shouts that the witch turned into a lioness right in front of him, escaping before he could stop her. His warriors, he claims, although brave, stand no chance against such evil magic. The elder bemoans he no longer has leverage against the M’Pau and begs the party to go now, before the witch has a chance to wreak vengeance on his daughter.

If the party takes his advice, they may follow the trail out of the village. Have them make a Tracking roll to notice that the lions—5 total—headed directly to the south of Atachu. After about an hour of trailing the beasts, a second Tracking roll reveals the paw prints have turned into footprints, lending validity to Namase’s story.

TRUTH UNTOLD

After the party has traveled a few miles from Atachu, they encounter a strange sight. The previously captive witch stands in the middle of the path, arms raised and extended outward. A short distance behind her, four muscular men stand at attention, unarmed and dressed in simple loincloths. Their only other adornments are fringed covers on their shins and forearms, partnered with a large headdress that gives them the appearance of a mane. They watch the party warily, but not advancing.

“I am Tau, child of Xango and priestess of M’Pau. You seem noble and honest, but you have been fed nothing but lies since you entered into Atachu. Please, stay your weapons and listen to my words, and judge their truth for yourself.”

Should the party listen, Tau explains that things in Atachu are not quite as they appear. The people of Atachu are semi-nomadic slavers, moving into an area and selling other tribes to white men from the coast. Her people, though small in number, are the guardians of this land. Entrusted with their duties by their god Xango, they cannot ever leave their territory willingly.

Namase has captured several of their women and sold them to the slavers. However, his warriors kill any males they have encountered and Namase eats their hearts in a deluded belief that it may grant him their power. She asks the party not to interfere in their escape, but if they need more proof, they can accompany her back to M’Pau. There, they can speak to Namase’s own daughter Malo, who has fled the Atachu in horror over her father’s actions.

M’Pau is much smaller than Atachu, only holding roughly 40 people. When the party arrives, Tau is greeted by Malo, who is clearly quite comfortable with her “captors.” She confirms everything Tau said. The two women speak briefly to one side before approaching the wanderers. They ask the heroes to help them end this conflict without further bloodshed by accompanying Malo, Tau, and a few of their warriors to parley with Namase.

EMPTY WORDS

This turns out to be a wise precaution, as the warriors of Atachu circle around the southern half of the village as the group approaches, Namase at their head. The negotiations are terse and short, as Namase is unwilling to parlay. Even Malo's pleas have little effect on him. Conflict becomes inevitable as he demands that the warriors seize his daughter and kill everyone else.

The battle is a rough affair, as although the party and the werelions are outnumbered, they are significantly better equipped and more skilled than their opponents. Neither of the women joins in the fight. Instead, Tau pulls Malo from the battle to protect her from her father's warriors.

The werelions shift into their bestial forms, savagely defending their own. Allow the players to handle the werelion warriors as Allies in this battle. The skirmish only concludes when Namase falls, fighting until the bitter end. Suddenly leaderless, the Atachu become disoriented and routed as the remaining werelions from the war party join in, chasing them away to the north.

🐾 **Atachu Warriors (30):** See below.

🐾 **Namase:** See below.

🐾 **Werelions (4):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

ATCHU WARRIORS

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Silvered short spear (Str+d6, Range 3/6/12), knife (Str+d4), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor to ranged shots).

ADVENTURE LINK



This adventure can lead to the **Savage Tale: Pride of the Waves**, on page 88.

If you choose to use that Savage Tale, after the battle, the explorers find that Tau is missing. Should the party investigate, Malo points to where she was last with the woman. Tracking and Notice rolls reveal blood trails and drag marks upon the ground, indicating that she is captive once more. The people of M'Pau despair at this, as the Atachu village is the northernmost part of their territory. The werelions are bound to the land, and cannot willingly leave it to follow her.



NAMASE

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7/6; **Toughness:** 6/8 (2)

Hindrances: Greedy, Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Level Headed, Noble

Gear: Silvered short spear (Str+d6, Range 3/6/12), short sword (Str+1d6), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor to ranged shots).

WERELIONS

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Werelions make two Fighting attacks each round at no penalty.
- **Immunity:** These creatures suffer half damage from non-magical attacks.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a werelion has a 50% chance of rising as a similar beast.
- **Size +2:** Werelions are tall and stocky.

THE PATH OF KANE

- **Weakness (Silver):** Werereatures suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

KINGDOM OF KONGO

Located in the western area of central Africa, the Kingdom of Kongo is the largest and most influential of the central African states. The king of Kongo rules over a kingdom that sprawls across several core provinces all bordered by water – the Atlantic to the west, the Kwango River to the east, and the Kongo River and Kwanza River to the north and south, respectively. Its influence reaches even further, as most neighboring kingdoms defer to Kongo in nearly all matters.

The structure of the kingdom is very European in nature, symbolic of its close alliance with the Portuguese. The Kongo is divided into provinces ruling communal villages which are moved every ten years to account for soil exhaustion. Leaders of provinces are hereditary and had specifically European titles such as Count, Duke or Marquis.



Taxes are paid upwardly, based on the number of villagers in a village, and collected each year on July 25. With nearly half a million souls in the kingdom, it's easy to see that Kongo is one of the richer areas of Africa. The taxes supplement Kongo's rich trades in ivory, copper, and fine cloths which in turn support the Roman Catholic Church of Kongo and the kingdom's army.

RUMOR

"They should just move Mutapa to Great Zimbabwe, it still stands, yes? Besides, many claim that Ophir lies there."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: The Great Zimbabwe**, on page 122.

The official state religion is Catholicism, albeit mixed with some local theological elements. In fact, the capital of Kongo was renamed to São Salvador ("Holy Savior" in Portuguese) to convince the Pope to recognize an official diocese for Kongo. However, the Portuguese king is responsible for appointing bishops to the See, which has led to a shortage of ordained clergy in Kongo.

The military is composed of drafted archers, skilled heavy infantry and Portuguese mercenaries. However, it has a largely decentralized nature. The army summons large numbers for individual battles—sometimes upwards of 20,000—but rarely maintains those numbers across long campaigns.

SÃO SALVADOR

Originally named M'banza-Kongo, São Salvador was already a large city by the time Portuguese missionaries found it. It sits atop a flat-topped mountain named Mongo a Kaila that rises over 300' above the surrounding valleys. Roughly 100,000 people live in or near São Salvador, making it one of the largest cities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Due to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and the Portuguese, much of São Salvador is comprised of stone buildings, including a cathedral, several churches and the royal palace (which includes a judgment tree known locally as the Jalankuwo). Full of the trappings of Western Europe, the party may feel themselves oddly at home in these surroundings.



THE RIVER GOD KAH-LUKA

LEAD In: As the party approaches the Kingdom of Kongo, they find that all bridges across the Kongo River have been destroyed, along with the boats of native fisherman. The natives reference an angry river god, Kah-Luka, which has been smashing anything that attempts passage across the Kongo.

! DANGER, BRIDGE OUT!

As the party gets closer to the seat of the Kingdom of Kongo, they find more and better travelled paths leading to the Kongo River. Following any of the larger trails takes them down a road that leads to a bridge across the river. However, the center span of the rope and wood bridge has been completely destroyed.

The splintered remains of the bridge wash up against the banks as the ropes dangle in the water. A Smarts roll allows the party to determine that the bridge was not demolished from the banks, rather from the center. Only a few feet of structure stand on either bank.

The river is not fordable even under the best conditions, as at points it is hundreds of feet wide and very deep. Recent storms in the area have left the river even more turbulent than normal, the waters rushing by at a brisk pace.

A short distance down the bank, several fisherman are gathered around the shattered remains of a boat, bemoaning its condition and pointing at times to the bridge. They aren't too put off by the presence of the explorers, as the frequent usage of the river

as a trade route has often placed them in contact with foreigners. In fact, as misery loves company, they gladly offer information about the current situation if asked.

The fishermen claim that every bridge across the river—and every boat on it—have been destroyed by an angry river god, Kah-Luka. They describe him as a massive beast.

"This is Kah-Luka's river. We had forgotten this, and that has made his rage very great. Too many use the river and his lands without making the proper tribute. To punish us, he has taken the form of one of the great-mouthed killers. Soon, he will likely come for old Melik, unless the fool stops making boats."

"DIVINE" RETRIBUTION

The fishermen tell the party that the nearest bridge they believe to still be standing is a day's travel to the north. Traveling north to the bridge is easy enough, as many paths and trails line the river. If asked, they tell the heroes that Melik, a boat maker, is only an hour or so in the same direction. However, they also caution the travelers again that Melik risks Kah-Luka's wrath and to deal with him is to court disaster.

Regardless of which course they choose, after walking for about 45 minutes, the characters see bits of shaped wood and splintered rigging starting to dot the shores, signs that a number of boats have met their end nearby. Progressing a little further, they see a riverside hut set back roughly 40 or 50 feet from the shore with several boats in the process of being constructed nearby.

A middle-aged man looks up from his work on one of the boats only long enough to gauge the travelers' intent before returning to his work. Should the heroes mention that they're trying to get across the river into the Kingdom of Kongo, he smiles and offers to sell them the boat he's currently making.

If they bring up Kah-Luka, he skeptically brushes it aside. *"It is a water-horse, nothing more. They like to be left alone. This one is making a claim for the river, but soon enough, he will pass."*



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With that, Melik approaches the river, pulling the boat along with him to test it. Allow the party to make a Notice roll. With a success, they see bubbles coming up from under the water about ten feet out. This gives them a split second to ready themselves before the giant hippo Kah-Luka emerges from the river. Any adventurers who fail the roll are surprised and receive no action cards the first round.

The huge hippopotamus charges from the river, rushing towards Melik and the boat. Melik drops the boat and hurriedly retreats. Denied its intended target, the enraged hippo takes on anyone in its path.

Kah-Luka attempts to flee if it suffers two wounds. Once the hippo has been forced to flee or is killed, Melik offers the party use of his boat as payment for their timely intervention. Regardless of their outcome, Kah-Luka has finally been pushed back, and moves further south along the river, where he finds less resistance.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



KAH-LUKA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Blubbery hide.
- **Berserk:** Hippos immediately go berserk if they sense intruders in their territory. While Berserk, its Parry is reduced by 2 but it adds +2 to all Fighting and Strength rolls, and his Toughness. The hippo gains the Hardy ability while berserk.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Dehydration:** Hippos must immerse themselves in water (salt or fresh) at least one hour out of every 24 or gain a Fatigue level each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.
- **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against a hippo due its size.

- **Semi-Aquatic:** Pace 8. Hippos can stay submerged for about 5 minutes.
- **Size +5:** Kah-Luka is enormous, even for a hippo.



SERPENTS UPON THE EARTH

LEAD In: The travelers come upon two missionaries set upon by a group of cultists. After rescuing them, they discover that another has been taken captive and is apparently intended as a sacrifice to an ancient deity.

MISSIONARIES IN NEED

Not long after the party arrives in São Salvador, as they are passing through a sparsely populated portion of the city in the early evening hours, they spot a pair of men being attacked by a small group of robed individuals. Upon seeing the party, the men call for help in Italian.

Should the party rush to their aid, they discover the two men to be Catholic missionaries. Their assailants are clothed in dark green robes and armed only with daggers. Once more than half the attackers are down or dead, the rest attempt to flee into the night.

🔱 **Cultists (2 per hero):** See page 114.

KIDNAPPED

The two missionaries, Biaggio Romano and Giuseppe Martinelli, thank the travelers for their assistance. One of their brother missionaries was recently taken captive, apparently by members of a strange serpent cult. He was kidnapped from their quarters just last night. A dagger engraved with a cobra pinned a message to the door.

The letter reads: *"Our eyes devour all, our ears consume every sound. We know you will try to follow us. Pursuing us further will result in the deaths of these innocent men of the false god. Mehen's chosen, the Apepsi, comes to you now, and will swallow you whole if you do not leave."*

The pair had been asking the local populace in hopes to find their brother, or at least his captors. They'd had no luck and, moments before the party arrived, they were ambushed by the group of robed men. Romano and Martinelli are at a loss as to how to proceed. Their skills lend themselves to neither finding missing persons nor fighting off murderous cultists. If the wanderers lend aid to them, an hour or two of canvassing the city and a Streetwise roll uncovers a good deal of information about the cult. Apep-si is apparently an ancient Egyptian serpent entity of malicious intent. Any worship of the snake god has long been forbidden in Kongo—even before the adoption of Christianity—but it is still used as a boogeyman to frighten unruly children. Apep-si has a taste for chastity, eating virgin men and women alike and summoning the powerful being requires the sacrifice of a virgin on its altar.

They also learn that the sacrifice is to be consumed when "Horus' left eye gazes upon the victim from on high, so he might see his failure." A Knowledge (Occult or Religion) roll or another Streetwise roll (-2) tells the characters that this most likely refers to midnight on the night of a full moon—according to legend, Horus' left eye is the moon. (If the travelers lack the appropriate skills to determine this on their own, one of the priests can reveal it to them.)

If the characters pass what they've learned along to the two priests, Romano tells them the kidnapped missionary was raised in the church, and has never known a woman's embrace—making him a prime candidate for the sacrifice. Neither of the two priests is convinced of the legend, but the physical safety of their brother is of some concern. The two plead with the adventurers to further aid them in saving their brother from an abominable fate.

CROWN OF THE SNAKE GOD

The heroes quickly realize that they are pressed for time, as there is a full moon that very night. An Area Knowledge or Streetwise roll learns legend holds that a nearby area known as Fanged Hill was the site of worship for the cult long ago. Fanged Hill is several

miles outside of São Salvador. By now, the party likely has only a few hours to accomplish their goals.

Pressing on into the night, they come upon Fanged Hill only minutes before midnight. The mound is pretty much just that—a large rolling heap of earth that stretches the better part of a mile from end to end. Surrounded by vegetation, the mound itself is clear of anything other than grasses and the occasional small bush or tree.

Approaching the mound, the explorers hear chanting and the rhythmic beating of rattles and drums. From the edge of the jungle, the party can see several snake men surrounded by crazed human cultists. The chanting is in an undecipherable dead language, growing in intensity and pace as they near the hilltop.

Seated on a crude throne of bone and wood is a richly robed black man, a blank expression on his countenance. On his head rests a golden circlet shaped like a snake with a globe in its mouth. The missionary is tied to stakes in the ground, and as the moon raises high above the clearing, the crowned man begins to hiss loudly.

The ritual is nearly complete and should the heroes hesitate more than a moment, the crown emanates a black aura, and the robed man begins shedding his human skin, scales replacing flesh as he becomes a towering serpent of great strength. He moves to consume the prone missionary and, if he does, continues to sate his hunger on every human nearby—friend or foe.

The cultists realize they've been deluded and flee after the first two have been impaled on the fangs of their god. The snake men and Apep-si fight to the death.

On the other hand, if the heroes move quickly and succeed in disrupting the ritual, then the fight is much easier, as Apep-si does not make its appearance. One of the snake man warriors rips the crown off the head of the robed man and attempts to flee into the jungle. The cultists and the rest of the snake men attack the party to provide the priest time to escape.

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Should the adventurers succeed in saving the missionary, his brothers and he are suitably grateful. They do not have anything of wealth to offer the characters as a reward but can serve as contacts for them later if you so choose. If the party manages to recover the crown, it fetches £200—if they can find a buyer. The item radiates an almost palpable sense of evil and menace.

🐍 **Cultists (1, plus 2 per hero):** See below.

🐍 **Snake Man Priest:** See below.

🐍 **Snake Man Warriors (2):** See below.

🐍 **Apep-si:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



APEP-SI

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d6

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11(2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick scales.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Constrict:** Against targets of Size +3 or lower, the snake can Constrict whenever it scores a raise on a Fighting roll. On each of the snake's actions, the victim must make an opposed Strength roll or gain a Fatigue level. Breaking free requires an action and an opposed Strength roll. Once Incapacitated, the victim is unconscious for the next 1d6 hours—during which time the snake eats him alive! Fatigue recovers at a rate of one level every 15 minutes.
- **Large:** Attacks against the serpent are at +2 because of its large size.
- **Size +4:** Apep-si is nearly 25' long.

CULTIST

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Outsider

Edges: —

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4).

SNAKE MAN PRIEST

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Astronomy) d10, Magic d10, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Tracking d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6/7; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: —

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), Combat Reflexes, Command, Improved Strong Caster, Level Headed, Natural Leader, Quick

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, Parry +1, Reach +1, Requires both hands).

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Scaly hide.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Poison (+0):** Snake men inject deadly venom through their bite. A character bitten by a snake man must make a Vigor roll. With a success, the bite area swells and becomes numb. The victim becomes Exhausted until healed. With a failure, the victim becomes Incapacitated and must make a second Vigor roll or die in 2d6 minutes.
- **Powers:** *Armor* (hardened scales), *beast friend* (snakes only), *puppet* (rocking motion), *smite* (venom), *summon beast* (swarms of snakes or giant constrictor only).
Treat as a Veteran character.

SNAKE MAN WARRIOR

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

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

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: —

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Quick

Gear: Scimitar (Str+d8).

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Scaly hide.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.

- **Poison:** Snake men inject deadly venom through their bite. A character bitten by a snake man must make a Vigor roll. With success, the bite area swells and becomes numb. The victim becomes Exhausted until healed. With a failure, the victim becomes Incapacitated and must make a second Vigor roll or die in 2d6 minutes.



TEMPLE OF BLOOD AND STONE

LEAD In: The party overhears a young warrior tell an improbable tale of being attacked by a “demon bear” to a group of men who doubt his claims.

THE WARRIOR’S TALE

While walking through the marketplace of the capital of Kongo, the party comes upon a gathering of men. Leading the argument is a tall, well muscled young man who radiates a fierce pride. The young warrior, whose name is Jomba, declares that he and his two brothers, Sogat and M’tulu, have encountered a beast and his strange animal servants.

They were part of a hunting expedition with three other tribesmen and a wealthy European and his retinue. Jomba animatedly describes a late night attack by the “demon bear.” The beasts came into the camp at least ten strong, slaying several of the guides and attendants. The European and two of Jomba’s tribesmen were captured by odd, hyena-like behemoths during the battle. Jomba and his brothers saw the demon bear watching in the distance.

“There in the glow of the fire’s reflection I saw it. A shuffling shape of a bear flanked on either side by similar, but stranger, creatures. The demon bear had burning red eyes that shone like hate in its empty sockets. Its flesh was torn and bone was exposed on the chest and face. The fur was patchy and gray. It growled in a humanlike voice then pounded its paws into the ground, a sick and wet thumping sound. The other bears heeded his call, dragging their dead and their captives away. My brothers and I alone lived to tell this tale.”

Not many of his listeners appear to believe his unusual story. Jomba is angry at his words being disputed and claims his listeners are merely fearful of facing the bear themselves. He turns to the heroes pointedly after saying this. Looking at the wanderers, he says, *“I see warriors and not cowards. Will you accompany me and my brothers to slay this demon?”*

TERROR FROM THE TREES

Travel to the scene of the demon bear’s attack takes two days, leading through the jungle and into the rough terrain of the lowland hills and mountains. At dusk of the second day the party and their warrior guides reach the spot where they had encamped.

Jomba suggests retiring for the night as the encroaching darkness makes the tracks nearly impossible to follow. He and his brothers set up camp at the base of an overhanging rock jutting from the base of the low



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hillside. Despite the constant animal sounds and movement in the shadows, all goes well until after midnight.

Those sleeping are rudely awakened by a deep rich pounding filling the camp. A very large bear stands erect on the top of the overhang, thumping his paws on the rock in aggressive fury. As the party begins to react, a scream and sickening snapping sound comes from behind them as the headless corpse of Sogat falls from a tree.

In the branches, a massive hyena-like creature snarls, blood on its muzzle. Its challenge is answered by several similar growls in the trees surrounding the campsite. The bear then shoves a small boulder from the overhang and retreats. Characters must make an Agility roll to avoid taking 2d6 damage from the falling rock.

After the initial round of combat Jomba and M'tulu shout wildly and give chase to the single fleeing demon bear. The creatures in the trees, actually nandi bears, stay behind to harass the wanderers, likely delaying them for a least a little while. After three rounds of combat, the remaining nandi bears also retreat into the jungle, following the same path as their leader.

The nandi bears are much better suited to traveling through the local terrain and stay in the trees and out of their pursuers' immediate reach. Eventually the nandi bears lead the party into a cave-like tunnel that winds into the lowland hills. When the adventurers exit the tunnel at the base of a large steep hill they find the body of M'tulu lying lifeless at the cave opening.

Worse, the remaining nandi bears have turned to face them!

🐾 **Jomba and M'tulu:** See page 118.

🐾 **Nandi Bears (1 per hero):** See page 118.

🐾 **Demon Bear:** See page 118.

TREACHEROUS DESCENT

After the fight, a Tracking roll—or Notice roll (–2)—finds signs of Jomba's passage into the jungle. Their trail winds its way up the steep incline choked through with heavy undergrowth, making the climb slow

and treacherous. As they ascend, the jungle canopy becomes sparse enough to let the moonlight to shine through, creating menacing shadows all around. The air is thick and humid as the adventurers hack, cut, and slip their way up the long hill. They are greeted at the summit by a cooling breeze and an incredible sight.

A hundred feet below them lay the ruins of a once magnificent temple. The ruin is disconcerting at best, invoking an ancient but highly advanced civilization, one that seems alien to this land. The temple is predominantly stone, but some decorative metal highlights adorn the building. Although structurally it is in relatively good shape, the jungle has begun to reclaim the temple.

The rear of the temple butts up against the mountainside, and the adventurers quickly realize that no small amount of activity is occurring there. They can easily see large animals—more nandi bears—moving about near the back of the structure. A series of crudely cut earthen steps, sometimes supported by rotted wood and thick roots, winds down toward the base of the temple.

Near the valley floor, the explorers must choose between hacking through a thick bush barricading the stairs or climbing down a 40' section of cliff. Cutting through the bush causes a flock of brightly colored jungle birds to noisily take flight. This alerts the bears in the city and a cacophony of growls and roars fills the air, several rushing to attack. Climbing down allows a decent chance of entering the city unnoticed—as long as no one falls!

At the base of the temple, they find Jomba hiding in the undergrowth. He followed the demon bear here to where it appears to lair, but he knows he cannot face it alone.

DEN OF THE DEMON BEAR

Characters who have visited the Great Zimbabwe (**Savage Tale: The Great Zimbabwe**, see page 122) may observe vague similarities between this ruin and that city with a Notice roll. Supported by pillars, the large rectangular building rests atop a dais of stairs that leads into a cavern in the mountain. The large archways give it an airy feel that opposes the choking, shadowy aura that envelops it.

Visible from the base are odd glyphs, written in a dark crimson color, out of place even in this surreal setting. Mounting the stairs, an overpowering stench of rot and decay assails the travelers, growing more potent as they ascend. At the top, they find themselves on a flat plaza that leads to the entrance to the temple.

Swarms of flies surround two piles of dark heaps lying in the temple corner—bodies of the bears' previous victims. The ambient moonlight makes it easy to see within the temple, where the body of a native rests upon a decorated wooden pallet. Near it are more bodies of various humans, haphazardly strewn about (including the remains of those taken captive).

From the shadowy recesses of the cave steps the hideous demon bear. Its hide is torn in several places and flies congregate on its flesh. Flanked on all sides by large bears, the demon bear walks upright. Grinning almost maliciously through half-rotted lips, it points and a short grunt sends its guardians to attack.

The nandi bears immediately charge the party. Meanwhile, the "demon" bear stands back, entering combat when he sees an opportune moment to strike.

 **Demon Bear:** See page 118.

 **Nandi Bears (1, plus 1 per hero):** See page 118.

LORD OF THE DEAD BEARS

Once the heroes have defeated the bears and begin to catch their breath, a startling thing occurs. One of the slain bears suddenly jerks back to life and assaults them.

Luckily, its second defeat is more permanent: the bear totters and falls, a ghastly glow speeding from it into the native on the pallet. The human body bolts upright, gasping in air and casting his eyes about furtively. Very emaciated and weak, the native doesn't move from the pallet.

He is not in good condition—skin hanging loosely on his frame, disfigured legs jutting outward in odd directions. With his eyes projecting hatred at the party, he attempts to choke out the words of a spell, his cracked

lips and dry throat failing him. Instead he settles for wheezing out a few spite-ridden words.

"N'Longa was a fool, not teaching me, B'kele, the ways of his spells. I have learned much on my own and soon I will be able to seize the bodies of man! And you, you are all so much like him, the white devil N'Longa calls blood brother. This does not end here. I will hunt you. Perhaps I will even take your body as my own."

The sorcerer, unable to muster the strength to possess yet another bear, falls back on his own not inconsiderable magical powers. However, his weakened condition overwhelms him after only two rounds of combat and he collapses unconscious, leaving him at the party's mercy. If Jomba survived the battle, he steps forward and plunges his spear into the sorcerer's helpless body unless the heroes prevent him.

Unfortunately, none of B'kele's victims remain to rescue. The necromancer and his animal minions have long since feasted on their remains.

 **Nandi Bear:** Use the stats for Nandi Bear with the Undead Special Ability. See page 118.

 **B'kele:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



B'KELE

A former pupil of N'longa, the wise juju man sensed B'kele's evil ambitions before training the sorcerer in his most powerful spells. This did not stop the man from continuing his quest for power and B'kele has made startling progress on his own.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Spirits) d10, Notice d6, Shamanism d8, Stealth d6

Charisma: +0

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

THE PATH OF KANE

Hindrances: Arrogant, Illiterate

Edges: Arcane Background (Shamanism), Strong Caster

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), fetish bag.

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, curse, fear, obscure, smite, spirit servant, spirit ward, summon beast, vision quest.*

Special Abilities:

- **Beast Mastery:** While inhabiting an animal corpse, B'kele can command others of its species to do his bidding.
- **Beast Possession:** B'kele can transfer his consciousness into the body of any dead animal within 10 yards. While possessing the animal's corpse, he retains his own Smarts, Spirit, and all linked skills. He gains all physical Traits, linked skills, and Special Abilities of the creature. When the animal is slain, he is forced back into his own body and is automatically Shaken. Treat as a Veteran character.



DEMON BEAR

The demon bear is actually the reanimated corpse of a particularly large and powerful nandi bear. Decay has begun to take its toll on the creature and, even without the party's intervention, it's unlikely to serve B'kele as a tool for much longer.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12

Special Abilities:

- **Ambush:** A nandi in a tree gains the Drop against prey passing it beneath that have failed to spot the beast. Its first attack is always a Called Shot to the head.
- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Nandi bears roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **Infravision:** The nandi halves Bad Lighting penalties for attacking heat-producing targets.
- **Size +3:** The nandi stands around 5' at the shoulder and is over 8' long.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No wound modifiers; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.

JOMBA, M'TULU, AND SOGAT, HUNTERS

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d8

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: —

Basic Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry) bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (20).

NANDI BEAR

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

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Special Abilities:

- **Ambush:** A nandi in a tree gains the Drop against prey passing it beneath that have failed to spot the beast. Its first attack is always a Called Shot to the head.
- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Nandi bears roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **Infravision:** The nandi halves Bad Lighting penalties for attacking heat-producing targets.
- **Size +2:** The nandi stands around 5' at the shoulder and is over 8' long.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

FILLED with a diverse array of terrain, Southern Africa is host to grasslands, forests, and deserts. Rugged hills separate low-lying coastal areas from a vast central plateau. Jungles in the northern region transition to grassy plains to the south, interspersed with subtropical woodlands. The western coast is home to several deserts, some possessing enormous sand dunes unrivaled anywhere else on the globe. As a result of the vastly varied geography, a wide range of both wildlife and people can be found here. The Portuguese maintain a strong presence along the southeastern coast, maintaining their hold over trade routes with India, although the Dutch have founded Cape Town on the southwestern tip of the continent. Southern Africa's mountains and hills hold many precious metals and hordes of diamonds, which has no doubt motivated many of their attempts to colonize the area.

However, the Europeans aren't the only outside people to be drawn to the area. Several times in its past

RUMOR

"Sometimes things are difficult. Yet another ship was lost to pirates, so I have no spices from the Indies."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Rescue Mission**, on page 128.

OPHIR

One of the motivating factors for Portuguese interest in southern Africa and the Mutapa Empire in particular, is that many Europeans believe that it holds the location of Ophir. According to the Bible, Ophir was the location of King Solomon's mines, the source of much of his vast wealth. A companion of the Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama claimed that Ophir was actually Great Zimbabwe. As evidence he pointed to local oral histories that record one of Great Zimbabwe's queens was named Sheba—the same as the queen of Ophir.

Whether or not King Solomon's mines lie within the Mutapa Empire—or if they exist at all—the Portuguese have spent a good portion of the last century searching for them. They maintain a strong presence in the region as a result. Regardless of the existence of the fabled mines, the wealth of the Mutapa Empire is without question and the Portuguese seek to maintain their considerable influence in the area as a result.

the southern part of the continent has experienced an influx of foreigners: Polynesians, Arabs, and even other Africans have all been drawn to the area for a variety of reasons. These incursions brought with them the inevitable clash of cultures that drives many conflicts. The coast of southern Africa also proves to be a popular area for pirates, who base themselves on islands near the continent that gives them easy access to the trade routes rounding the continent's horn.

MUTAPA EMPIRE

Mutapa (literally translated as "the conquered lands") is a vast kingdom that emerged from an earlier realm known as Great Zimbabwe. Controlling both gold and ivory, the empire is virtually unassailable by external forces thanks to its wealth and military power. However, that has not stopped multiple factions from attempting to wrest control of the kingdom for themselves, including the Portuguese, Musselmen merchants, Swahili traders, and prazeiros (half-Portuguese/half-Mu-

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tapan estate holders). The Mwenemutapa, or King of Mutapa, watches over all of this with his collection of “Wives” acting as his court and cabinet.

The capital city of Mutapa is a melting pot of people brought there by the empire’s total dominance of gold, ivory, and copper trade. In the small stone buildings that comprise the capital one may find Jesuit missionaries, Ottoman merchants, and Portuguese diplomats. The official state religion is overseen by officers called mhondoros, who consult with both spirits and royal ancestors and also serve as oral historians.



SENTRY OF THE IVORY GRAVES

LEAD In: Traveling through the Mutapa Empire, the wanderers encounter a band of hunters attempting to bring down a lone elephant. The elephant is clearly aged and in poor physical condition, but the hunters flee at the party’s approach. If the heroes have been traveling in the region for long, perhaps one of them recognizes the elephant as one used as a beast of burden used by a former guide on another journey.

A GIANT’S PLIGHT

As the characters travel near the Zambezi River, they hear a loud trumpeting noise and the sounds of conflict a short distance in front of them. Investigating, they come across a lone elephant, fighting a desperate and losing battle against a group of hunters. When the party arrives on the scene, the hunters abruptly break off their attack on the beast and retreat.

An adventurer who makes a Common Knowledge or Area Knowledge roll remembers that ivory is an important part of the Mutapa Empire’s economy. As such, it is closely regulated and all elephant hunters require explicit permission from the throne to do so. It’s likely that the men were poaching ivory with the intent to sell it to Portuguese or Musselmen merchants on the coast.

The elephant appears gravely wounded but does not flee the party. A successful Notice roll (–2) allows the wanderers to determine that the elephant seems to be attempting to communicate with them. The great beast meekly approaches the group, extending its trunk to several of the party members. Turning, it starts to leave, but hesitates if the wanderers do not follow, using its trunk to gently push the party along with it.

If the party is still indecisive or against travelling with the elephant, he goes so far as to lift one of their smaller members with his trunk and deposit them safely on his back, heading on his way.

THE JOURNEY HOME

The elephant presses forward determinedly, rarely slowing to rest or drink. A successful Smarts or Medicine roll reveals the noble beast is dying. It’s as though an air of sadness overshadowed by resolve permeates its very being.

An hour into the trip the elephant halts near the entrance to narrow defile. It becomes slightly agitated, looking about warily, its ears extended as if searching for something. A Tracking roll allows wanderers to see signs that other people have been here recently, and a system of vines and ropes lie on the floor of the narrow valley. Nevertheless, the elephant digs its stout legs into the soil and moves onward, in spite of its obvious concerns.

The same poachers the heroes chased away earlier spring their ambush once the group enters the canyon. They begin by yanking hard on the ropes, attempting to entangle both the beast and his newfound protectors. Characters need to make an Agility roll to avoid the trap. Those that fail become entangled and unable to move. Each round, entangled explorers may attempt a Strength or Agility roll to break free.

The elephant, already on its last legs, lacks either the physical power or agility to free itself without aid.

After triggering their trap, the poachers leap from vantage points overlooking the pass, aiming rifles near the rear of the ele-

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phant, forcing it to bolt into the ropes and vines. The hunters attempt to strike at the party as they free themselves.

These hunters are not very brave, and if more than a third of their number fall, they break and run. Their opponents routed, the party is unhindered in their efforts to loose the elephant from the trap.

🐘 **Poachers (3, plus 2 per hero):** See page 122.

A PARTING GIFT

Once released, the elephant limps forward through the narrow defile. The gap widens at the far end, overlooking a small valley filled with the bones of elephants both recent and ancient. The great beast has led the party to the legendary elephant graveyard!

Starting towards the mound of bones, the pachyderm turns right before he reaches the edge, kneeling down on his front legs until his forehead touches the ground. Stepping backwards into the pile of bones, he lies down and closes his eyes forever. A single breath shudders out of his frame, and then he is still.

From behind the party, a loud trumpeting sounds three times, and the group wheels to face a spectral mammoth. The insubstantial creature would be a behemoth even amongst his own kind and his tusks are enormous. An answering blast resounds from where the dead elephant lies, and above his body is his ghost, looking healthier and more content than he did in life.

The larger spectre walks through the pass to the players, and repeats the kneeling stance performed by his smaller descendent earlier. As he stands, he reaches amongst one of the bone piles and a very material horn emerges in his trunk. He hands this to the character that was closest to the elephant on the journey, and then fades from view.

LAST GASP

Having not learned their lesson in previous encounters, the surviving poachers lie in wait for the heroes on the return trip. Later that day (preferably after the party sets camp), the poachers attack the party. Angry for having their prey denied, the men hope to recoup some of their loss by robbing the travelers. This time, they fight more fiercely, but once the wanderers outnumber them, they attempt to retreat—this time for good.

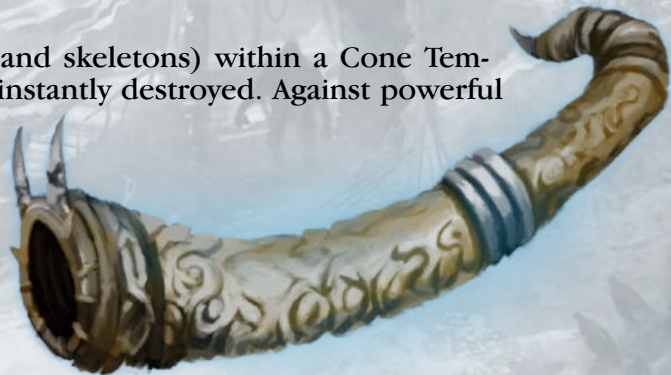
ARTIFACT: HORN OF THE SENTRY

The horn appears to have been carved from an elephant tusk and polished to a high sheen. Ancient and unfamiliar runes adorn the length of the horn, which is ringed in gold at each end. The horn is hollow and clearly intended to serve as a sound device similar to a crude trumpet.

A player may choose to spend a benny and blow the Horn. The sound of the Horn dispels all mind-affecting powers and abilities of evil creatures or casters including, but not limited to, *fear*, *lower trait* (Spirit or Smarts), *puppet*, and similar effects on characters within a Large Burst Template.

Additionally, all lesser undead (zombies and skeletons) within a Cone Template beginning at the end of the horn are instantly destroyed. Against powerful undead creatures, it acts as the *fear* power to all in the Cone Template. This power overcomes any immunity the creature may normally enjoy.

The Horn can only be blown three times before it returns to the ether.



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Poachers (varies): See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

POACHERS

These poachers are illegally hunting on lands that belong to the King of Mutapa. They are well-equipped, trading valuables with European and Musselmen merchants.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6 Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: -2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy, Mean.

Edges: —

Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6), matchlock musket (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d8), shot & powder (10).



THE GREAT ZIMBABWE

LEAD In: The party is approached by one of the advisers to the Mwenemutapa. He asks them to serve as guards for himself and his retinue as they travel to a site that may well hold the secret to the fabled mines of King Solomon.

NO GOOD DEED

After the wanderers arrive in Mutapa, they hear word of hunters who have been spotted in the Mwenemutapa's hunting preserves.



ADVENTURE LINK

You can use the **Savage Tale: Sentry of the Ivory Graves**, on page 120, to lead into this adventure. If you do, the party's success against the poachers in that tale precedes them into Mutapa. The Fourth Wife seeks them out based on their prowess against the rogue hunters.

After a very short time in the city, the party is approached by a delegate of The Fourth Wife of the Mwenemutapa, who wishes to meet with the adventurers.

The characters may be surprised to discover that the Fourth Wife is actually a man. The title of Wife is that of a dignitary of the royal court. He welcomes the party to the lands, and if they have already encountered the rogue hunters, he thanks them for their service to Mutapa.

The Fourth Wife relates that he has been asked by the Mwenemutapa to visit the Great Zimbabwe, a ruined former capital that will be used to house visiting nobles and even some of the royal court. However, there is a concern that the poachers in the region may be tempted to attack his retinue, believing it to carry items of value often associated with members of the royal court. Of particular note is that many of these outlaw groups are equipped with firearms which they've purchased from European or Musselmen merchants.

The Mwenemutapa's warriors, while fearsome, carry traditional weapons and may be outclassed by the better-armed poachers. Given that the wanderers are likely to be carrying firearms themselves (and possibly have the reputation of fighting the hunters), the Fourth Wife would like to have them accompany his expedition. He offers to compensate them for their service as well.

RUINED EXPECTATIONS

Bringing a retinue of nearly twenty retainers, architects, servants and four personal guards, the large group sets out shortly after sunrise the next morning. After about half a day of travel have the wanderers make Notice rolls. Any who succeed spot a figure or two trailing the procession from a distance. Should anyone give chase, their shadows flee into the wilderness.

It is late afternoon when the party sees the ruins off in the distance. Even from nearly a mile out, some of the structures are plainly visible, a majestic remnant of a previous age still proudly standing under the searing sun. The Fourth Wife leads the group toward a large, walled enclosure on the outskirts of

the ruins, explaining this was where royalty once lived. His workers will evaluate whether the structures within can be made habitable again.

HIDDEN WEALTH

The next day, the Fourth Wife's workers begin exploring the Great Enclosure in earnest. The heroes have little requirements on them and are free to wander as they see fit as long as they remain relatively close to the main body of the retinue. Around mid-afternoon, a shout goes up from one of the more intact buildings. It is followed quickly by a flurry of activity as workers, then the Fourth Wife and his bodyguards, rush to the building.

Inside, one of the architects has discovered a hidden room of substantial size. Apparently, it was a treasure room of sorts and is filled with all manner of wealth. Gazing through the door, the explorers see dozens of objects adorned in gold and gems. Goblets, jewelry, even ceremonial armor and weaponry are contained within the chamber.

However, their attention is quickly distracted from the more mundane items by a statuette sitting on a stone table at the rear of the chamber. Even at a distance its value is unmistakable. The statue resembles an obese man-child squatting atop a small dais with its over-large mouth agape.

In spite of the grotesqueness of the figure, the sheer decadence of its construction is breath-taking. Crafted from carefully carved ivory, the statue is capped in a golden crown and silver filigree scrolls all around its form. It is possibly the most valuable item any of the characters have ever seen—easily worth the treasury of a small kingdom by itself.

Obviously others have tried to loot the room before the Fourth Wife's expedition. Several skeletons lie on the floor not far from the statuette. Ancient spears and arrows jut from the bare bones of their ribcages. One is even draped across the table holding the carving, its bony fingers almost brushing the base of the glorious sculpture.

Any character with the Greedy Hindrance must make a Spirit roll. On a failure, he feels a powerful urge to possess the sculpture (if

THE GREAT ZIMBABWE

The word "Zimbabwe" most likely is a combination of two words that translate into "stone house." The Great Zimbabwe is so named because, while there are several similar ruins throughout the region, it is by far the largest. It encompasses nearly 1800 acres of area and was likely home to thousands of inhabitants at the height of its power.

There are several architectural styles evident in the ruins, from common houses to a hilltop fortress to a temple complex overlooking the rest of the city. The most striking structure is known as the Great Enclosure. Its walls reach over 35 feet in height and encompass over 300 buildings. Unlike European capitals, the Great Enclosure is located away from the center of the city—possibly to avoid the risk of the dreaded fly-borne sleeping sickness.

the player wasn't already roleplaying this). While he's unlikely to charge up and grab it, he may begin formulating plans to "acquire" it later...

By this time, most of the retinue is either in the room or crowding into the doorway to gaze on the riches. Some have begun to move toward the small statue, whether to touch it or just to get a closer look at the piece of artwork. The Fourth Wife and his bodyguards push through and even he is momentarily struck silent by the statuette's grotesque beauty.

The Fourth Wife quickly regains his composure and begins berating the entire group for their greed.

"How can you think only of yourselves? How can you believe that you are better than the wishes of the Mwenemutapa? This is the rightful property of the Mwenemutapa!"

His bodyguards quickly interpose themselves between the statuette and the rest of the retinue. The Fourth Wife orders the workers back to their jobs, but several seem

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hesitant. Before the situation develops further, however, the sounds of gunshots crack from the courtyard of the enclosure!

ATTACK!

Rushing outside, the travelers discover they are under attack. Several workers lie dead or dying and a group of armed men threatens the expedition from all sides. With most of the Fourth Wife's group distracted by the treasure chamber, a rogue band of hunters has seized the opportunity to spring an ambush.

The poachers armed with firearms manage to maintain their composure long enough to fire another volley at the adventurers before dropping their weapons and charging in a senseless bloodlust. The rest of the outlaws attack immediately in a berserk frenzy with reckless abandon.

They seem fanatical in their efforts and do not retreat from the attack, no matter how bad the defeat they are suffering at the hands of the wanderers. They fight to the death in an attempt to gain entrance to the building holding the treasury. This is because they too have fallen under the effects of the statue's material lust.

Unknown to the heroes (although some may have begun to guess) the statue—actually an idol of a demon lord of greed—radiates the essence of material lust. While the treasure room was closed, this influence was blocked, but upon opening it, waves of greed wash over the Great Zimbabwe. Any already predisposed to such emotions are instantly affected, but all exposed to it eventually succumb to an overpowering urge to possess the statuette.

🦋 **Poacher (3 per hero):** See page 125. One-third of these are armed with matchlock muskets (Range: 10/20/40, Damage 2d8) and shot and powder (10).

Mine! Mine!

Once the raiders are defeated, the party quickly realizes that no one else emerged from the building during the battle. A quick check inside reveals the answer to that mys-

tery. It seems another skirmish took place inside the treasury while the heroes had their own hands full outside.

The Fourth Wife stands at the far side of the room, cradling the statue in his arms. His bodyguards, nicked and scratched but otherwise no worse for wear, ring him at the base of the stone table. At their feet lie over a dozen bodies of workers from the expedition, all slain by the bodyguards' spears. Other members of the retinue, nursing wounds of various severities, have retreated to the edges of the chamber. Still, the naked greed in their eyes is evident, undulled by their injuries.

Holding the statuette as if it were a child, the Fourth Wife cackles with glee. He shouts, *"The gold is mine, the statue is mine, the Great Zimbabwe is mine! Soon, all will be mine—all!"* With that, he orders his bodyguard forward to slay the heroes and the injured survivors. His men begin to obey, then suddenly turn on each other as they struggle to reach the statuette for themselves.

By this time, the wanderers are beginning to feel an unnatural urge to possess the sculpture as well. Each must make a Spirit roll every round to take any action beyond attempting to secure the idol. Greedy characters receive a -2 penalty to the roll. The bodyguards and the Fourth Wife fight back against any character who gets too close to the statuette.

The only way to end the idol's influence is to actually break the statuette itself. Even a single point of damage is sufficient to do the trick, but attempting to destroy it requires a second Spirit roll for each attempt. As the sculpture is a small target, all attacks against it are at a -2 penalty. Furthermore, any ranged attacks that miss have a chance to strike the Fourth Wife on a 1 or a 2 due to his close proximity to it.

Alternately, if the wanderers have obtained the Horn of the Sentry (**Savage Tale: Sentry of the Ivory Graves**, see page 120), spending a benny and sounding the Horn instantly shatters the statue.

After the idol has been destroyed, all those under the curse will return to normal, now very regretful for actions they took while

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under the corrupt influence of the demon of avarice. The Fourth Wife is especially apologetic, offering Mutapa as a safe haven should the wanderers ever need such.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



FOURTH WIFE

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (Heraldry) d8, Knowledge (History) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +4

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

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Charismatic, Noble

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), writing utensils.

TRIBAL WARRIOR

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6/7; **Toughness:** 6/8 (2)

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: First Strike

Basic Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, one-handed), knife (Str+d4), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (20), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged attacks).

POACHER

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Shooting d6, Survival d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d8

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: Berserk, Woodsman

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (20).

OF TRIALS BOTH GREAT AND SMALL

LEAD In: While traversing the jungles of Africa, the adventurers find themselves in serious peril when their trusty guide falls victim to a poisonous snake.

BETTER WATCH YOUR STEP

Having traveled the better part of the day through the dense tropical jungle, the heroes start to truly feel fatigue slow their limbs. Their guide insists on pushing forward:

"This is the land of the shadow men, here they hunt man at dusk." He pauses to point out a brightly painted human skull resting in the crook of two nearby branches. "There—a warning sign. I tell you the shadow men... arrgh!" His sentence is broken midway through by a sharp cry of pain. The guide jumps back and you see a long thin shape quickly slither off into the underbrush.

The guide looks up frantically at you and chokes out "I...I have been...bitten. A green bush snake, the ones the shadow men use in their poisons. I...I am soon to die...unless..." He scans your surroundings quickly before speaking again. "Yes, to the northwest, a three petal flower grows with the color of the sun. It can be made into a cure. You must help me retrieve it...please!"

Before the poisoned guide can say any more, a shrill cry breaks from the nearby undergrowth. Three short spears lodge themselves into the ground and trees surrounding the party. The guide, already showing visible signs of his envenomed state, shouts "Shadow men!"

With that exclamation a group of savage but extremely small warriors burst from the brush wielding primitive weaponry. They each stand only about three feet high and wear roughly cut animal pelts and bone jewelry. Their skin is dark and their eyes speak of savage madness. With a war cry the little natives throw themselves at the heroes. The natives only break off their attack and flee if they lose three quarters of their numbers.

Shadow Warriors (2, plus one per hero): See page 127.

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RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE

After the melee, the wanderers find their guide has taken a turn for the worse. He is feverish and is rapidly becoming incoherent. The excitement of the battle sped up the poison coursing through his veins. He fights his weakened state, staring at the party and trying to form words.

"More...there...will...more...more will come, must go...find flower...time short. He points in a general direction and starts to stumble off."

The party has not traveled far before the savages regroup.

Soon you hear drums reverberating throughout the jungle. The guide looks back smiling and declares, "Now... now shadows...they hunt us...we...we run now."

The tiny savages can be heard rushing through the undergrowth and small feathered darts fly at the adventurers. A Notice roll shows the shadow men have at least twice the numbers of the previous attack.

Standing and fighting is an option, however the sheer numbers of the enemies could eventually force the party to retreat. Even winning against this first group only ensures that the wanderers hear even more drums approaching in the distance. It soon becomes clear the pygmies plan to send wave after wave against the heroes until sheer numbers overwhelm them.

If the party runs, the pygmies chase them for half a mile through the hazardous terrain. At that point, the pygmies abruptly skid to a stop and fall very quiet. The primitive attackers look to the oldest member of their group, a shaman. He bears multiple ritual scars and numerous tribal adornments, his only weapon a gnarled walking stick. He turns and faces his fellows, raising a hand and they silently melt back into the growing shadows of the jungle at dusk.

Unable to stand on his own at this point and barely able to speak beyond fevered ramblings, the guide mutters out a harsh whisper. *"Find flower...beware...the claws...the night hunts...has claws, the flower...is his,"* before falling into unconsciousness.

🐾 **Shadow Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 127.

🐾 **Shadow Shaman:** See page 128.

CLAWS OF THE JUNGLE NIGHT

Despite escaping the pygmies, the wanderers have by no means solved their problems. Their guide has become unresponsive at this point, yet he is the only one who knows how to navigate this deadly jungle safely. The sun is on the horizon line but the thick canopy has made the whole area extremely dark.

Locating the flower is a difficult task. The flower grows on vines that wind up the trees in this area. It only blooms at dusk, nestled beneath low hanging branches. A Notice roll (-2) is necessary to find the flower. Each attempt requires 15 minutes of time.

During that search, the wanderers find collections of small human-like bones at the bases of several trees. The bones have deep furrows as if gnawed upon by large pointed teeth, and even the marrow is missing. Anyone making a Survival roll notices that

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the jungle in this area is deathly silent. No monkeys hoot and no birds sing. A Tracking roll reveals large, deeply imprinted feline footprints near the trees.

Once a flower is spotted, trying to claim it makes for a rude surprise. Staring back at the would-be harvester from above the flower are a pair of piercing yellow eyes. Behind the eyes is a large muscular form with a night black coat that renders it nearly invisible from its tree limb perch.

The creature strikes without a sound. It displays almost preternatural cunning, attacking those with light sources first in an attempt to retain his advantage. The panther begins a hit-and-run campaign against the wanderers for as long as it can. The panther directly engages the party until it is seriously wounded, protecting its hunting ground and den fiercely.

 **Night Claws:** See below.

LEAVING THE TREES

Defeating the panther, the party still needs to prepare the cure for their beleaguered guide. A Healing roll and 5 minutes effort allows a curative poultice to be made. Should the roll fail, a new flower has to be found—potentially allowing Night Claws to return if not slain.

If this happens, time itself truly becomes the antagonist. The adventurers must find a new flower and successfully prepare a new paste in no more than half an hour after they first defeat the panther or their guide dies.

Should the wanderers succeed in saving their guide, they can nurse him back to travelling health by camping overnight—something perhaps best accomplished far away from Night Claws and the shadow men. The next morning, shaky but in good spirits, the guide continues to lead the group to their destination.

Failure means their efforts were for naught. Additionally, they may now be hopelessly lost. This likely makes just getting out of the jungle the top priority.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



NIGHT CLAWS

This panther has protected its territory from both the shadow men and wanderers, becoming a creature of legend amongst travelers. Smart, deadly, and hungry, he will only be satisfied when he can take one of the characters for his next meal.

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

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Tracking d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite or Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Night Claws may make two attacks each round with no penalty.
- **Low Light Vision:** Halve penalties for Dim and Dark lighting conditions.
- **Pounce:** Night Claws pounces on its prey to best bring his mass and teeth to bear. It can leap up to 6" to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action.

SHADOW WARRIOR

These pygmies have a reputation for being a fearsome and cannibalistic lot, and many avoid their territory for fear of being overwhelmed.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Illiterate, Small
Edges: Woodsman

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry), blowgun (Range 2/4/8, 1d6+1), mixed (see below) darts (10).

Special Abilities:

- **Paralysis (+0):** Pygmies dip their blowgun darts into paralyzing poison. Anyone Shaken or wounded by a paralysis dart

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must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.

- **Poison (+0):** Some poison darts are coated with curare or other such deadly poisons. Anyone Shaken or wounded by a poison dart must make a Vigor roll or suffer an automatic wound. Deadlier poisons, which give a penalty to the Vigor roll, are sometimes used.

SHADOW SHAMAN

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Shamanism d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d8

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Small

Edges: Arcane Background (Shaman), Strong Caster

Gear: Walking Stick (Str+d4, +1 Parry), fetish bag.

Powers: *Armor, boost/lower trait, curse, fear, obscure, shape change, smite, summon beast, vision quest.*

Treat as a Veteran character.

MADAGASCAR

Sometimes referred to as the “Island of the Moon”, Madagascar sits in the Indian Ocean near the southeastern coast of southern Africa. The island, slightly larger in land area than France, is the fourth largest in the world. It is considered one of the better

transoceanic stops for trade between Europe and India for the Portuguese spice and silk merchants who call it São Lourenço.

The eastern coast of the island consists of a strip of rainforest sandwiched between sharp escarpments to the west and the Indian Ocean. The central highlands are a plateau region that descends gradually into the deciduous forest and savanna-like plains that approach the west coast. The northern territories are mountainous while the south contains desert terrain. The dry season runs from May through October, with the rest of the year being hot and rainy.

As isolated as it is, Madagascar is home to a number of unusual animals and plants. Natural creatures of all shapes and types abound here, from lemurs and mongoose-like fossa to the 10-foot tall elephant birds. There are four bird families and over 9,000 plant varieties unique to the island.

The people of Madagascar are a wide mix as well. Groups of Austronesian (Asian/Pacific Islander) as well as African origins are the primary inhabitants. These are divided into roughly 36 chiefdoms that divide the island amongst them. The tribes often war with each other, usually along ethnic lines.

Although there is some Islamic influence on the western coast and Christian pockets near the Portuguese trading posts, the majority of the Madagascar people practice a traditional religion which accentuates links between the living and the dead. They believe that, upon death, one becomes divine and still interested in the affairs of their living descendants.

RUMOR

“This forest reminds me of Virginia
—all those odd lights we saw there.”
This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale:
Foolish Fire**, on page 135.

📖 RESCUE MISSION

LEAD In: A struggling merchant has disturbing news, as two ships bringing much needed goods and supplies hit a horrible storm near Madagascar. One of the ships was driven aground, the other pursued by pirates until making safe harbor.

The DARK CONTINENT

TREACHEROUS WATERS

While in a prominent coastal or port town in central or southern Africa, the party hears of a merchant vessel seeking able-bodied men-at-arms. They have little trouble locating the merchant, Godfried Westerveldt, a Dutchman who has been trying to solidify his trade company's presence along the south and eastern African coasts. He gladly explains to anyone interested that his company struggles with the typical dangers, losing ships and cargo to pirates and weather, as well competing for shipping routes often frequented by Islamic empires.

He tells the wanderers that he had two ships, *The Lady's Favor* and the *Martina*, both carrying spices from the Far East. The vessels hit bad weather as they neared Madagascar. *The Lady's Favor* was driven into a reef during the storm. It sank, and its crew was stranded on Madagascar's nearby shore.

The crew of the *Martina* attempted to rescue the survivors, but they were set upon by pirates. They were forced to flee and limped into port due to damage from the fight with the buccaneers.

Godfried is hopeful the hastily repaired *Martina*—leaving at sunrise the next day—can mount a successful rescue mission. Should the party agree to assist, they're introduced to the *Martina*'s captain, Holden Blair, whose brother is the first mate on *The Lady's Favor*.

ROCKY RECEPTION

Once the *Martina* sets off, the voyage is uneventful. Captain Blair sets a frantic pace in the hopes of rescuing his brother and shipmates.

When the *Martina* arrives nearest to the location where *The Lady's Favor* wrecked, the crew finds the rocky, reef-filled waters deny them access to the shore. Captain Blair takes the ship south and finds a river large enough for the *Martina* to enter. He sails the ship several miles up the tributary in an attempt to get as close to the survivors as possible.

He organizes several search parties to forge west toward the beaches. The characters are formed into one by themselves, as they have no experience working with the rest of the crew. Remaining on board the vessel with several crewmen, he instructs everyone that they are to return to the *Martina* in two days time or be left behind, presumed dead.

DISCOVERIES MOST FOUL

As the party crosses overland to try and find the imperiled seamen, the forests prove to be a hazard, slowing all the parties as they navigate through the dense foliage. After several hours of hacking their way west, the adventurers start to come across breaks in the forest, larger clearings forming the further they push. One of these clearings stands out, as the wanderers nearly stumble over a group of enormous nests lying in its center. The nests are easily 10 feet wide and hold gigantic eggs—each roughly 3 feet across.



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As the party comes to terms with the probable size of the creatures that left these eggs, a horrid blasting shriek fills the air, as several of the largest birds they've ever seen charge from the surrounding tree line to aggressively defend their unborn chicks!

🦅 **Vorompatra (2, plus 1 per 2 heroes):**
See page 131.

RESCUED!

From this point, it takes the party only half an hour to walk the remaining distance to the shoreline, even though Madagascar's coasts are filled with sharp rocks and broken terrain. Once within eyesight of the beach, they quickly spot a small cluster of crudely assembled emergency shelters. As they come closer, they are in turn noticed by one of several sailors who are guarding the camp. Cheering, the seamen rush their rescuers.

After welcoming the newcomers, the sailors tell the wanderers that being stuck on the beaches of Madagascar has taken its toll. Their own foodstuffs running low, the nearby elephant birds hindered the sailors' attempts to push inland to hunt and scavenge. Worse, a few of the survivors have been stricken by a terrible fever that ravages both the body and the mind. The worst victim has been none other than the first mate, Edmond Blair.

As the sailors dealt with the hardships of surviving the shipwreck, Edmond began speaking—sometimes even arguing—with himself. Shortly before the party arrived, Blair stood up and made a startling announcement, claiming the captain, Jonas Winthrop, was a “Jonah,” a jinxed person whose presence spells doom for a ship and its crew.

Blair marched into the shelter and put his matchlock pistol to Winthrop's head before ordering the captain, who had been injured in the shipwreck, to march into the jungle. The first mate held the other sailors at bay with the threat of killing their captain.

Having gone several days with minimal rations, none of the crew is in any condition to mount a rescue and they implore the heroes to find the captain before it is too late.

THE RACE IS ON

Blair has a two-hour head start on the party. However, remind the players they have only a finite amount of time to make it back to the *Martina* or risk being marooned themselves.

Should they follow the pair, Blair's pace, while frantic and driven by madness, is hindered by the sickly and injured Captain Winthrop. Blair has Winthrop bound by rough rope and marches the captain in front of him, his pistol at the ready. As a result, Tracking rolls to follow the pair receive a +2.

Following Blair's path leads the party inland from the rocky shorelines and over rough limestone outcroppings that are dotted through with thick copses of various trees. Caves and sinkholes are frequent throughout the region and can lead to false trails, slightly complicating the party's search. All manner of brightly hued lizards and snakes scuttle and slither about the trees and jutting rocks as hooting whoops from the lemurs sound out from their lofty perches.

The wanderers come upon their quarry after three hours of trailing the pair in one of the many mangrove swamps scattered throughout the area.

DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

When the party finally catches up to Blair and Captain Winthrop, the crazed first mate has taken refuge in a shallow cave at the swamp's edge. His fatigue has finally won out over his dementia. The party hears the sounds of an argument long before they spot the pair. “*Are you sure?*” and “*Do I have to kill him?*” echo across the fetid water.

Once the heroes come in sight of the pair, Blair is using the frail and broken captain as a shield. Crazed, battered and exhausted, his eyes dart frantically as he brandishes his pistol wildly. He is desperate and hardly seems to be paying attention to the party.

The captain simply *must* die, that is the belief driving Blair forward and deeper inland, searching for the perfect place to murder his superior officer. He knows that the whispering and harsh voices in his mind

can no longer be ignored. Once he rides the crew of the *Jonah*, then the voices tell him “*Respect and power will finally be yours.*”

Any character that succeeds on a Notice roll sees that the match is wet, rendering the weapon useless a firearm. Even if the party doesn’t notice Blair’s weapon is useless, they may still try to talk him down. Reasoning with him is very difficult, as he looks about, arguing and shouting in every direction. The wanderers may attempt to calm him or otherwise control the situation with Persuasion or an Intimidation roll (–2).

If they’re successful, Blair initially appears docile, handing the captain over and cursing himself for being mad. If attacked, he spends his first action pulling the trigger on his useless weapon, then pushing his captive to the ground and draws his knife.

Either way, Blair isn’t able to stand against the party for long, and winds up whimpering and unresponsive, only returning with the party if they physically carry him back.

Returning to the *Martina* with Blair earns them Captain Blair’s undying gratitude—and it’s never a bad thing to be able to call in a favor from the master of an open-water vessel! Also, Westerveldt rewards them with a £100 bonus on their return.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



FIRST MATE BLAIR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d4, Shooting d4, Stealth d4, Swimming d6

Charisma: +0

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

Edges: Berserk

Hindrances: Delusional (Major – believes the Vorompatra want to make him their King)

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), flintlock pistol (unable).

VOROMPATRA

Standing 10 feet tall and nearly half a ton in weight, these flightless birds are very dangerous.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidate d6, Notice d12+4, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Fleet-Footed:** Vorompatra roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Size +3:** Elephant birds may measure up to 10’ in height.



THE BITTER BLOSSOM OF MEMORY

LEAD In: The native fauna of Madagascar affect the party as they camp, filling them with euphoric visions of people they’ve lost as the plants slowly entangle the party to devour them.

This Savage Tale works best as a short interlude between adventures while on the island. It can be placed anywhere, but due to the unique plant species on Madagascar, it works particularly well there.

A PEACEFUL NIGHT’S REST

As the party makes camp for the evening, everything seems pleasant and innocuous. The wanderers find a decent clearing, well protected by a few mounds jutting out of the ground and ringed by thick copses of bushes, extending outward from a small forest. The clearing is loosely packed dirt, soft and comfortable. Bright crimson flowers spot the bushes, giving off a light fragrance not unlike that of a wild rose.

If the travelers specifically state they are conducting a thorough examination of the area, allow them a Tracking roll. If successful, they discover there are some tracks—both animal and human—leading to the clearing besides those of the party. However, there are no tracks leaving the area.

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As the party rests, have anybody who stays on watch make a Vigor roll at -2 every hour to remain awake. On a Notice roll, the first watch becomes aware that there is very little active wildlife in the area. Also, should the character attempt to wake another, have them make a Vigor roll at -3 to wake up. Soon, most, if not all, of the characters are in a deep slumber.

A LITTLE DREAM OF ME

As the characters doze, give them a description of a dream that they experience. Although the dream should be tailored to each character directly, the visions share several commonalities. The dream involves a person who has passed on, whether an ally, friend, loved one or someone else important to the hero. The dream is very serene and peaceful, almost hypnotic and surreal. This requires a little effort on your part to craft



one that is specific to the character, her history, and—when possible—any relevant Hindrances.

After each member of the party has had an individual dream, it moves to a shared dream. The characters believe that they have awoken the next morning, and begin preparing to continue on their day.

Every few minutes, have the wanderers make a Spirit roll—any character that fails believes that they are still going about their day as usual. A character who succeeds, however, is in for quite a shock. She awakens for real, finding vines holding her, slowly constricting and pulling her into the soft earth. Looking around, she notices that each of her companions is also bound, and a red flower from the nearby bushes rests near each one's face, a fine mist falling from the bud.

Freeing oneself from the vines isn't easy. Characters who wish to escape faster must make a Strength or Agility roll to break free, forcing the vines to slowly sink back into the dirt without their prize. Freeing her companions is relatively easy, particularly if the adventurer uses an edged weapon to hack through the plants. Once a flower is displaced from an explorer, he may be given a Vigor roll to throw off slumber and assist in his own rescue.

WEED WHACKING

Once its hypnotic effect is broken, the plant is little more than functional scenery. It's not capable of directly attacking the explorers unless they are immobilized. Its primary means of offense and defense are the toxic flowers, which emit a thin gas that sedates its prey and acts as a hallucinogenic.

The wanderers should have little trouble dispatching the various vines and weeds. The best way to end any threat this plant poses is to simply light it aflame, destroying it down to the roots.

The New World

North America in the 1600s is an isolated place of opportunity and peril, the home of strange cultures and dangerous wilds. Native people of both good and ill intent, fierce animals that have not yet learned to fear man, and treacherous terrain all make the New World a breeding ground for adventure.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the so-called New World had been home to cultures as far back as 12,000 BC. These cultures predate the tribes of Solomon Kane's time by thousands of years, although few reminders of their lives remain. Norse sailors reached the easternmost points of the New World, with some settlement efforts in the 10th century but no permanent colonies. Not until Columbus' discovery of the landmass at the end of the 15th century did the opportunities begin to capture European imaginations. Even so, the native tribes of North America would know relative peace until the Europeans arrived en masse at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The Migration of Evil

WHILE many of the horrors that lurk in the New World have existed there as long as (or even longer than!) the native people, some arrived with the growing influx of European explorers and colonists. As always, evil finds a way, and many of these foul creatures made the voyage to North America in the holds of Spanish treasure ships, Dutch merchantmen, and French warships. As well, many perils aren't evil incarnate, but merely men with little regard for their fellows. Cruel pirates, uncaring soldiers, and those seeking to feed their base desires all do more harm to their fellow man than the creatures of the night.

Homegrown or immigrant, the minions of evil still plague this largely unexplored wilderness, waiting for heroes to purge them from the land.

A Melting Pot of Faith

The influx of people to the New World brings together a clash of beliefs, cultures and faiths along with a crush of superstitions. Even as reason begins to dawn on the world, the mysteries of an unknown land combine with the ghosts and goblins in the minds of travelers to leave the average person, native or otherwise, fearful in the world. Alternately, those who would seek out the supernatural find grains of truth in the tales told around fires, helping them to hunt the denizens of darkness.

What would become the American identity in later centuries is still made of the component parts of the settlers of the land: native tribes, Dutch, English, French, and Spanish. Much of the superstitions of these people are simply extensions of their religious beliefs. Most believe, at least, in the idea that there are beings that would serve the Devil rather than God. Many take this to an extreme, as evidenced in the decimation of the Aztec empire in the name of a foreign faith.

Many of the New World make their faith a personal matter. More than seeking the glory of God, they simply wish to do right by themselves and those they care about. In all things, the people who inhabit the New World are industrious by desire, rugged by necessity, and prosperous by hard work, often regardless of strong faith. This is the start of the Age of Reason: Man is beginning to see himself as a thinking creature able to shape the world.

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THE NATIVE FAITHS

THE superstitions of native cultures vary from tribe to tribe, although many of the myths spring up from the natural behaviors of animals and insects. Various tribes believe that the world is alive and aware, with animals of all types able to influence the world on human behalf if asked. Likewise, waterways and forests, mountains and valleys all have a spirit of their own, a driving and often intelligent force that not only grants requests but lets the spiritually aware know if it is well or sick.

This belief of sentience carries over even past the death of animals. Hunters take great care to treat the bones of animals with respect lest they offend the animal that gave them food and fur. Spiritual marriages take place between people and locations, objects, or even plants.

According to these beliefs, spirits of varying types flood the world. Some have good intentions, some seek to cause harm, but all of these spirits—sometimes referred to as manitous—represent a morality different than what European missionaries bring to the New World. Good manitous are not holy or compassionate but deliver blessings onto people, while those that bring misfortune are thought of as evil. Still, Catholic missionaries are able to bring forth the idea of God to many of the tribes simply by pointing out that if animals had ruling spirits, so must Man. Thus, the concept of a “Chief of the

SAMPLE NATIVE AMERICAN SUPERSTITIONS

Dunking male babies in water will make them good hunters.

Feeding a baby salmon will give him weak ankles.

Dropping an eagle feather during a dance is bad luck.

Seeing an owl in daylight means death is near.

Sky” or a being with dozens of similar names is growing slowly more widespread, along with the concept of an absolute morality.

However, even with the spread of the word of God by the Jesuits and other missionaries, the old ways have not passed from the land. Many elements of the old worship are integrated into the Catholic dogma of the regions. In the lands controlled by the Spanish, a proliferation of saints and saintly intervention mirror the same calls to spirits of the natural world. As a result, a priest from Rome watching the worship practices of a Native American Catholic in the New World would most likely be shocked or at least confused by the practices of his New World counterparts.



THE ENGLISH

THE English, while newcomers to the New World themselves, have already made several attempts to found permanent colonies here. The most famous of these, the Roanoke colony, was founded in 1584–85 only to be abandoned the next year. A second attempt was made to settle the island in 1587 and did result in the birth of Virginia Dare, the first English child in the New World. Mysteriously, the colony and all of its inhabitants disappeared that same year.

However, Roanoke was not the only English colony in the New World that failed, although none of the others were quite as mysterious in their end. The Popham colony, near the mouth of the Kennebec River in modern-day Maine, was founded in 1607 by George Popham and Raleigh Gilbert (half-nephew of Sir Walter Raleigh) only to be abandoned a year later when Popham died and Gilbert returned to England.

Finally successful with the St. John’s colony in Newfoundland and Jamestown colony in Virginia, the English are just beginning to expand their presence in the New World. A relief ship bound for Jamestown wrecked on reefs off Bermuda, also known as Virgineola or the Somers Isles, in 1609. Some of the survivors remained behind on the island and the Virginia Company has claimed the charter for the island and colony as well. Virginia itself is seeing more growth as more small communi-

ties of settlers, such as the town of Henricus, have begun to spring up in the surrounding wilderness near Jamestown.

JAMESTOWN

After over a dozen earlier attempts failed the Virginia Company, which holds the English charter to seed colonies in the New World, succeeded in establishing the Jamestown colony in 1607. Jamestown lies on an island near where the James River empties into the Chesapeake Bay. The original colonists chose the island for its defensibility and location in a navigable river. Unfortunately, those very facts make the location less than ideal as a settlement, as it is surrounded by swamps, plagued by mosquitoes, and has little land suited to agricultural purposes.

The year 1609 was a particularly difficult time for the colony with food shortages and Indian attacks taking a terrible toll on the colony. Only sixty-one out of the five hundred settlers survived and were in the process of abandoning the colony when a resupply fleet arrived from England. On board was the new governor of Virginia, Thomas West, Baron De La Ware, who ordered the colonists back to Jamestown.

Under Lord De La Ware, Jamestown is beginning to recover. As yet, the colony has not been profitable for the Virginia Company, failing to produce the precious metals of the Spanish holdings to the south. However, experimentation with a strain of tobacco holds promise for the economic future of the settlement.

Jamestown is positioned inland from the James River far enough to protect it from point blank fire from Spanish ships. The settlement currently consists of little more than an Anglican church, a store house, a single merchant, and guardhouse surrounded by a triangular palisade. Also inside the walls of the fort lie a little over a dozen buildings serving as living quarters, home to most of the 200 or so colonists currently at Jamestown. Given the current antagonistic relations with the Powhatans, the local Indians, only the brave or foolhardy reside outside the walls.

POWHATAN INDIANS

The Powhatan tribe is actually a confederacy of about 30 tribes led by Wahunsunacawh, known to the English as Chief Powhatan. The Powhatan control all the territory around the English colony. Initially, the English did succeed in establishing some trade with the Powhatans and the tribe was instrumental in the survival of the colony during its first few years, supplying much needed food.

In 1609, relations deteriorated and the Powhatans began raiding the English settlement, capturing and killing at least one trading party. When the relief vessels arrived in 1610, the English began an organized campaign against the Powhatans that continues through the middle part of the century. A brief peace is established in 1614 with the wedding of Pocahontas to John Rolfe, but it ends upon her death in 1617.

FOOLISH FIRE

WHILE in Jamestown, the wanderers learn of the disappearance of a local woodsman who had gone to investigate strange lights in a swamp to the southeast.

MISSING MAN

Recently resupplied from England, the colony is currently well-stocked in good food and good spirits. Wandering through the common ground inside the palisade walls, the heroes overhear two men talking about the latest troubles: a young laborer and a slightly older man dressed in the fashion of an Anglican minister. *"It's a shame, too,"* the laborer says, *"with him having his boy here and all. It's what he gets for going out alone."*

If the heroes interrupt the pair, they are surprised but friendly. They explain that Roger Hall, an experienced guide and hunter, went out alone to investigate the source of strange

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lights in the marshes to the southeast. He hasn't returned and it's been over two weeks. The weather hasn't been kind lately and Hall is an expert at hiding his tracks so there is little hope of finding him even if he is alive. The minister, Father Parker, has been consoling the man's 14-year-old son but feels there is little hope for Hall.

The minister takes the time to talk to the heroes about their beliefs, letting the heroes know of his efforts to bring God to the Powhatan Indians in the area. He has met some resistance and warns the explorers that the Powhatans are "murderous savages." He sells up their ferocity for all it is worth, but the heroes should leave the conversation thinking that this Father Parker is indeed a good man of God.

THE FATHER'S REQUEST

Later the next day, Father Parker tracks down the wanderers. He's visibly upset and has been actively seeking them out for the better part of an hour. At first having trouble speaking, he finally calms down enough to explain his dilemma to the heroes.

"Early this morning, I noticed that Stephen, Mr. Hall's son, was not present at his home. Finding one of his companions, I discovered that Stephen went out into the wilderness to find his father. Mr. Hall had been training his son in woodcraft and the young man left last night. He's a bright lad and his father taught him well, but with hostile Indians, I fear for the boy's life. Others have already started looking for him, but I worry that the needs of the colony may prevent them from searching far enough afield."

Father Parker cannot offer much to heroes of a mercenary bent, although he is quite skilled at pointing out that shepherding the weak is an admirable quality.

FINDING STEPHEN

There are few leads as to Stephen's whereabouts. Smart adventurers may think to talk to the friend Father Parker mentioned, a boy by the name of Edward. At first nervous that he is in trouble for "telling on Stephen," a

successful Persuasion check or a suitable bribe such as a knife yields the following to the wanderers:

"Stephen said he was heading to the southeast. He took a knife and one of his father's pistols. There are some trail signs that he and his father used in case they ever needed to find the other. He taught them to me as well so we could use them when we were allowed to go hunting by ourselves."

If asked, Edward can sketch out the trail mark for the wanderers (three slashes with a crosshatch).

INTO THE MARSHLANDS

Stephen has at least a day's head start on the heroes. It takes approximately a day to reach the edge of the swampland. Travel through the swampy lands southeast of Jamestown requires both rafts and some overland travel with portage. Although much of the route Stephen took is on the water, vegetation grows thick enough in the marsh to allow the party to follow trail signs even there.

Have the characters make a total of five Tracking rolls (-2) over the course of a day. If they learned the Hall's trail sign from Edward, give them a +2 bonus to the roll. Each failed check runs them into a natural hazard of the marshland (either a patch of quicksand, poisonous fumes or bad water). If they fail three or more Tracking checks, they stumble into a group of Powhatan Indians unhappy with their passing.

The Indians are hostile, but the wanderers have time for a quick parlay before they attack. The hunt leader speaks enough English to allow communication in that language. If the heroes succeed on a Persuasion roll, the Indians allow the group to pass unmolested. Otherwise the Indians attack the heroes.

If the adventurers manage a raise on the Persuasion roll, one of the Indians recalls seeing Hall miles to the southeast following a strange light. The light simply floated in the air and Hall followed it as though there was nothing else around.

🗡️ **Indian Leader:** See page 139.

🦋 **Indian Hunters (2 per Hero):** See page 139.

BROKEN SEARCHERS

Near the end of the day, the explorers spy a light in the distance. Approaching the light the wanderers see a campfire and several scared men.

"Show yourselves!" a man shouts, his voice trembling in terror. You hear the breathing of a number of other men as well as the clicks of flintlocks. Through the light of the fire you see three men hiding behind trees and rocks, not so much for cover but in fear of you...or what else might be out in the marsh tonight.

Looking around, you have an inkling of what they might fear. Bodies, perhaps companions of theirs, lie strewn around the camp. Many bodies have already been moved but it seems the work was too much for the frightened men so the best they did was set a fire and huddle beside it.

These colonists, also out searching for Stephen, came back to their camp to find their compatriots dead to the man. As long as the wanderers don't attack them or do anything supernatural, they put away their weapons and let the party stay a respectful distance while they talk. The colonists explain that, after what they found, they are leaving the area when morning comes. For now, they huddle around their fire and pray nothing harms them.

If asked about what killed their friends, one of the men breaks down and babbles about *"the lights swooping in and burning them to death."* Forcing the issue yields more information: the colonists saw a glowing ball of fire dance among their friends, burning and suffocating them. They stayed hidden until the fire flew away, started to move the bodies and then grew so fearful that they set a fire.

Examining the bodies shows terrible burns cover their skin and clothing. The bodies smell of noxious fumes, like swamp gas. The dead are spread out over several hundred feet, making it obvious that some of them tried to flee and failed. One even ran headlong into a patch of quicksand that the searchers had marked previously.

While examining the bodies, have the heroes make Notice rolls. Success finds another one of Roger's trail markers very close to the camp. The colonists do not know anything about Roger's trail markers and were completely unaware of the significance of it.

The colonists welcome the company through the night and true to their word leave in the morning.

PLAYING WITH FIRE

The wanderers can pick up Stephen's trail in the morning. Strangely, his tracks have become surprisingly easy to follow, with no effort to hide them. Furthermore, anyone with Tracking or Survival can make a roll to determine that his pace has slowed considerably. After a half-day of travel, the wanderers see the boy:

You spy a tall and thin boy dressed in rugged outdoor clothing about 100 feet ahead of you. Floating in front of him is a glowing ball of pale yellow flame, flickering in the shade. Heedless of his surroundings, the boy walks forward toward a large pond of stagnant water, unaware of the bears that start to move towards him.

One ghost light is occupied with drawing Stephen to his end at the teeth of the crocodiles. He moves at a Pace of 3 while enthralled by the ghost light, so it's an easy matter for the characters to catch up to him. Once they do, additional ghost lights appear in front of the heroes. Each attempts to target one person and draw him into a patch of quicksand about 10" to the right of Stephen. Should this fail, they fly in and engage in combat.

Meanwhile, the alligators move in for a meal, attacking anyone on land with a preference to hypnotized victims.

Once the heroes defeat the ghost lights and the alligators, Stephen explains that he tracked his father but was enchanted by the ghost light. He insists on searching the area for his father, accepting no other answer. Looking around for at least an hour uncovers the remains of Roger in the quicksand, a victim of the ghost lights.

THE PATH OF KANE

Saddened by his death, Stephen at least can bring his father's remains home for burial.

• **Stephen** : See page 139.

• **Alligators (2)**: See below.

• **Ghost lights (1, plus 1 per 2 heroes)**: See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

ALLIGATOR

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d6, Swim d8

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +2:** Thick skin.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 5.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.



- **Rollover:** Alligators are notorious for grasping their prey in their vice-like jaws and rolling over and over with their flailing victims in their mouth. If one of these large amphibians hits with a raise, it causes an extra 2d4 damage to its prey in addition to its regular Strength damage.

GHOST LIGHT

Appearing as a simple ball of light in the wilderness, the ghost light is a malevolent spirit that seeks to draw the foolish to their doom. Hypnotized by their flame, many end up in quicksand, off cliffs and into other dangerous circumstances by the "foolish fire." Should a victim resist the lure of the fire as they approach the danger, the ghost light is very capable of killing the brave with choking, nauseating flame.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Stealth d12+2, Tracking d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Ghost lights are immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks or truly courageous heroes. A hero can attack a ghost light with his bare hands (not with weapons), by using his Guts skill in place of his Fighting skill. All modifiers associated with Fighting apply to Guts for this purpose.
- **Flight:** Flying Pace 10".
- **Foolish Fire:** Str +d4 damage. Anyone striking a ghost light with his bare hands suffers 2d6 damage.
- **Hypnosis:** A ghost light may attempt to hypnotize a single target by winning an opposed Spirit check. The victim forced to follow the light at half his Pace. The ghost light must make this check every hour to continue the effect. The ghost light may attempt to draw the victim towards danger (a hazard, a hostile creature, etc.) by winning another opposed Spirit check. Once a victim is in the dangerous situation, the hypnosis ends. A target who is physically unable to see the ghost light immediately shakes off the hypnosis.
- **Size -1:** It's a glowing ball of fire.

INDIAN HUNTER

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: —

Basic Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry) bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (10).

INDIAN LEADER

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Level Headed

Basic Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry) bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (10).

STEPHEN

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

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Survival d8, Swimming d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Curious, Young

Edges: —

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), pistol (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 2d6+1), shot & powder (20).

BLOOD, WEST

While traveling along the coast in the New World, the party comes upon the wreckage of a ship. A quick check of the nearby shore reveals signs that survivors may have moved inland.

This adventure can take place anywhere along the eastern coast of the continent.



ADVENTURE LINK

This tale is loosely tied to the **Savage Tale: Newly Turned**, on page 19. If the heroes have played that adventure, they may have an inkling of what's ahead when they first find the wreck of *The Promise*. If you've already run **Newly Turned**, you may need to make an adjustment in the dates noted in the captain's journal.

BACKGROUND

The New World holds promise not only for colonists and traders, but also for those who prey upon them. Johann van Houten, a vampire of some age and experience, decided that the vast unexplored wilderness of the North American continent would be a perfect hunting ground. While he wouldn't have the vast throngs of Europe upon which to slake his thirst, there would also be far less humans to threaten his undead existence as well. With some effort, he believed he could found his own domain in the wilds of the New World.

Van Houten secreted himself aboard *The Promise*, an English vessel carrying supplies to the Jamestown colony. He intended to feed on livestock transported on the vessel as long as possible, but when *The Promise* took a longer southerly route to the colony, he found his feeding soon depleted the animals and he was forced to begin preying on the crew and passengers.

Long before the ship sighted land, the vampire had taken such a toll that the crew was no longer able to effectively sail the vessel. *The Promise* was left to the whims of the ocean. Some time ago, the ship crashed against the shore and van Houten along with a handful of sailors he had enthralled moved inland into the surrounding wilderness.

Aided by the former second mate, Sven Holtz, van Houten has subjugated a small group of Indians, who see the creature as some spirit of great—if malevolent—power.

THE PATH OF KANE

He has established a temporary lair not far from the shipwreck with the intention of moving further inland soon.

THE PROMISE

While traveling near the coast late one afternoon, the players find the beached wreckage of an English merchant vessel. (Alternately, they could also observe it from the deck of a ship as they approach the New World.) The sails are in tatters, hanging loosely from the masts, and a large hole in the side of the vessel is partially filled with sand. The ship might be repairable by a skilled shipwright or in a fully equipped shipyard, but at the moment it is clearly unsailable.

Should the adventurers choose to examine the vessel more closely, they learn that it is named *The Promise*. The ship's wheel is lashed in place and there are no sign of anyone aboard. Checking below decks, the wanderers find little in the way of goods or personal belongings. Even the ship's locker is empty of most repair equipment. It appears, at first glance, that at least some survived the wreck—either that or the vessel has already been looted.

Carefully searching the captain's cabin allows the heroes to make a Notice roll. With a success, they find several navigation maps with a course plotted that should have taken *The Promise* nowhere near its final resting place. On a raise, one of the characters discovers a journal behind a drawer in the captain's small desk. Skimming the book tells a strange tale of the disaster that befell the vessel in the emptiness of the vast Atlantic.

THE CAPTAIN'S JOURNAL

The book is the personal record of the captain of *The Promise*, Bernard Wakefield. The ship departed Dover over six months ago (or possibly longer if the heroes have also played the **Savage Tale: Newly Turned**). At that time, *The Promise* was carrying supplies and a few passengers en route to the Jamestown colony.

Two weeks after leaving port, some of the livestock they were transporting to the colony began to appear sickly and weaken. The sick-

ness spread despite the crew's efforts and by the one month mark over half the livestock had died.

By the second month, the illness had begun to affect the passengers and crew. Soon the ship was down to a skeleton crew on watch at any given time. Worse, madness seemed to accompany the disease and more than one crewmember succumbed to hallucinations.

Captain Wakefield's last entries make it clear that he too was succumbing to the disease. His writing becomes scrawled and difficult to decipher. However, it appears that he was beginning to fear a mutiny led by the second mate, a man named Holtz. Further, he claims that some of the crew may have begun to result to cannibalism—even though there is no mention of any shortage of foodstuffs. His final note says only, "*I have seen Him below the decks. I go now to commend my body to the sea so that my Soul may not perish.*"

ALL ASHORE

If the heroes search the shoreline near the wreckage, a Notice or Tracking roll uncovers a path leading inland near *The Promise*. While it does not appear to have been used recently, it is clear that at one time it saw fairly heavy usage. If there were any survivors of the shipwreck, it seems likely that they traveled this trail.

The trail leads several miles through a thick forest into a series of low hills. There a second Tracking roll detects that the path is becoming more and more trafficked as the party moves inland. A short distance into the hills, the heroes see the flicker of firelight through the trees, no doubt the camp of the shipwreck survivors.

When the heroes approached the camp, read the following:

The camp is a strange mix of tents and fine furnishings, crates and bedrolls out under the open sky. As well, the cargo from the ship is here, resting on the side of the hill. Obviously someone intends on establishing a civilized household either here or further afield. Further up the hill behind the odd encampment is a wooden building

constructed of planks and posts—no doubt scrounged from the stores of *The Promise* itself.

Amidst the eclectic surroundings are several of the local natives, some resting on the furniture, others involved in mundane tasks such as cooking, mending weapons or clothing, and the like. A single European man strides among them, and from their deference, he appears to lead the ragtag band. At his approach, the natives avert their gaze or scurry from his path. Two large, black dogs wander the camp seeking food scraps, occasionally pausing to sniff the air.

Should the heroes attempt to sneak up on the camp, every few rounds they must roll Stealth opposed by the dogs' Notice. If the dogs win, they immediately attack, snarling and barking as they charge the characters.

On the other hand, if the wanderers enter the camp openly, they find the camp welcoming, almost overly friendly. The European introduces himself as Sven Holtz and asks the party to join him for the evening. He and the Indians are both quite relieved to see the newcomers as they represent food for the vampire, which means one of their number is unlikely to suffer that fate—at least for a short while.

Should anyone question him about *The Promise*, Holtz readily admits to being the second mate. He disavows any mutiny, claiming that the captain had merely succumbed to the ravages of the disease that took everyone else aboard the ship. By the time the ship beached, he says, he was the only soul left alive. Fortunately, the local natives took him under their care and are helping him prepare his home on these inhospitable shores.

Holtz is merely trying to keep the explorers distracted until his master, Johann van Houten, takes note of their arrival (or until darkness falls should the group have discovered the camp in daylight). He entertains any questions, stretching the truth or outright lying as necessary to detain the party as long as possible.



Any hero making a Notice roll detects inconsistencies in Holtz's story. The man speaks far louder than necessary and even occasionally giggles while telling the tale, glancing furtively about when he does to see if any of the adventurers noticed the gaffe. If Holtz is confronted about this, his composure snaps. He immediately sets his guard dogs on the heroes and the Indians attack.

🐾 **Sven Holtz:** See page 143.

🐾 **Indian Warriors:** One per hero, see page 143.

🐾 **Guard Dogs(2):** See page 142.

THE MASTER ARRIVES

The vampire has made his temporary lair in the small cabin above the encampment. Here, he and his recent "bride" take shelter from the deadly rays of the sun. The single-room cabin is windowless and there is a small foyer that prevents light from entering the room through the doorway. A well-constructed coffin filled with dirt from his homeland serves as van Houten's bed. His spawn, a young Indian woman, occupies a rough-hewn crate made from supplies taken from *The Promise*.

THE PATH OF KANE

Should Holtz be able to keep party distracted long enough, van Houten notes their arrival in the camp. Approximately five minutes after they enter the encampment (or two rounds after combat begins), the vampire and his spawn descend from the cabin. Of course, if the heroes arrive during the daytime, van Houten does not emerge until after dark.

Van Houten makes no pretense at civility upon his arrival. If combat has not already begun, he orders his minions to attack. Although his bride immediately enters the fray, van Houten seeks to avoid direct combat unless engaged. The vampire has nowhere to flee, so he, his bride, and Holtz fight to the death. The Indian warriors fight only until van Houten is defeated. When he falls, they break off and retreat into the wilderness.

After the battle, the wanderers can find copious amounts of supplies in the encampment. There is everything from gunpowder to foodstuffs to finely crafted furniture. The total value of the cargo is well over £1000, although it weighs several tons. However, they can certainly replenish their supplies and searching carefully gather items of value (jewelry, spices, etc.) worth £50 with negligible weight.

♣ **Johann van Houten:** See page 143.

♣ **Van Houten's Bride:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

BRIDE, WESTERN VAMPIRE

The bride of van Houten is a slight, attractive, Indian girl. She has only been one of the undead for a brief time and has yet to come into the fullness of her powers.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Blood Drain:** A vampire who succeeds

in grappling an opponent can make a bite (Fighting) attack next round with a +2 bonus. When successful, the victim must make a Vigor roll (–2) with a raise, or suffer Fatigue from blood loss. This can lead to Death.

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Frenzy:** Vampires can make two attacks per round with a –2 penalty to each attack.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by a vampire has a 50% chance of rising as a vampire themselves in 1d4 days.
- **Small:** The Bride of Van Houten is a fragile girl, and has –1 to Toughness.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No wound penalties; Immune to poison, disease, and gas; Called Shots do no extra damage (except to the heart—see below).
- **Weakness (Holy Symbol):** A character with a holy symbol may keep a vampire at bay by displaying a holy symbol. A vampire who wants to directly attack the victim must beat her in an opposed test of Spirits.
- **Weakness (Holy Water):** A vampire sprinkled with holy water is Fatigued. If immersed, he combusts as if it were direct sunlight (see below).
- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (–6) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** The Bride catches fire if any part of her skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that she suffers 2d10 damage per round until she is dust. Armor does not protect.

GUARD DOG

Enormous black mastiffs once intended for a landowner in Jamestown, these creatures are completely in van Houten's thrall.

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

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Dogs roll a d10 when

running instead of a d6.

- **Go for the Throat:** Dogs instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.



JOHANN VAN HOUTEN, WESTERN VAMPIRE

An arrogant vampire, van Houten uses Taunt to throw the wanderers into a rage. He enjoys calling them "his naughty children."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Blood Drain:** A vampire who succeeds in grappling an opponent can make a bite (Fighting) attack next round with a +2 bonus. When successful, the victim must make a Vigor roll, -2 with a raise, or suffer Fatigue from blood loss. This can lead to Death.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Frenzy:** Van Houten can make two attacks per round with a -2 penalty to each attack.
- **Level Headed:** Vampires act on the best of two cards.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by a vampire has a 50% chance of rising as a vampire themselves in 1d4 days.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No wound penalties; Immune to poison, disease, and gas; Called Shots do no extra damage (except to the heart—see below).
- **Unholy Speed:** Van Houten moves with preternatural quickness, granting him +2 Parry and +2 to evade area of effect weapons (when allowed). Additionally, attackers must subtract 2 from Shooting or Throwing rolls when targeting him.
- **Unsettling Gaze:** Van Houten gains a +2 on all Intimidate rolls.
- **Weakness (Holy Symbol):** A character with a holy symbol may keep a vampire at bay by displaying a holy symbol. A vampire who wants to directly attack the victim must beat her in an opposed test of Spirits.
- **Weakness (Holy Water):** A vampire

sprinkled with holy water is Fatigued. If immersed, he combusts as if it were direct sunlight (see below).

- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (-6) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Van Houten catches fire if any part of their skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust. Armor does not protect.

INDIAN WARRIOR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate

Edges: —

Basic Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry) bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, arrows (10)).

SVEN HOLTZ

Holtz's madness manifests not only through his occasionally strange behavior, but also his generally unkempt and dirty appearance.

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

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, , Shooting d6, Survival d8, Swimming d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Delusional (Major: Serves a Vampire), Habit (Minor: doesn't bathe)

Edges: Alertness, Close Fighting, Improved Close Fighting

Gear: Shortsword (Str+d6) pistol (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1), shot and powder (20).

THE PATH OF KANE

The French

FRANCE has had mixed success in colonizing the New World. One of the first European explorers, the French made several attempts in the 16th century to found settlements on the continent. All failed, whether due to harsh weather conditions, disease, or conflicts with Indians or other European powers. Fort Caroline, founded in Florida in 1564, lasted only a year before being destroyed by the Spanish who built their own settlement, St. Augustine, only a short distance away. An attempt to settle over 40 convicts on Sable Island off the coast of Newfoundland in 1599 ended in 1603 with only 11 of the original men surviving.

Nonetheless, there are several small French outposts throughout the New World, most along the course of the St. Lawrence River. Tadoussac, founded in 1600 at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, is the only French seaport inhabited year-round. Further up the river, the ambitiously named Quebec City, established in 1608 on the site of an earlier French fort, primarily serves as a base for traders headed further into the backcountry. A handful of similar trading posts are scattered through the region while far more have disappeared into the wilderness—and from the memories of other French trappers and traders.

THIS THING OF GEARS

WHILE traveling through the St. Lawrence River valley, the wanderers come across a trapper's homestead apparently under attack by Indian warriors. Within moments of arriving, they are confronted by an enormous mechanical man.

MIGHTY GEARS

While following a fairly well-traveled trail, the party hears angry voices from the forest ahead. There appear to be several parties involved in what is clearly an argument, and while two of the voices are speaking French, the others are in a local native tongue.

The trail opens into a clearing near a riverbank. There are two buildings in the open area: a log cabin and a larger building, perhaps a barn. Between the two buildings are two groups of men. The first is a pair of European men, one older with a skullcap and beard and a younger man holding a crossbow. Opposite them is a small band of Indian warriors. On the ground in front of the Indians is a young European boy who has a serious injury to his leg.

As the heroes enter the clearing, the younger European man, Diego Sandoval, raises the crossbow and fires, just missing one of the Indians. The other warriors spring to the attack! Carlos Sandoval does not enter the fight, but falls back apparently frightened by the warriors.

Whether or not the adventurers jump in to aid the two men, at the end of the first round of combat a thudding sound echoes from the larger building. Moments later, a large mechanical man-shaped device lumbers out of the building and begins attacking the warriors. Clattering, clanking, and whirring sounds accompany its movements as it flails its bulky metal fists about.

Faced by a technological nightmare they cannot comprehend, the Indians flee the clearing after half their number falls or after the fourth round of combat, whichever comes first.

🐉 **Indian Warriors (2, plus 2 per hero):** See page 147.

🐉 **Diego Sandoval:** See page 147.

🐉 **Carlos Sandoval:** See page 147.

🐉 **Steam Golem:** See page 147.

TRAGEDY AND INVENTION

After the Indians have fled, the older man introduces himself and his son, Diego, to the wanderers. He thanks them for their help and rushes to help Diego check on the boy. Carlos quickly explains the boy is his grandson and Diego's son, Alfonso. Alfonso appears to be about 8 years of age.

The boy's leg is nearly severed, apparently by being struck by a sharp object like an axe. A quick examination allows a Healing or Knowledge (Medicine) roll. On a success,

the character determines Alfonso's injury is several hours old and that the boy has lost a considerable amount of blood. Without immediate care, he will die before the end of the day. Even with treatment, his survival is not assured.

Diego orders the golem back into the large building which serves as his workshop. A woman, Diego's wife Rosa, emerges from the cabin, and helps move Alfonso into the cabin. Should any of the explorers volunteer to treat the lad's wound, the Sandovals gratefully accept the offer. If not, Diego does the best he can.

If asked—or if the party just displays understandable interest in the mechanical giant—Carlos briefly explains that the Sandovals are of Jewish faith. He and his family fled Spain to France to escape the Inquisition. However the French were only moderately more accepting of his heritage, so Carlos brought his son and grandson to the New World where he hoped they might be free from religious zealotry.

Once here, he drew inspiration for his creation from the golem of Jewish myth, which tells of a great stone man who protects the Jewish people. A clockmaker by trade, he chose to build the golem from metal and wire rather than clay. However, it ultimately serves the same purpose as the legendary golem—to protect his family from those who mean them harm.

At this, Diego laughs, beginning a somewhat one-sided argument between the men. *"Even here we are bated and attacked! We are never safe—we must teach them to fear us, Papa!"*

Carlos attempts to calm his son, saying that perhaps they misunderstood the circumstances behind Alfonso's injury. Diego rebuts his father, saying, *"What would justify a band of armed men attacking a young boy? Nothing, I say! And yet, even here you seek to make excuses for our persecutors..."* With that, Diego storms out of the cabin, slamming the door behind him.

Carlos apologizes for his son's behavior and invites the wanderers to stay at his home for the evening, particularly if they either helped in the fight or aided Alfonso.

RUMOR

"I learned clockmaking in Switzerland, and first dreamed of this thing of gears to protect my people as we left that horrid place. Several maidens had been slain, horribly torn. It was no place to keep my family, much as I wish to find the evildoer."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Timing is Everything** on page 53.

Should the heroes remain for dinner, Diego does not return. Nonetheless, Rosa prepares a meal for them. Carlos explains that Diego has taken up trapping since their arrival in the New World. On occasion, he has had conflicts with the local Indians who sometimes pilfer their traps for beaver.

Allow any characters who helped with Alfonso another Healing roll or Notice roll (–2). If any succeed, they notice that Alfonso's leg bore identical wounds on opposite sides—an injury more in line with one caused by a trap than a blow from a weapon! If they do not make this observation, at some point after dinner Rosa comments on the injury, although she does not make the connection.

Upon this revelation, Carlos rises suddenly from his chair. *"Then the Indians were likely just bringing Alfonso to us—after he was injured by one of Diego's own traps! Diego must be told before his anger rises too high!"* he says and rushes out into the night. After calling for his son for several minutes, he suddenly stops and cries out in anguish.

The door to his workshop is open and the golem is gone!

WRONGFUL REVENGE

Carlos urges the heroes to help him find his son. *"I fear he plans to do something rash and with dire consequences. I may be able to smooth relations even in light of the fight today, but if Diego attacks them over this misunderstanding, I have little doubt that they will stay their hand against us!"*

THE PATH OF KANE

If they agree, they quickly find that, although it is dark, Diego's trail is not hard to follow. Nine hundred pound metal giants tend to make fairly obvious trails. A simple Tracking roll allows the heroes to locate his route. The golem does not travel quickly either, but Carlos explains that the nearest Indian village is only a few hours away and Diego likely has at least a couple hour's head start.

The wanderers unfortunately do not overtake Carlos before he reaches the village. When they arrive, the golems are rampaging about and several warriors have already fallen before it.

"Father, our people have suffered enough," Diego calls to Carlos when he spots the party. *"My son, and every one of us driven from our lands and our wealth stolen. We thought we would be better here, but why is my son close to death? God has given me the instrument of His wrath and I will serve His will."*



"These people did not do this!" Carlos yells to his son. *"It was an accident! This is not God's will!"* Diego does not respond to his father's pleas and continues to direct the golem in its slaughter. Turning to the characters with tears in his eyes, Carlos says, *"You must stop him before he sheds more innocent blood."*

By this time, four of the warriors present in the village are lying injured in the path of the golem. Feel free to sprinkle as many noncombatant villagers into the fight as you need. The Indians don't fight, but merely attempt to escape the wrath of the clockwork menace Diego has unleashed upon them.

Once the adventurers begin to intervene on behalf of the Indian villagers, Diego turns the golem's wrath on them. Diego will do everything he can to stop the heroes, commanding the golem to attack while he fires at them himself. There's no reasoning with Diego; he truly believes that only by killing everyone who may pose a threat can he protect his family. The only person Diego does not fire on is Carlos or any hero who he knows to be of the Jewish faith, unless they attack him directly.

Carlos does not enter the fight, but attempts at first to regain control of his creation. He quickly discovers that Diego has replaced his name in the golem's mouth. Regardless, the golem has run amok from the violence it has committed and, even if Diego were not controlling it, would continue its murderous attacks. He then tells the wanderers of the construct's specific weakness. When the golem is defeated, Diego stands down, knowing he has lost the battle.

Upon defeating Diego and the golem, Carlos removes the mainspring from the golem, destroying it forever. As much as he would wish to protect his family, he is not willing to risk his creation causing more harm.

The actions of the party and Carlos are not lost on the surviving Indians. After a few tense moments—and possibly with the help of the wanderers—Carlos is able to make peace with his neighbors. If Diego was killed, he

mourns the loss of his son, but he is clearly more sorrowful over the undeserved tragedy these people have suffered.

Carlos has little wealth other than his tools, but he does present the group with a wondrous curiosity: pocket watches of startling accuracy.

 **Diego Sandoval:** See below.

 **Carlos Sandoval:** See below.

 **Steam Golem:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

CARLOS SANDOVAL

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (Clockmaking) d12, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Repair d10

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Elderly

Edges: Steady Hands

Gear: Knife (Str +d4), clockmaking tools.

DIEGO SANDOVAL

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (religion) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Vow (Major, Protect His Family)

Edges: —

Gear: Crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6 AP2), knife (Str+d4), bolts (20).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

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

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** The golem is covered in thick iron plating.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from called shots (but see Weaknesses below); No wound modifiers; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** The Golem is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Tireless:** The Golem never suffers Fatigue.
- **Fists:** Str +d6.
- **Size +3:** The Golem is nine feet tall and over nine hundred pounds.
- **Weakness (Animating Glyph):** The golem bears an animating glyph on their foreheads (“*emet*”, meaning “truth or reality”) stamped into the metal of its forehead. If this glyph is erased—no easy task!—the golem ceases to function.
- **Weakness (Written Instruction):** The golem contains written instructions on who is their master. Removing this instruction (requiring a Called Shot to the head in melee and a raise) causes the golem to recognize no master, attacking the closest target present. Commanding the golem takes no action.

INDIAN WARRIOR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Axe (Str+d6) bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, arrows (10)).

STEAM GOLEM

The golem stands over 9' tall and is constructed of iron casing with its joints wrapped in leather. A strange mark (Hebrew) marks its forehead behind a thick piece of glass. Whirring and clicking accompanies its movements, rising to a clattering crescendo when it enters combat.

THE PATH OF KANE

■ EVERLASTING

The wanderers rescue a young man pursued by Indian warriors. Upon returning him to a nearby trading post they hear a tale of a settlement under siege by a hostile tribe.

BACKGROUND

At this point, few colonial settlements in the New World are likely to survive, but such is the human spirit that people will always try to carve a place for themselves. Once such group of people is lead by Henri Arsenault, a merchant recently from France.

A number of years ago, Henri Arsenault's group was caught in a cave-in while waiting out a fierce storm. Driven to starvation, the members of an extended family ended up killing and eating others of their number in the caves. This act of cannibalism caused a remarkable transformation in the remaining survivors; they grew stronger and faster, but at the terrible price of being forced to feed on living flesh.

Driven by their cannibal curse, the group of merchants and trappers kept to themselves. They built a waystation near the birthplace of their curse, which over time, has drawn a fair amount of trade from French trappers in the region. Unknown to its customers, the outpost of Everlasting now serves as food larder for the hidden monsters in Arsenault and the others.

At the cusp of growing beyond a simple trading post, the settlement of Everlasting currently fights for its survival at the hands

of the local Indians who are aware of the hideous dual nature of its inhabitants. The tribe is actually attempting to save as many as possible from the monsters in the settlement. Unfortunately, to the uneducated eye, their actions appear overly hostile.

TRAVEL TO EVERLASTING

Whether the adventurers approach Everlasting by land or river, they see a form break through the woods near the riverbank. It is a young man, Yves Arsenault, who is no more than fifteen years old. Chasing him are several Indians—obviously warriors intent on doing him harm. Should the heroes do nothing, the Indians catch up to him and quickly slay the boy.

If the heroes choose to intervene and are on land, most of the warriors interpose themselves in front of them while one drags off the young man. The Indians attempt to delay the wanderers long enough to give the other warrior time to kill the boy. The warriors attack only if the party either attacks them or attempts to force their way past the Indians.

If the wanderers are on the river it takes them two turns from noticing the attack to get to the shore with their boat. The warriors do not fire their bows unless the characters use ranged weapons from their boat. Instead, they meet them at the water edge, weapons ready. As before, they attack only if the heroes attempt to move past them or attack.

Once the characters rescue the young man—or allow him to be killed—a party of frontiersmen and trappers comes upon the scene. They quickly ask about the boy and then split off a group to continue after any remaining Indians. The leader of the group, Thierry, thanks the heroes for their help and offers to lead them to the nearby trading post.

🗡️ **Indian Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 154.

🗡️ **Yves Arsenault:** Use the Citizen stats on page 69.

RUMOR

"Not all men would wish you well in your work against evil. Tales come in from passers-through of the Inquisition seeking out those who would hunt wickedness and imprisoning them. You would think that God's work is God's work, but they would wish a monopoly on it."

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Jackals Among Wolves** on page 76.

A TALE OF SAVAGES

Everlasting is a simple trading post surrounded by a little more than a half-dozen buildings. An incomplete stockade wall surrounds half the outpost. From the size of the wall, it's clear the inhabitants expect much greater growth in the future. In addition to a trading post and hidehouses, a number of sturdy log cabins are scattered inside the half-finished wall.

Thierry brings the heroes to a stocky and rather harried man at the trading post, seemingly the hub of social activity in this area. Surrounded by a small group which appear in part to be relatives, Henri Arsenault is more than willing to talk about his town's problems. He is the owner of the trading post and de facto leader of the community. The young man the wanderers rescued is Yves, Arsenault's son.

"The Indians attack us for no reason we can discern. It has gone on for some time, but we took it as part of the area. As we grew the community a little, we thought they would realize their folly. Not only have they stepped up their attacks and cut off much of the fur trade, the savages have kidnapped some of the most recent arrivals while out trapping or even from their beds. We are tradesmen, not soldiers. Please, you must help us."

A few men in the group turn out to be Arsenault's family: his brothers, Thomas, Francois, and James, and an uncle, Paul. Also present are two of Henri's friends, Amaury and Daniel. A handful of guides and trappers round out the population. The residents are friendly enough, if only to share their tales of misery with someone who has not heard them before.

Thierry remains as well, telling of his nephew's disappearance seven years ago. Arsenault recommends that the heroes rest the night, especially after their battle. The men are more than willing to house the heroes as best as they can, sharing what luxuries they have freely.

THE LAND REBELS

In the night, a hue and cry wakes the wanderers, Thierry leading the call. He calls to the heroes: *"Hurry—there is movement in the forest. I fear an attack may be imminent."* When the characters come outside they see a few of the traders emerging from their huts, most still half-asleep and confused. Thierry leads the heroes to the open side of the incomplete wall.

At first there is a rumble in the rain that could be mistaken for thunder, but soon there is no mistaking it for the very land moving beneath you. Amongst the trees, huge shadowy forms rush toward the outpost. With a roar, several large beasts—bears—emerge from the treeline. Behind them is a line of Indian warriors creeping forward, weapons at the ready.

"I have never seen the likes of this," exclaims Thierry. "I will muster the others." With that, he hurries back to camp to gather reinforcements.

Neither the bears nor the Indians pay any attention to the heroes unless they are attacked first. If the heroes do attack or impede either the bears or the natives, however, they become fair game to both groups. Left alone, both the warriors and the animals enter the outpost and focus their attacks on the inhabitants therein—specifically the Arsenault family, but as they comprise the largest portion of the settlement, this may not be immediately obvious to the players.

After two rounds of combat, 4 other frontiersmen emerge to help the party battle the assault. The bears fight until slain, but the warriors retreat after more than two-thirds their number are slain.

🐻 **Bears (1, plus 1 per 2 heroes):** See page 153.

👤 **Indian Warriors (3, plus 2 per hero):** See page 154.

👤 **Frontiersmen (4):** See page 153.

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NOT EVERLASTING

Once the attack is defeated, the wanderers notice that there are sounds of shouting coming from the outpost itself. The party sees the shadowy shapes of figures retreating from the settlement back into the wilderness.

Thierry meets the heroes as they approach. From within the trading post itself comes the sound of screams and crashing. Thierry tells them while the main attack drew the attention of many of the defenders, more Indian raiders crept into the settlement. Arsenault's son Yves was killed in the attack, if he wasn't slain before.

When they enter, Henri looks at the wanderers, shaking. His mouth opens, but words seem to fail him at first. Soon, however, he speaks, his voice flat:

"We will pay you any price. I will give you this trading post. I am not a poor man; the fur trade has been good to my family. I have gold and accounts and lands in Europe." Henri slips a ring off his finger, a gold band with several emeralds set in it, and holds it



out to you. "See, I have this ring, a gift from my wife still in Paris. I promised her I would care for the boy. Just kill them all."

Henri goes very quiet. He blankly walks out of the main room of the trading post to his room, closing the solid door behind him. Soon, the trading post erupts with talk of hunting parties and brutal reprisal. Thierry pulls the heroes outside to speak to them.

"I would not bring this up to the others because they do not appear to be of sound mind. I wonder if we misunderstand the natives' motives. Some of the warriors drove me into my hut during this attack. They did not allow me to leave, but it became clear they did not seek to harm me. There was another... creature in the darkness. The Indians chased it away."

"More importantly, I saw what I thought was a ghost: my nephew Jean, one of the first taken years ago. He had aged, certainly, but I would swear it was my nephew. I know, it's been years, but his face... he had my sister's nose. I just know it was him. He was dressed as the Indians, carrying a bow."

Thierry reveals that he believes the Indians may have more complex goals than simply driving the trappers away. He suggests that, as newcomers, the wanderers may be able to make peaceful contact with them and thus gain more information. However, he adds they need to do so quickly before the rest of the town mobilizes.

ON THE WARRIORS' TRAIL

The war party that attacked the trading post was fairly large, so finding the initial tracks is not terribly difficult. Have the heroes make a Tracking roll; the size of the Indian band offsets the modifiers for poor light. The Indians are encamped about 10 miles away, so the adventurers have to make 10 checks to find the camp. On a critical failure, the heroes are Fatigued when they finally find the Indian camp.

Assuming the party doesn't pick a fight, the Indians are not hostile. Indeed, an older man, clearly a shaman, greets the party as friends in English.

"I am Crying Ghost, medicine man of this tribe. We have not much time. The land is sick and I know you to be of good heart. Come with us and you will learn our intent."

If the party does start a battle, they find the Indians able foes.

🦋 **Huron Warriors (20):** See page 154.

🦋 **Crying Ghost:** See page 153.

CRYING GHOST'S TALE

The shaman welcomes the wanderers to the camp. It quickly becomes apparent that this is not a true village, but rather an encampment of warriors. There are no women or children present, or indeed any sign that they ever have been, and all the men are well-armed.

Crying Ghost is polite but direct with the heroes.

"Many men at the white man's post are tainted, and the taint consumes all who live there. We may save some, but our numbers are few and this stain must be erased. It is only a matter of time before the taint consumes each new visitor. There are many more who come every passing of the seasons."

Crying Ghost is unable to put a name to the evil, explaining his people have no word for it. It is a spirit of the far north, one of evil hunger that devours all, either in body or spirit.

He explains years ago his people fled the area for fear of the evil which came not long after the first traders arrived. He and many of the tribe's warriors volunteered to remain to oppose it, to prevent its further spread. However, they are limited in number and they become fewer each year as they fall in battle against the horror festering at the outpost. His words make clear that he expects one day he and his warriors will lose their fight to protect his people.

Having spoken his peace, Crying Ghost allows the heroes to rest among his people until early morning.

A young man approaches the party either as they settle down for the night or as they prepare to leave. At first, Thierry's nephew

THE HURON

If you set this adventure in New France, the Indian tribe most likely to be plaguing the inhabitants of Everlasting is the Huron. Meaning "boar's head" from the French word referring to the men's stiff and upright mohawk hair, the Huron are an agricultural people that supplemented themselves with deer and bear. Producing a surplus, extra crops such as corn became stable trade goods for the Huron.

Deeply involved in the European fur trade, the Huron enjoy much better relations with the French than most tribes have with other settlers. Terrifying warriors and enemy of the Iroquois, the Huron have an incredible respect for their youth and extensive efforts are made to educate them in both warcraft and peacetime efforts such as food preparation and the making of clothes.

Jean appears to be another Indian warrior until he speaks. With him are a few other trappers who have been "kidnapped" over the years.

Jean explains that the Indians were rescuing them from a danger they did not even know existed. When possible, Crying Ghost's warriors limit their actual attacks to only those who are beyond salvation. The men confirm what Crying Ghost has told the wanderers and say once they left the confines of the trading post they began to feel the wrongness seeping from it into the surrounding world.

THE CANNIBALS ATTACK!

On the way back from Crying Ghost's encampment, the characters catch sight of a man stumbling through the woods. He's dressed as one of the French trappers, but as they catch up to him, he cowers at their

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approach. As they get closer, they recognize it to be Thierry. He's shuddering from cold and limping badly.

"Please, help me..." he says when he realizes who the wanderers are. He is soaked in blood from a number of visible wounds. Slashes, no doubt from axes or knives, are interspersed with savage bites that have torn the flesh from his body.

At this point, several forms break out of the woods. Dressed as men, they look nothing like any man you have ever seen. Scurvy pulls back their gums to expose dagger-like fangs, malnutrition and hunger bloat their stomachs to disgusting size. Their fingernails extend nearly two inches, dripping with blood. They race forward, initially focused on Thierry.

JOURNAL OF HENRI ARSENAULT

Trapped, first by the weather and then by the cave-in. Out of food, out of hope. Roger snapped, tackling Claude, screaming about food. Thomas jumped on Roger and bit him. He clamped down on his neck, and tore a hunk of flesh out, and chewed and chewed. I couldn't see; blood in my eyes, blood in my mouth... I was so hungry...

I was chewing. I was chewing Roger. My god, what have I done?

I have not written in this book in five years. I have not appeared to have aged a day. The others have not either, including my son Yves. I am stronger, faster, and more vital than ever. More than human, leaders among men. Wonderful health, great strength. But there is a price; I must eat human flesh...

More people come here every day, slow but sure. Excellent hunting and fishing. I am a wolf in the fold.

Life evermore.

Hunger, everlasting.

Have the party check for surprise at this point. Thierry's pursuers weren't expecting to encounter anyone but their victim, so they also must make a Notice roll. If the wendigo fail the roll, they launch themselves at Thierry the first round, seeking to devour him on the spot. Otherwise, they go after the heroes.

The wendigos begin the combat with a +1 increase to the die types of their Strength and Vigor dice to reflect the bites they've already inflicted on Thierry. The wendigos do not retreat. They know they must keep their secret from the outside world.

Once combat ends, the heroes will recognize the clothing on the monsters as belonging to Thomas, Francois and James. Close examination shows them to be Arsenault's brothers, just suffering from what appears to be extreme starvation.

Thierry, unfortunately, is quite dead by this point, either from blood loss or the additional wounds inflicted by the wendigos. Hidden in his coat is a blood-soaked journal.

Wendigos (3): See page 154. Unlike a standard wendigo, these are not Wild Cards.

OUTPOST OF HORROR

Following Thierry's tracks leads the heroes back to Everlasting. There, they find a terrible sight: Most of the trappers and traders who had taken refuge at the post are dead, slaughtered, and apparently, partially devoured. Arsenault and the rest of his family emerge from the buildings of the settlements as the explorers arrive. All are covered in blood.

Arsenault initially claims that while the party was away, the Indians attacked again. The warriors, he says, slew many of the inhabitants. He explains the bite marks on the dead frontiersmen as caused by animals who aided in the attack like the night before.

If the heroes confront him—or he catches sight of the journal in their possession—Arsenault and his family transform into their horrific, cannibalistic forms. Their skin stretches tight over their bones, their lips pull back from their teeth, and their flesh turns ashen in color. They leap ravenously to attack the group.

Raise each of the wendigos' Strength and Vigor die types by +1 to represent the earlier carnage they inflicted on the frontiersmen. Some time has passed, so they have lost some of their Foul Strength. As before, the wendigos fight to the death.

Following the battle, the wanderers can rummage through the trading post. There are certainly plenty of goods on hand to allow them to resupply food and ammunition. Additionally, they find £200 in various currencies and nearly £500 worth of furs in various states of curing. However, the furs are extremely bulky and heavy so transporting them is likely to be beyond the ability of the party unless they are well equipped with pack animals or a ship.

Wendigos (4): See page 154. Only Arsenault himself is a Wild Card.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

BEARS

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

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Bear Hug:** A bear that hits with a raise has pinned his foe. The opponent may only attempt to escape the "hug" on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Size +2:** These bears stand 8' tall and weigh over half a ton.

CRYING GHOST

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Spirits) d10, Notice d6, Shamanism d8, Stealth d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal



Edges: Arcane Background (Shamanism), Healer, Strong Caster

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), fetish bag.

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, curse, deflection, fear, obscure, smite, spirit servant, spirit ward, summon beast, vision quest.*

Treat as a Veteran character.

FRONTIERSMAN

Whether experienced trappers, traders, or simply rugged explorers, all of the men at Everlasting are skilled woodsmen and tough, hardened fighters.

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

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Survival d8, Swimming d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: —

Edges: Woodsman

Gear: Axe (Str+d6), knife (Str+d4), flintlock musket (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d8), shot & powder (20).

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INDIAN WARRIOR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (20).

WENDIGO

Normally, these creatures appear as humans. However, when the hunger overcomes them, they undergo a startling transformation into emaciated humans with bloated stomachs and other signs of starvation.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Combat Reflexes:** +2 to recover from being Shaken.
- **Foul Strength:** A wendigo who inflicts a wound on a foe with its bite gains +1 die in Strength and Vigor for the remainder of the scene, to a maximum of four extra die types. Outside of combat, each increase lasts for one hour.
- **Frenzy:** A Wendigo may make an additional Fighting attack each round at -2.

The Spanish

THANKS to sponsorship of Columbus' original voyages, the Spanish have been active in the New World far longer than the other European powers. The oldest existing Spanish settlement, Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola, was founded in 1498—a century earlier than French and English successful attempts.

Spain is far more aggressive in their efforts to colonize the New World as well. Already there a number of Spanish cities in the hemisphere: Havana (Cuba), Lima (Peru),

Cartagena (Colombia), Santiago (Chile), Mexico City (Mexico), and San Juan (Puerto Rico) to name only a few. More than 250,000 European-born Spanish are in the New World at this time.

The Spanish Crown has divided its holdings into two vast colonies. To the north, the Viceroyalty of New Spain encompasses North America, most of Central America, the Caribbean, and the Philippines. New Spain is ruled from Mexico City, easily the largest and most powerful city in the New World at this time. The Viceroyalty of Peru, with its capital in Lima, governs all of South America.

Spain has profited greatly from its colonies in the New World, unlike the French and English. Gold and silver captured there have funded a surge in Spanish power and influence in Europe. Thanks to restrictive trade practices, Spanish colonists are allowed to trade only with Spanish merchants. Needless to say this has caused a fair amount of aggravation to English and Dutch merchantmen in the Caribbean, leading to large numbers of pirates, who not only raid ships but at times even lay siege to Spanish port cities.

The Spanish hold a very proprietary view of land in the New World. Not only does the Spanish Empire claim the land they conquer, but also the very people living on it. They employ two systems of land management, the *encomienda* and the *hacienda*. Both are grants from the crown usually given to nobles, conquistadors, or soldiers.

The *encomienda* grants the recipient a trusteeship over the natives on an area of land. The trustee is allowed to collect tribute, but is expected to teach the natives Spanish and the Catholic faith. Although there is no specific land grant associated with the *encomienda*, unscrupulous trustees often use the authority they've been granted to legally seize property from their wards.

The *hacienda* system bestows upon the grantee an often sizeable area of land. In addition, the Spanish crown grants the recipient with any Indian inhabitants on that soil, providing him with no less than the power of life and death over his charges. The owner, sometimes called a *hacendado*, is usually

chosen from minor nobility, although the Crown has occasionally awarded a grant to a religious order such as the Jesuits.

MEXICO CITY

Founded by the Aztecs in 1325, what was known as Tenochtitlan was the fulfillment of a prophecy for the foundation of a great city. The Aztec used this base to fuel their own growth, expanding their control over other tribes throughout Mesoamerica through conflict and trade routes reaching hundreds of miles or more. With a population of close to a quarter million people in the time of Cortés arrival, it presented too much of a lure to Spanish greed to last long. At first considered to be a prophecy come true by his arrival, Cortés proves to be far worse than a living god.

Using the inherent dislike by other tribes of the Aztec people, Cortés was able to mobilize these natives to march on Tenochtitlan. After a siege, a smallpox epidemic, and finally fierce house-to-house fighting, the Aztecs surrendered. With the city in Spanish hands, Cortés drastically rebuilt the city, leaving many sections to rule themselves but always keeping a hand on the gold and trade that would pass through what was now known as Mexico City.

Mexico City became the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Spain in 1535 and is now home to more than 40,000 residents, the vast majority of whom are Indians. Standing on an island situated in Lake Texcoco, the city is prone to flooding during the rainy season. It is laid out in a very structured fashion. Streets and canals run north-south and east-west.

Although the new buildings mimic those of Spain, the Spanish cannot erase all the marks of the previous city. Traditional Catholic dogma finds itself immersed in the area's spiritual beliefs, due to the overwhelming Indian population outnumbering the Spanish, despite the best efforts of the Dominicans to expand their missionary efforts. However, the Spanish Inquisition holds considerable power in Mexico City and public executions for heresy are not uncommon.

PALIMPSEST

The wanderers hear terrible rumors regarding several churches in Mexico. Clergy have been terribly tortured, often to death, within their own churches. The only clues left behind are strange feathers.

BACKGROUND

In 1521, Cuauhtémoc, the last ruler of the Aztecs, was captured while trying to escape the fall of Tenochtitlan to the Spanish. Surrendering to Cortés, he asked to be put to



RUMOR

"Something has disturbed the peace of the grave—I hear the dead are beginning to walk again!"

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Risen** on page 159.

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death by his own blade. Cortés refused and Cuauhtémoc was first treated well. However, when he refused to reveal the “hidden treasure of the Aztecs,” Cortés allowed him to be tortured terribly. His feet burned repeatedly, but as no such treasure existed, he remained steadfast in the face of the pain. After watching the destruction of his city, he was finally executed in 1525.

Cortés had the whole of Tenochtitlan razed to the ground in an attempt to remove all traces of Aztec culture from what would become Mexico City. Claiming the Imperial Palace as his own, his next move would bring a reckoning many years later. He ordered all the old temples destroyed and placed a church over the old foundations, erasing any trace of the Aztec worship sites and rewriting the land to his own desires.

Cuauhtémoc’s spirit, denied an honorable death and forced to watch the destruction of his people, remained tied to the shell of Tenochtitlan. Now, two brothers seek dominion over the tortured soul of Cuauhtémoc. One, Takal, seeks to capture it so that it will not torment the living. Takal’s brother Nema, however, has already bound Cuauhtémoc’s spirit to use as a weapon against one of the symbols of the Spaniards that broke the back of the Aztec empire: the Catholic Church.

INVESTIGATING THE CHURCHES

Asking at the churches regarding the attacks is the best course of action. Officially, the church officials do not cooperate with the heroes, going so far as threatening to contact the authorities. However, word of the wanderers’ interest filters out and witnesses—even some of the surviving victims—begin to open up to them.

Each day, allow the adventurers to make Streetwise or Persuasion rolls. On a success, they manage to make contact with a witness or victim who provides one of the clues below:

“Several men vandalized the churches, desecrating the altars. They appeared to be Indians dressed in traditional garb. Several unusual feathers were found at the scene of the attacks.”

“The victims—all priests—were alone at the time of the attacks. They were subjected to horrible torture, burning the tops and bottoms of their feet. Some even died as a result, perhaps just the shock of the terrible wounds... or, some claim, from fright!”

“One priest claims he saw a ghostly form, floating and bound, just before his feet burned. The ghost appeared to have burned feet itself.”

AZTEC ATTACK

The heroes’ investigation has not gone unnoticed by other interested parties as well. The evening after the heroes finish speaking with the last witness, Nema sends a group of warriors to deal with them. They are dressed as traditional Aztec warriors, a sight seldom seen in Mexico City at this time.

The warriors time their assault to occur when the party is either separated or at least not in a public place. They do not utter a single word, but instead immediately begin their attack.

Three rounds into the fight, a second wave of Aztec Warriors appear. There are fewer of them—only one per wanderer—but these warriors begin fighting against the heroes’ attackers. You can prepare an Ally sheet for each warrior and let the players run them, if you’d like.

Once the hostile Aztec warriors are dealt with, the other warriors remain. They do not answer any questions or even speak with the adventurers but seem to be on guard for something. Within moments of the end of the battle, an old man in traditional Aztec clothing appears.

Nema’s Aztec Warriors (3 per Hero): Use Aztec Warrior profile, page 158.

Takal’s Aztec Warriors (1 per hero): Use Aztec Warrior profile, page 158.

AN UNEXPECTED ALLY

The old man says some words in an unusual language (Nahuatl) and orders the warriors away. He introduces himself as Takal, an Aztec priest. He quickly assures the

wanderers that he had nothing to do with the attacks against the priests and tells them the story of Cuauhtémoc.

Takal explains how his group has been trying to put Cuauhtémoc to peace after all these years. While they cannot themselves attack Cuauhtémoc, Takal believes the wanderers can either wound Cuauhtémoc enough or break the spiritual bindings placed on him by Takal's brother so that Takal can trap him in a vessel and stop the attacks on the churches and the clergy.

"These priests, they are not the ones who harmed my people. Some of them, their fathers were unborn when my people fell. And Cuauhtémoc would not harm them unless he was bound to do so. If he is to find peace, he must be stopped and brought to the spirits again. My brother must be stopped as well, for his attacks will turn the Spanish against my people yet again."

HEEDING THE CALL

If the wanderers agree to help, Takal gives them Cuauhtémoc's knife, telling them that they must use it to destroy Cuauhtémoc or cut the bindings tied to his form. He leads the wanderers to a series of tunnels

under the city, a place he knows his brother conducts rituals with his worshippers. As they reach the ritual chamber, they see a horrific sight:

Covered in a rich cloak of gold and quetzal feathers, the mirror image of Takal plunges a knife into a bound and terrified young man and begins cutting his heart from his still living body. The man, a Catholic priest by his garb, howls in agony. His scream is echoed by the chants of several men wearing tribal clothing and marked in blood.

The wanderers need to make a Guts roll against Fear/Nausea upon seeing the grisly ritual murder of the poor unfortunate young priest.

The man is obviously Takal's brother, Nema. Next to him stands the shimmering form of a young Indian with ghostly leather straps and chains entangling his limbs and throat. The specter fades as the priest's life ebbs away.

The Aztec priest turns to the chamber entrance and notices you for the first time with a start. Nema looks to his followers. "You, go to see our work is done," Nema says and a group breaks off to a side tunnel leaving the chamber.

ARTIFACT: CUAUHTÉMOC'S KNIFE

A small and sharp stone knife with a plain leather handle, this knife was one of several owned by Cuauhtémoc and in his possession when he was captured by Cortez. His pleas to be put to death with its edge ignored, Cuauhtémoc's rage has extended across the pale and may only now be stopped by his spirit's death from this knife.

Anyone holding the blade hears a faint but constant flutter of feathers when all is silent. Despite its brittle appearance, the blade holds an edge against even the hardest materials, even able to cut steel given time and effort.

The knife is treated as a normal one of its kind except against those of Spanish descent. Against them, the wielder gains a +2 to his Fighting rolls and ignores two points of armor from any non-magical source. As well, the knife will harm any creature only affected by magical weapons.



THE PATH OF KANE

"You would turn on our people, brother?" Nema says, pointing his dripping dagger at his brother. "Your blood will wash clean the stain of your betrayal!"

Nema commands his minions to attack the wanderers, staying back with one tribesman and using his spells against appropriate targets. Nema and his followers do not surrender and fight to the very end. Takal, refusing to take the life of one of his own people, does not enter the battle.

When the battle is over, Takal rushes to his brother's body. Even death does not stop Takal from finding out what he needs. He performs a short ritual over his brother's corpse. At the end of his recitations, Nema's body sighs heavily and says, *"...the church of San Pedro and San Paulo."*

🗡️ **Nema's Aztec Warriors (4, plus 2 per hero):** Use Aztec Warrior profile, see below.

🗡️ **Nema:** See page 159.

🗡️ **Takal:** See page 159.

THE CHURCH OF SAN PEDRO AND SAN PAULO

This small church is easy to find even at night. It is still under construction, with scaffolding covering the outer walls. The tracks from Nema's servants, still wet from the damp tunnels, are likewise easy to find, leading to a set of broken main doors.

The smell of burnt flesh assails the party as it enters the simple church. Portions of the unfinished ceiling are covered with heavy canvas, lost in the shadows of the many candles. Down the central aisle by the altar lies a middle-aged priest dragging himself forward with his arms, his shoes smoking.

The air is filled not only with cooking flesh but clouds of quetzal feathers spinning and whipping about. Amidst one of the clouds hovers the ghost of Cuauhtémoc, who gestures towards the priest. The priest screams as his feet ignite. The remaining followers of Nema laugh at the man's torment.

Takal draws forth a small urn from a bag, smudging symbols on it with a smoking twist of hemp. *"I cannot attack him,"* he says. *"Do what you must to free him."*

If the heroes attempt to take the Aztecs by surprise, roll opposed Stealth vs. Notice. If the wanderers win, they gain surprise on the Aztecs and the spirit of Cuauhtémoc.

Takal is unarmed while he performs the ritual. Due to the protections of the containment ritual, Cuauhtémoc cannot approach Takal, so he commands his minions to kill Takal. Meanwhile, Cuauhtémoc fights any wanderers who attack him. He does his best to avoid anyone wielding Cuauhtémoc's Knife once he is struck with it the first time and realizes what it is.

The wanderers have two options when fighting Cuauhtémoc. They can either attack him directly or they can attempt to cut the bindings holding his spirit. Cutting his bindings require three separate Called Shots at -4 for a small target. Once he realizes what the attacker is doing, Cuauhtémoc commands two of the tribesmen to attack the knife-wielder directly.

Once the wanderers defeat Cuauhtémoc, either by disincorporating him or cutting his spirit bindings, Takal is able to force him into the vessel. Now trapped and Nema's influence ended, Cuauhtémoc's attacks against the clergy and others stop. He allows them to keep Cuauhtémoc's Knife for their future battles against spirits.

🗡️ **Aztec Warriors (2, plus 2 per hero):** See below.

🗡️ **Spirit of Cuauhtémoc:** See page 159.

🗡️ **Takal:** See page 159.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter.

AZTEC WARRIOR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Obsidian Axe (Str+d8).



NEMA

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Spirits) d10, Notice d6, Shamanism d10, Stealth d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Elderly, Outsider

Edges: Arcane Background (Shamanism), Strong Caster

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), fetish bag

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, curse, deflection, entangle, fear, obscure, smite, spirit servant, spirit ward.*

Treat as a Veteran Character.



SPIRIT OF CUAUHTÉMOC

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d12, Taunt d10, Stealth d12+4

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

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Cuauhtémoc is immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks or truly courageous heroes. A hero can attack Cuauhtémoc with his bare hands (not with weapons), by using his Guts skill in place of his Fighting skill. All modifiers associated with Fighting apply to Guts for this purpose.
- **Fear -2:** Cuauhtémoc appears as a young man with horribly burned feet, and causes a Guts check at -2 when he lets himself be seen.
- **Quetzal Concealment:** All ranged attacks within five inches of Cuauhtémoc suffer a -2 penalty due to the cloud of feathers surrounding him.
- **Spirit Burns:** Cuauhtémoc can inflict horrible burns on targets within his Spirit in inches similar to the ones he suffered at the hands of the Spanish. Make an opposed Spirit check against a target. Success means the target is Shaken and has his Pace cut in half for the next day. A raise results in a Wound and the target needing to make a Vigor check to walk each round. A second Shaken result causes a wound.



TARAL

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Spirits) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shamanism d8

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Elderly, Loyal, Outsider

Edges: Arcane Background (Shamanism), Strong Caster

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), fetish bag

Powers: *Banish spirit, boost/lower trait, deflection, entangle, obscure, smite, spirit servant, spirit ward, vision quest.*

Treat as a Veteran Character.



RISEN

The heroes get wind of rumors of the dead rising from their graves in Mexico City.

BACKGROUND

Doctor Ernesto Sanchez, a bitter and greedy man, has hit upon a plan to make a great profit for himself at the expense of his patients. He had found ways to inflict illnesses on the unsuspecting and then 'cure' them, but he now befriends the rich and elderly so that they will leave him portions of their estates upon their deaths. Waiting until they passed naturally, Dr. Sanchez grew impatient with each patient's day of good health. Now, he has no qualms with poisoning his patients so that they pass quickly.

A related problem of which the doctor is unaware has cropped up though. His poison of choice, an odorless and tasteless mixture, actually does not kill his victims but temporarily paralyzes them. When they awake, they are buried in a casket and often die of fright or suffocation. However, others manage to break free and wander in a drugged daze, their minds destroyed. A civic-minded priest new to the city has sworn to put down this 'threat of the Devil.'

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OUT OF THE GROUND

A Streetwise roll on the topic of the walking dead points the heroes to Panteon Esteban. Panteon Esteban is an expansive cemetery servicing the rich parishioners of the local Church of San Juan. Walking paths around the cemetery bring the heroes to the church, with a short detour right into a fight with what appears to be a zombie.

A young priest stands with his back against a gravestone monument as a shambling man approaches him threateningly. Dirt is crusted onto the man's clothing and hair and his fingernails are cracked and broken. His eyes hold a vacant stare as he shuffles menacingly toward the priest.

Although the newly risen man is not truly undead, the effects of Dr. Sanchez's poison render him immune to pain and incapable of any rational thought. Nonetheless, the fight should be a quick one.

🦋 **Risen Dead:** See page 162.

DEATH AND DRUGGINGS

The priest, Father Emmanuel, thanks both God and the heroes for their help and gets to work in returning the dead to the ground, welcoming any help from the party. The "zombie" emerged from a nearby grave marked as belonging to "Reuben Cardona." Even a cursory examination tells the party that the grave is a recent one. The dirt has not yet begun to settle on it.

Likewise, the wanderers can make a Notice roll if they examine the body. Unlike 'normal' undead, this one appears to have bled when struck with a weapon. A closer inspection shows that the man was not actually dead until he was killed by the heroes. Anyone with Knowledge (Medicine) or Healing may make a roll to determine that the person was under the effects of a drug of some type.

Father Emmanuel, new to the church (the former priest was horribly burned during a vandalism), explains what has been happening over the past few months. Put succinctly, the dead are buried and sometimes they get back up. Rumors abound, he says, but the church hierarchy is too busy 'squeezing gold from the Jews in Spain' rather than helping

to fight evil. He fears that if he cannot find a permanent solution he will have to close the cemetery.

The priest answers any questions the characters may have. The Father's knowledge of the strange resurrections is fairly limited as he is a new arrival to the city. All he has determined is that the phenomenon began about eight months ago and that every person that rose from the dead did so within three days of their interment. However, a Streetwise roll while speaking with Father Emmanuel reveals that all of the risen dead were buried by a single local gravedigger, Ernesto Padilla.

The Father allows the heroes access to the church records as well. An Investigation check while reviewing them confirms that the "dead" rising began about 8 months ago. Furthermore, it also tells the party that all of the deceased were without any next of kin in the New World. (There is no record, however, of the disposition of any estates, should the characters ask about that specifically.)

A GRAVE UNDERTAKING

Another Streetwise roll while asking around the city finds the location of Padilla's residence, a single-room shack on the outskirts. The outside of the shack is in pretty poor repair, with a fair number of gaps in the wood planking (occasionally patched by mud packing). Several shovels and a wheelbarrow sit propped near the front door.

Ernesto Padilla comes to the door within moments after the party's arrival (whether the characters knock or not). He is a nervous and frail man, prone to fainting when stressed. A Notice roll observes that the man has a particularly large gold ring on one of his dirt-crusted fingers. A Knowledge (Heraldry) roll tells the wanderers that it appears to bear the crest of the Cardona family.

Should the heroes be aggressive in their dealings with him (i.e., using Intimidation rolls), they spend a great deal of time reviving him from a fainting spell so that they can question him. Dealing with him in a more polite manner—by Persuasion, for example—obtains far better results.



He prepared the burials for all the recently interred on the heroes' list, he says, and was under orders from Doctor Sanchez—the attending physician—to simply garb the dead and bury them quickly. He did not question the matter since he was paid for doing little work, but he did recall that there were no signs of rigor mortis in one that he was delayed in preparing. Pushing him further causes him to plead for mercy, even offering to bring them to the scene of his most recent burial at the Villemar household's private plot.

THE VILLEMAR HOME

Francisco Villemar, an elderly owner of great farms in the countryside, was a popular man. Still, he found little solace in society, choosing his friends carefully. His death is a great shock to his servants since he was a very fit man. Sadly, his latest friend was not the wisest choice: Doctor Sanchez.

If the party arrives in the company of Padilla they have no problem entering the home. The gravedigger has already had contact with Villemar's staff. If asked, the servants have

nothing but praise for Villemar and Doctor Sanchez. They even note they look forward to serving the doctor as they did Master Villemar. Further questioning reveals that Villemar left much of his holdings in the city to the doctor as payment for his care and friendship, much to the consternation of his distant relatives in Spain.

At this point, Doctor Sanchez arrives to catalog the belongings in his new home, accompanied by several hangers-on and hired bodyguards. Padilla quickly becomes quite nervous.

A stout man in his late fifties, Doctor Sanchez dresses in a rich style to which he is obviously accustomed, a great contrast to some of his rough companions. *"Ernesto, what brings you here with your...friends?"*

"They made me tell them!" Padilla collapses yet again, all color flooding from his face. Realization strikes Sanchez, his face twisting in anger. He draws a pistol and fires a shot at Padilla, striking the gravedigger in his leg. Padilla screams, falling over and clutching his bleeding limb.

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"*Stop them!*" Sanchez yells and his followers leap to the attack.

The doctor's 'friends' quickly reveal themselves as the low-life rabble they are, using all manner of dirty tricks in the battle, with little regard for any damage they cause to the Villemar household. Meanwhile, Doctor Sanchez is a savvy opponent with some small skill but little in the way of morals. Should matters become difficult for him, he attempts to take a frightened servant hostage in order to secure his release.

🐾 **Doctor Ernesto Sanchez:** See below.

🐾 **Henchmen (2 +1 Per Hero):** See below.

🐾 **Servants (3):** Use the Citizen stats on page 69. The servants do not enter combat; treat them as innocent bystanders.

VILLEMAR RETURNS

Three rounds into the combat, everyone is in for a big surprise as Francisco Villemar decides to come home one last time. Villemar launches himself at Doctor Sanchez, screaming "*Alive! Alive!*"

Villemar becomes more coherent by the moment, howling about being buried alive and how Sanchez will "*burn in the Pit!*" Once Sanchez's henchmen are defeated, Sanchez breaks down and begs the heroes to protect him from Villemar.

It is up to the heroes what to do next. Villemar must be restrained, although he won't attack the heroes and gains more of his intellect every moment. In exchange for his life, Sanchez insists that the drug he used can be purged from Villemar's body and that he will, in time, return to normal.

Regardless of if the heroes show mercy to Sanchez or avail themselves of an open grave on the Villemar estate, Francisco Villemar is eternally grateful to his saviors. He fully recovers from the poison in matter of weeks under a more considerate doctor. Should the heroes need a place to stay in Mexico City his home is always be open.

As well, society doors open easily on his say-so, as does his wallet: if they are willing to accept it, he gives each of the heroes £50 worth of coin and gems.

🐾 **Francisco Villemar:** Use the stats for Risen Dead, see below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



DR ERNESTO SANCHEZ

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d8, Knowledge (Science) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Greedy

Edges: Brawny, Charismatic, First Strike, Iron Jaw, Rich

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry), scalpel (Str +d4, poison), wheellock pistol (Range 10/20/40, Damage: 2d6+1) shot & powder (20).

Special Abilities:

- **Poison:** Doctor Sanchez keeps a scalpel coated with a dangerous toxin in case of grave danger. Any victim Shaken or wounded by an attack with the scalpel must make an immediate Vigor roll or suffer an additional automatic wound.

SANCHEZ'S HENCHMEN

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d6, Intimidation d8, Riding d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: -2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Block, Dirty Fighter, Frenzy, Quick

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry).

RISEN DEAD

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str.

- **Fearless:** Risen Dead are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Mindless:** Their nearly mindless state causes the risen to mimic some of the aspects of actual undead. They receive +2 Toughness and +2 to recover from being Shaken.



■ The SMOKING MIRROR

A NUMBER of wealthy Spaniards are found dead in their bedchambers, their skin dry and weather-beaten. The heroes are contacted by a member of one of the families to determine the cause of the strange deaths.

A DAUGHTER'S REQUEST

The wanderers are contacted by Elsa de la Cruz, the daughter of a well-known Spanish patron of a hacienda near Mexico City. Elsa tells the heroes their reputation precedes them and that she has a problem for which they may be uniquely qualified. She explains that her father was found dead in his bedchambers only a few days earlier, but that the circumstances were very strange.

"I had dinner with my father the night he died. In the morning, his skin was burnt and dry to the touch—as if he had been in a desert for weeks! The door to his bedchamber was locked and the windows were barred from the inside. The doctor claimed it was a fever of some kind—but my father was as healthy as a bull. Other—all hacendados—have also died in a similar fashion. If it was an illness, why does it only strike these wealthy men?"

She is clearly upset by the event and quite out of her depth. She offers to pay the adventurers the hefty sum of £50 each if they uncover an explanation for her father's strange death—and, if there is any foul play, bring his murderers to justice.

MERCHANT OF DEATH

Searching her father's bedchambers provides few clues to the cause of his demise. The only thing of note is an unusual mirror crafted of highly polished obsidian and framed in wood covered by gold filigree. The

carvings on the frame are clearly of Aztec origin. If asked, Elsa explains that her father purchased the mirror from a local merchant.

A Streetwise roll quickly uncovers the fact that each of the other dead hacendados also possessed such a mirror—and all were purchased from the same merchant, Ruben Vargas, who specializes in native antiquities. The same roll also locates the address of the man's shop in the city. The wanderers find him quite forthcoming with information, horrified at the turn of events.

"I discovered an ancient pyramid of Aztec construction in the jungles to the south. In it, I discovered dozens of these unusual mirrors. Having never seen the like before, I knew my patrons would leap at the chance to acquire them."

Vargas is reluctant to provide the location of his treasure trove to the wanderers without good reason. However, he's been somewhat unsettled by the strange black mirrors since he first discovered them. If the characters tell him of the unusual circumstances behind the deaths of many of his customers, a simple Persuasion roll is all it takes to get him to open up. Other methods might include bribery (although he's unlikely to sell out for less than £200), force (requiring an Intimidation roll), or even entering into a business deal of some form with him.

If the adventurers convince Vargas to tell them where the tower is, he provides the party with a rough map leading them to the location. He also gives them a small obsidian hand mirror should they need to use a sample to question local inhabitants for better directions.

A TWISTED REFLECTION

The pyramid is over 300 miles to the south and through inhospitable terrain. Feel free to fill in the journey with native and animal attacks—or even another Savage Tale or two—or you can cut right to the action.

About halfway through the trip, have a hero who's taking a watch at night during a waxing moon make an opposed Spirit roll against the **priest of Tezcatlipoca** (see page 166).

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A success causes the hero to notice that there was an outside force pulling at her very soul. With a Smarts roll, she identifies the source of the attack was the mirror. A failure on the part of a wanderer means she immediately goes to look at the mirror. Regardless of whether she resisted or not, if she looks into the mirror, read the following:

Looking in the mirror, you see two forms. One is your own reflection, twisted and jagged; the second is a skeletal priest, adorned in bone and feathers. The skeletal form steps out of view as hands from your own twisted reflection grab you and yank you into the mirror.

Allow the hero to yell a warning before she is pulled into the mirror. If the character didn't resist the call of the mirror at first before she examines the mirror, allow the mirror self of the person pulled in to get the Drop on the hero. Otherwise, draw action cards and conduct combat as normal.

The explorer drawn into the mirror is faced with a distorted version of herself and her surroundings. The mirror image immediately attacks, intent on destroying its real-world twin.

Any wanderers still in the outside world have a couple of options for this combat.

When they look into the mirror and see their ally in it, they also see reflections of themselves. Any actions they make are mimicked by their reflections. So long as the heroes can see themselves in the mirror—in other words, in front of the mirror and within about 2" (12 feet)—they can cause their reflections to fight by proxy. This is difficult to accomplish with any accuracy; all targeted attacks suffer a -4 penalty.

Another option is to simply break the mirror. Although it is made of obsidian, the mirror is surprisingly resilient. It has a Parry 2 and Toughness 8 (remember, damage rolls do not collect bonuses from raises on the attack roll, nor Aces). This tactic is extremely dangerous for the trapped hero, however. If the mirror is broken, the wanderer caught inside is showered with large shards of fragmented—and razor sharp!—pieces of obsidian as she bursts forth into the real

world. She suffers 2d6 damage from the broken mirror pieces, but may soak the wounds normally.

Once the mirror image is defeated or the mirror is broken, the trapped character can escape. If the mirror is still intact, the wanderers certainly may choose to break it. If they do so, it shatters into many tiny pieces, as well as one slightly larger piece that does not break.

🗡️ **Mirror Hero:** See page 166.

THE MIRROR TEMPLE.

The heroes reach the Mirror Temple just as a full moon rises in the sky.

Reaching the top of the hill, the slope descends into a shallow valley. The land alternates between thick foliage and blasted and burnt ground, huge strips of scorched land. At the center of the valley nearly a quarter-mile away rest the remains of an Aztec temple.

While much of it is consumed in vines and foliage, a two-story edifice sits atop the pyramid. Powerful illumination flashes out from it at regular intervals, like a land-bound lighthouse warning away all but the most foolish.

Once the party has closed to within 100 yards of the temple, read this:

The glow fades and then grows in intensity, as though the tower has noticed you. The light narrows, aimed towards you as it tracks across the tops of the trees, leaves boiling and withering at the light's touch.

Draw action cards as normal with the mirror tower gaining surprise on any wanderers who don't immediately announce that they are moving to avoid the light. The tower is only able to attack every three turns. It focuses on the largest group of characters unless someone in the party has an intact mirror (including the large piece from the broken hand mirror). In that case, it attacks the mirror holder in preference to any other targets.

On the tower's initiative, place a Medium Burst Template on the ground to cover as many wanderers as possible. Roll a ranged attack using Shooting d8 with no range pen-

alties against anyone under the light, doing 2d6 fire damage to anyone hit if they are in foliage and 2d8 if they are in the open and burnt areas.

An adventurer holding the mirror can attempt to reflect the moonlight back at the tower with a Spirits check opposed by the tower's attack roll. If successful, the tower's attack does no damage that round. This counts as an action for the mirror holder.

Treat the overgrown areas as difficult terrain for movement purposes. The burnt, open areas allow normal movement. The rocky outcroppings act as Heavy cover and provide 2 points of Armor against the tower's searing light.

A successful Notice check shows that the tower cannot attack targets on the pyramid itself. Once the heroes reach the base of the pyramid, the light will continue to pulse and burn the ground, unable to reach them.

The pyramid itself is completely solid except for the two-story structure atop it—clearly a temple of some sort.

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

Great braziers burn along the perimeters of the stone walls of the temple. Carved into the stone are horrible scenes of sacrifice, both victims and priests accented with shaped bone and polished obsidian. It is a wide open chamber spread over two levels.

The room is brighter than the braziers should make it, their meager light amplified by a dozen mirrors of various sizes placed throughout the chamber. Six mirrors hang from walls or rest in stands on the upper level, while six rest on the bottom level.

The mirrors are of a similar design to the one given to them by the merchant. Naturally, a wanderer will investigate the remaining mirrors:

As you step towards the mirror, a form appears in it as though reflected from the real world. He is not present except in the mirror, however, although this makes him no less unsettling. A short twisted shape dressed in feathers and leather, his skin hangs off his body in dried shreds, blood

and life gone from it long ago. The eye sockets of his cracked skull burn with the same light as the tower outside.

"You come here to find answers," the grim priest says through a lipless mouth. "All you shall find is death at the hands of the Smoking Mirror!" He raises his hands, fire rushing from the form in the mirror and barely missing your reflected self. Although no flames exist outside the mirror, the heat from it feels all too real. As fire flares in the mirror, the braziers' flames grow in intensity, smoke forming into the horrible forms that quickly take on substance.

Several strange creatures resembling jaguars created from smoke and hate coalesce about the room. Their eyes burn like red-hot coals and their claws spark with flame on the temple floor. Draw action cards as they move to attack.

The Priest of Tezcatlipoca attacks the wanderers from within the mirrors, using Special Abilities and spells on anyone within range. Each turn, choose a mirror from which the priest attacks. This is his position for purposes of line of sight and range. He always selects one that moves him as far away from attackers as possible while allowing him to be in range to attack (5").

Meanwhile, the only way to attack the Priest of Tezcatlipoca is to appear in the reflection of the mirror (assume anyone within 5" of the mirror appears visible in it) and use the reflection as a guide on where to attack. As before, this imposes a -4 penalty on any attack rolls.

The mirrors are made of obsidian and surprisingly sturdy. Treat each mirror as Toughness 10. Blunt weapons halve the mirrors' Toughness. Breaking half the mirrors causes the priest to suffer a -2 penalty to all Trait and Attribute tests in addition to restricting his options. The Beings of Smoke and Hate focus their attacks on anyone attempting to destroy the mirrors.

Breaking all the mirrors forces the Priest of Tezcatlipoca into the real world and Shaken. He no longer suffers the -2 penalty from the broken mirrors, but if the wanderers suc-

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ceeded in wounding him while he was inside the mirrors, those wounds persist when he is pulled into the outside world.

If the heroes defeat the Priest of Tezcatlipoca, the power of the temple fades. The Beings of Smoke and Hate immediately vanish and all the braziers go out. Let them sweat a little in the darkness before they realize they have succeeded. Once they light some torches and lamps, they find a total of £200 worth of gold fragments from the filigree on the now-powerless mirrors.

🐉 **Beings of Smoke and Hate (1, plus 1 per 2 heroes):** See below.

🐉 **Priest of Tezcatlipoca:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

BEINGS OF SMOKE AND HATE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d10

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Ember Claws:** The touch of a Being of Smoke and Hate burns the soul and body, doing 2d8 damage on a successful Fighting roll.
- **Smoky Aura:** Anyone within 1" of a Being must make a Vigor check or suffer a -2 to all actions for the round from smoke.
- **Smoky Form:** The Beings automatically succeed at escaping any physical attempt to restrain or grab them (such as grappling).

RUMOR

"Wickedness abounds, my friends. While I was in Spain, a duchess buried her much younger husband. None will speak of it, but I have on good source she is no lady. It is said she bathes in blood, a mockery of Christ's sacrifice for us!"

This rumor refers to the **Savage Tale: Duquesa Roja** on page 80.

MIRROR HERO

Treat a hero's mirror image as a duplicate of him in all respects, including Traits, Edges, and equipment, with the following additions:

Special Abilities:

- **Construct:** +2 Toughness and +2 to recover from being Shaken
- **Fragile:** A raise on an attack with a blunt weapon automatically causes an additional wound (on top of any resulting from damage).
- **Identical Appearance:** Until the mirror image suffers a Wound, the heroes will have to make a Notice check to tell the difference between it and the actual person.
- **Sharp Edges:** Str+d4 damage as a melee attack.



PRIEST OF TEZCATLIPOCA

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Spirits) d10, Notice d8, Shamanism d8, Stealth d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty

Edges: Arcane Background (Shamanism), Strong Caster

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4).

Special Abilities:

- **Blast of Heat:** The priest may place a small burst template down on anyone within 5" of his mirror, making a Spirit check versus the targets' Vigor. Success causes 2d6+2 damage.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison; No wound modifiers.
- **Weakness:** The priest suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls if more than half the mirrors are destroyed. If all the mirrors are destroyed, he will appear in the real world and be Shaken when he does so.
- **Powers:** Boost/lower trait, curse, deflection, fear, obscure, smite. Treat as a Seasoned character.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

First spotted by Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513, Florida, the 'Land of Flowers', would become one of the most important points in the Spanish empire. However, for nearly half a century the Spaniards were unable to successfully settle Florida, although it promised to be a valuable waypoint for Spain's treasure ships on the way back across the Atlantic. Meanwhile, the threat of France grew all too real with the establishment of Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River in 1564—within striking distance of Spain's return route.

In response, King Phillip II sent Pedro Menendez de Aviles to colonize Florida and remove all threats to Spanish rule: pirate, colonist or soldier. The city of St. Augustine, so named for Menendez' arrival in Florida on the Feast Day of St. Augustine in 1565, proved to be a key settlement for the Spanish. From here, Menendez devastated French ships threatening Spanish ships, as well as destroying the French military force at Fort Caroline.

St. Augustine has had its share of troubles—from attacks by pirates to conflicts with the Timucua Indians. Hurricanes and fires are almost regular occurrences, although the latest to strike was in 1599. Already home to hundreds of citizens and soldiers, St. Augustine is home to a fort, church, hospital, and seminary.

One of the major influences in St. Augustine, as in many Spanish towns, is the Catholic church. The year 1566 would first bring Jesuits to the region. They had little success with the local Timucua Indians. The Franciscan order would have much better luck, establishing their first mission in 1588.

MAD DAN'S FRENZY

SHIPS bringing goods to St. Augustine are ending up as targets of frequent night attacks, mere days out of port with no attacking vessel in sight. More often than not, the ships are later found floating empty of valuables and crew.

TIMUCUA

The Timucua, a tribe of Native Americans indigenous to northeastern Florida, are tall by the time's standards: several inches over five feet tall on average.

Dark-skinned and dark-haired, they cover themselves with elaborate tattoos to show status and their contributions to their people. Their permanent homes are built within walled villages, with several holding hundreds of people and ruled by a chief. Farming supplements hunting for the Timucua.

Originally allies to the French, the destruction of Fort Caroline and the wholesale murder of nearly all the French present increased tensions between the Timucua and the Spanish. However, conversion efforts by the Franciscans spread Christianity through Timucua towns and normalized relations between colonist and native.

This has not served the Timucua well, unfortunately. War amongst themselves and with other tribes, demands of the Spanish Catholics for the Timucua to serve the Empire, and the rampage of disease reduces their numbers dramatically.

BACKGROUND

Daniel McAuliffe, an Irishman of poor moral fiber and ill temperament, was always willing to do anything for a price, be it theft, murder, or worse. It's no surprise that he eventually found himself in charge of a pirate vessel in the Caribbean. Life was good for a while—until his vessel was blown out from under him by a Spanish warship. While he was floating away on a piece of wreckage, sharks began to swarm around him and several other survivors. As the ferocious predators began to feed, he and the other pirates called out, half-crazed with fear, offering their very souls in exchange for their life.

The prayers of the righteous are heard, and so, apparently, are those of the unrighteous. Just not by the same listener.

THE PATH OF KANE

The forces of darkness answered the pirates' pleas, but not, perhaps, as they had hoped. The men were transformed into a blasphemous union of human and shark, their outward form now a reflection of their inner avarice.

Once the initial shock of his new form wore off, McAuliffe began to see potential in their curse. Rather than a huge crew with a large ship that made him a big target, his group of powerful sharkmen could board a ship, steal only the best valuables and head off where none could chase them: deep in the ocean.

A Chance Meeting

While the heroes are wandering around St. Augustine, preferably later in the evening, one of them notices a few suspicious characters moving into an alley by the docks. It's a simple matter to follow these people and listen from afar.

The men speak in hushed tones. One group carries a set of small boxes with them; they were the last to enter the alley. The other is a single man, cloaked and hooded, holding a pouch out to the group. They exchange items, the man taking the pouch opening it up and looking inside. It jingles, the sound of coin within. Meanwhile, the cloaked man shakes the boxes, satisfied by the rattle before putting them in a net bag over his shoulder.

"You've got a lot of guts to keep on attacking ships like that, Tomas" one man says to the cloaked man. The cloaked man smiles with huge teeth, his face a bit longer than would appear normal. "Well, McAuliffe likes the lifestyle to which he's accustomed—you were followed!" he says as he sniffs the air and then points in your direction.

The smugglers immediately attack as the penalties for dealing with pirates are as severe as those for actual piracy—and all end in death. When more than half their numbers have fallen, most of the smugglers attempt to flee, although one throws down his weapons, offering information in exchange for his life and freedom.

The hooded man, however, has no desire to fight anyone on land and makes a beeline down the alleyway to the ocean. Unless the party takes action to stop him, the run only

takes him two rounds. Should they overtake him or wound him sufficiently to slow him down, he throws back his hood.

Beneath, his features are a twisted blend of man and shark. Coal black eyes sit in a face that is a pale and deathly white. His mouth is over-wide and lipless, and filled with far too many dagger-like teeth. Slimy, wet black hair lies pasted to his head like seaweed. Seeing the horrific sight necessitates an immediate Guts check.

If forced to fight, he does so to the death, going into a frenzy immediately should anyone be injured. He attacks with both cutlass and bite, his black eyes rolling back into his head as his jaws open so wide they appear to actually unhinge.

🦈 **Sharkman:** See page 170.

🦈 **Smugglers (1 per hero):** See page 170

PIRATES...OR WORSE

If the wanderers accept the smuggler's bargain, he gladly gives up all the information he has on his former business associates.

"The man I was dealing with works for Mad Dan McAuliffe. He's a crazy Irishman long wanted for piracy, got himself branded even, right on his cheek! I heard he was killed over a year ago—his ship sank by a Spanish man o'war. If so, he popped back up like a cork. Far as I know, McAuliffe doesn't have what you'd call a crew, just a few close mates. They're the ones that have been raiding the ships in the waters east of here."

The smuggler doesn't know how the pirates are getting aboard the ships out in deep water. He's never seen a ship nor has his contact ever mentioned one. The smuggler assumes they keep it hidden in a cove somewhere along the coast.

If the characters defeated the sharkman and show his body to the smuggler, he's horrified by the man's monstrous appearance. Although he's dealt with the pirates before, they've always kept their faces hidden by hoods. The smuggler had assumed this was to protect their identity, but now he knows it was due to their terrifying features.

Regardless if the heroes keep their word or turn in the smuggler, he is no further trouble for them.

BOARDING ACTION

Further investigation into McAuliffe and his band turns up no additional information. The smugglers were the only contact the pirates had within St. Augustine. The only open course of action is to hire on with a likely merchant vessel in the hopes that the pirates decide to attack it.

Although there's only a single merchant ship in port, the *Maria Teresa*, the adventurers have no trouble gaining employment on it. With the number of ships either falling victim to the pirates or just outright disappearing, the captain, Eladio Zapeta, is more than happy to take on extra bodies to protect his vessel. The wanderers may have ideas on how to make the *Maria Teresa* more appealing such as circulating stories about a secret gold shipment or other valuables hidden aboard about town. Actually convincing the captain to turn his ship into bait by making it appear especially vulnerable or unprotected takes a successful Persuasion roll, however.

Once the heroes sign on with the *Maria Teresa*, they don't have to wait long. Regardless of their efforts to make the vessel an enticing target (or not), on the first night out, McAuliffe and his school of pirates take to the water and attempt to plunder the ship.

If the characters are trying to hide their presence, give McAuliffe a Notice check opposed by a group Stealth roll for the party. If he succeeds, he goes ahead with the assault but is mindful of the danger and changes his tactics as necessary.

Assuming he doesn't see the heroes, the sharkmen do what they always do: Spot the lookouts, climb aboard ship and eliminate any guards. They then make for the stern of the ship to subdue the captain and officers. The sharkmen attempt to leave no witnesses, but don't spend an inordinate amount of time searching for survivors either.

After that, they search for the quartermaster's records. The pirates use the records to find the best loot to steal while McAuliffe avails himself of the captain's stores and



silverware. Loot in hand, they throw it overboard by bashing through windows in the captain's stateroom or smashing a wall and then jump after it, swimming away.

Most of the crew is so unnerved as to be unhelpful in a fight and others are still below decks and mobilizing. Captain Zapeta and a few sailors are clear-headed enough to throw in, grabbing belaying pins and helping in the fight.

If anyone meets McAuliffe in combat, he's overjoyed. If anyone has been wounded, he's already in a feeding frenzy. Should things turn against McAuliffe, he attempts to throw himself overboard, promising to remember what the characters "*taste like*" and laughing all the way. The rest of the sharkmen are too overwhelmed by their own bloodlust and fight to the death. Once the heroes defeat them, the attacks on St. Augustine ships stop and trade can resume.

The leaders of St. Augustine are very grateful to the heroes, offering a £200 reward for stopping the attacks. Meanwhile, if Dan McAuliffe survived, he heads to better waters,

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remembering the insult the heroes delivered onto him in the single-minded way only a shark can think...

🦈 **Mad Dan McAuliffe:** See below.

🦈 **Sharkmen (2, plus 1 per hero):** See below.

🦈 **Captain Zapeta:** See below.

🦈 **Sailors (1 per hero):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

CAPTAIN ELADIO ZAPETA

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

Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Navigation) d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: —

Edges: Command

Gear: Sextant, compass, cutlass (Str+d6), pistol (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1), shot & powder (20).



MAD DAN MCAULIFFE

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean, Wanted (for Piracy by the Spanish), Branded

Edges: Brawny, Dirty Fighter, Dodge, Really Dirty Fighter

Gear: Net bags, Cutlass (Str+d6)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Thick Hide
- **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Fear**
- **Feeding Frenzy:** Once an opponent has suffered at least one wound, a sharkman

goes into a feeding frenzy, allowing him to attack twice each turn at no penalty. In addition, the feeding frenzy adds +2 to his attack rolls, damage, and rolls to recover from being Shaken for the rest of the fight, but applies a -2 Penalty to his Parry.

- **Hardy:** McAuliffe does not suffer a wound for being Shaken twice.

SAILOR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances & Edges: —

Gear: Belaying pin (Str+d4).

SHARKMAN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d12, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean, Wanted (for Piracy by the Spanish)

Edges: Dirty Fighter

Gear: Net bags, Cutlass (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Thick Hide
- **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Feeding Frenzy:** Once an opponent has suffered at least one wound, a sharkman goes into a feeding frenzy, allowing him to attack twice each turn at no penalty. In addition, the feeding frenzy adds +2 to his attack rolls, damage, and rolls to recover from being Shaken for the rest of the fight, but applies a -2 Penalty to his Parry.
- **Hardy:** Sharkmen do not suffer a wound for being Shaken twice.

SMUGGLER

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

Skills: Boating d6, Driving d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Greedy

Edges: Connections

Gear: Cutlass (Str+d6), knife (Str+d4), flintlock pistol (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1), shot & powder (20).



THE SOUTHWEST

FIRST discovered by Francisco Vásquez de Coronado in 1540 while searching for the Seven Golden Cities, New Mexico would soon become a foothold for the Spanish in the Southwest of the New World. Previously inhabited by native cultures as far back as 9000 BC, the current inhabitants include the Pueblo people such the Zuni Indians. With initial conflicts and Coronado's expansive exploration yielding no golden cities, New Mexico has largely been ignored by the Spanish.

The third, and present governor, of New Mexico, Pedro de Peralta, moved his capital to Santa Fe in 1610. Building began immediately on the Palace of the Governors, a single-story adobe structure housing not only the governor and his offices, but also cavalry barracks and a church. As yet, there is little beyond the palace and a few outlying buildings in the settlement.

Invariably, the Spanish ended up in conflict with the natives, and New Mexico was no exception. The need and abuse of Indian labor and the oppression of native religious practices continues to create constant conflict among both groups of people. The Spanish are still vastly outnumbered by the native tribes, with missions spreading at a crawl along the Rio Grande and other rivers. Perhaps the one blessing the Spanish brought is horses; they are quickly being assimilated into the culture of several Indian tribes.



■ SALT, BLOOD, FLINT

THE wanderers are approached by a lone Zuni Indian who tells them he has had a vision that the party would help him.

This adventure can take place at any time with the Indian stumbling across the heroes no matter where they are, from Fort Nassau to Hindoostan.

BACKGROUND

Each year, the Zuni Indians make a pilgrimage to the Zuni Salt Lake. Here, they gather salt for everyday use and for sacred rites to the Salt Mother. Before the pilgrimage a shaman arrives at the lake to seek the Salt Mother's blessing. As he has done, just as his father did before him, Speaks with the Wind traveled alone to the lake to commune with nature and gain the Salt Mother's favor.

His son, Ten Fists, had other plans. Always greedy and aggressive, he chafed under his father's calm nature and longed for even more influence than being the medicine man's son. He also saw the peril and potential of the recently arrived Spanish to the region and sought to use it to his own end. Gathering those who believed as he did, he sought out and murdered his own father in the middle of the ritual. This disruption angered the Salt Mother and brought a powerful being, the Achiyalatopa, to drive away any Zuni trying to use the Salt Lake.

With the Salt Lake unusable by the Zuni, Ten Fists started to deal with the Spanish in an attempt to gain wealth and even displace the chief of the Zuni. Not the smartest of people, Ten Fists did not consider the danger the Achiyalatopa represented or that the Salt Mother may seek other help for the Zuni...

SMILING CLOUD

The wanderers are approached by a lone Indian who introduces himself as Smiling Cloud. He is a pudgy but strong young man with a sharp mind and likeable nature. He speaks a language common to the party, enough to explain his plight.

His people have lost the favor of Ma'l Okyattsik'i, the Salt Mother. He had a vision that strangers who "*were from far away and of good heart*" would help him. Smiling Cloud explains the yearly pilgrimage to the Zuni Salt Lake to gather salt, a holy ritual for his people. This year, however, the shaman who was to go first and seek the blessing of

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the Salt Mother did not return and others who have arrived at the lake were driven away by a birdman coated in feathers of flint.

If the adventurers encounter Smiling Cloud while pursuing another goal, he helps them accomplish it to the best of his ability. Feel free to let the party run Smiling Cloud as an Ally if you choose.

🐉 **Smiling Cloud:** See page 174.

THE ZUNI PUEBLO

When the heroes arrive at the Zuni pueblo located in New Mexico, they find the Indians at first suspicious of them. However, Smiling Cloud is well-liked by the elders for his goodwill. His family and friends immediately accept the explorers on Smiling Cloud's behalf, and the other Zuni are respectful, if distant to the strangers.

The chief of the tribe, Stone Stands, insists on meeting the heroes, speaking with them through Smiling Cloud. An old and thin man, he is very curious about the world beyond his people and the dangers it presents.

THE ZUNI

The Ashiwi, as the Zuni call themselves, live along the Zuni River in western New Mexico. One of several groups descended from the Paleo-Indians of the region, they are most noted by the village style which gave them and other tribes a common name of Pueblo people: multilevel stone structures entered by way of ladders. Unlike other tribes, the Zuni manage to keep themselves relatively isolated from other cultures and avoiding much of the conflict faced by other Indian people. Even their language is isolated, making communication difficult.

Spiritually, the Zuni accept an interlinking of life between ancestors, the natural world, and its people. Their art carries religious elements, and illness is believed to be caused by the breaking of religious laws. As a result, many problems within the society are seen as caused by those would bring the world out of balance, a common theme among faiths as far-flung as Buddhism.

Should the heroes tell him of their adventures and the evil they have fought his mood changes considerably for the better. Stone Stands has the heroes meet other elders, including Ten Fists, Speaks with the Wind's son. Still apparently grief-stricken, Ten Fists is polite but distrustful of strangers. He has led several groups to search for his father, he says, and he is going out again in a few days.

After they meet with Ten Fists, Stone Stands speaks to the heroes again, using Smiling Cloud as an interpreter.

"I believe you must stop this creature of the salt lake, as you have stopped many other evils. There are times when the strength of good and the strength of evil must meet together and battle. Good will win, or evil will win, but neither good nor evil will win by talking."

Stone Stands dismisses the heroes, leaving them to their thoughts. If the heroes didn't quite understand what Stone Stands meant, Smiling Cloud points out that the elders often talk too much for Stone Stands' liking rather than taking action. He believes it is best to head out rather than lingering at the pueblo.

THE ZUNI SALT LAKE

A flat dry expanse shows the remains of an enormous lakebed. Throughout the bed lay white crystals, salt evaporated from water. As well, odd pieces of flint lay on the ground, cracked and broken. A closer look shows that the stones are intricately carved in the shape of feathers. Some are buried into the ground or even other stones with great force, with a few areas sure to be dangerous to walk due to the mass of sharp flints pointed upward.

Once the party is within a half-mile of the salt lake, the Achiyalatopa makes its attack. The only sounds on the air are the wind and a flapping rattle, the light from the sun blotted out by a form fast approaching. The creature appears as a large humanoid resembling a Zuni warrior, with wings instead of arms and claws for feet. Its wings and back are covered with stony growths shaped like feathers.

There are several places where the heroes may take cover, from rocky outcroppings to twisted trees that provide Medium cover.

The Achiyalatopa flies close to the ground to slash heroes with its talons, saving its Feathered Blast for groups of gathered heroes. It actively avoids harming animals unless the heroes attempt to use them for cover.

If the heroes manage to defeat the Achiyalatopa, it momentarily collapses to the ground in a pile of stones before bursting forth again whole. This time, it is aggressive but does not attack and is willing to talk. If the heroes ask any question regarding why it is here, such as why the Salt Mother forsook the Zuni or why it is attacking, it rattles furiously as it speaks in a language the heroes understand.

"Each year, before the Ashiwi walk to this sacred place to gather the salt, a shaman would come and talk to me, tell me why Ashiwi should have the gift of the Salt Mother. He would be kind, and he followed the old ways, and I would always let the people pass."

"This year, I arrived to find him dying, cut with a dozen knives. His own people—Ashiwi warriors cut him down and left him to die, dumped him in a hole never to be found! But I see! And I know! I know the Salt Mother will not forgive the Ashiwi until the betrayer is dead! Find this betrayer to receive the Salt Mother's favor again!"

The Achiyalatopa leads the heroes several miles away to a gully. In the gully are the remains of an old man, nearly mummified in the dry heat. Smiling Cloud recognizes it as Speaks with the Wind and he immediately wraps the body so they can bring it back to the tribe.

As they do so, the Achiyalatopa shakes a wing, a flint feather chipping off. *"Break this feather when you have found the betrayer and are before him. I will come and deal with him."* The creature takes wing, the weight of his feathers not slowing him in the least as he flies into the distance.

🦅 **Achiyalatopa:** See page 174.

DIPLOMACY

On their way back to the pueblo, the heroes come across a group of well-armed Spanish horsemen. The sun is behind the wanderers.

It partially blinds the Spaniards as more than one of them holds his hand up in an effort to block the glare.

A well-dressed man addresses you across the distance. "I did not expect you to be this early," he shouts to you, shielding his eyes from the sun. "I have brought your treaty and your gold, Ten Fists."

The men move forward as though they recognize the party. Smiling Cloud tells the party he does not recognize the men. As they get closer and the sun leaves the man's eyes, and he is startled. His men immediately draw their weapons and he orders them to attack.

Don Navarez does not wish to reveal his negotiations to the wanderers but is not willing to lay his life down unnecessarily. Should more than half his men be Incapacitated he calls for them to lay down arms and offers the gold he is carrying if the wanderers will spare them. Getting more information out of him takes a little convincing, either through a Persuasion roll or an opposed Intimidation roll.

If they succeed on either, Don Navarez says that he was sent by the governor to negotiate payment for the Zuni Salt Lake and other lands. He was to set camp near here until the other party arrived. The gold is a down-payment as a sign of good faith.

In his possession are maps of the land to be ceded to the Spanish as well as a treaty to be signed by Ten Fists, who he believes to be the leader of the Zuni. Don Navarez keeps to his word and gives the party the gold, £50, for sparing him and his guards. He explains the only reason he attacked was that Ten Fists has given a description of Smiling Cloud as a rival.

If made aware that Ten Fists actually is not the chief, Don Navarez becomes confused. He tells the adventurers that since Speaks with the Wind and Stone Stands are dead, Ten Fists becomes the chief of the Zuni. This should immediately raise a red flag to the heroes, since Stone Stands was quite alive when they left a few days ago.

Should the wanderers pass this along, Don Navarez insists on going back with the heroes to the Zuni. He is a very honorable man and has the feeling that Ten Fists lied to him.

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🐉 **Don Emmanuel Navarez:** See below.

🐉 **Spanish Soldiers (6):** See page 175.

HONOR

When the heroes return to the pueblo, their story is met with no small amount of doubt. While Navarez insists he knows Ten Fists and attempts to show proof, Ten Fists denies it fiercely. He uses his influence with the elders to have Navarez and his men taken captive.

Smiling Cloud, however, confirms the story and shows everyone the body of Speaks with the Wind, raising doubts in the minds of the elders and others. This convinces the tribe to leave the heroes free for the moment. In response, Ten Fists demands that Smiling Cloud and his 'invader' friends face him in combat. That is, face him and his loyal allies in what he believes to be a very unfair fight. He wastes no time with formalities, immediately attacking Smiling Cloud in order to silence him. His allies quickly move against the wanderers.

Stone Stands immediately orders his people to back away and let this fight continue, seeing it as the struggle between good and evil that requires action rather than talk.

If the character with the Achiyalatopa feather breaks it, nothing happens at first. Two rounds into the fighting the Achiyalatopa arrives in a thunderous rattle of feathers and immediately seeks out Ten Fists to fight in melee. All of the Zuni other than Smiling Cloud need to make a Guts roll (see Achiyalatopa, below) with Ten Fists suffering an additional -2 penalty to his roll.

Once the heroes defeat Ten Fists, the Achiyalatopa tells them that the murder of Speaks with the Wind is avenged and that the Salt Mother returns her blessing. He then carries off Ten Fists, never to be seen again.

The Zuni shower the heroes with gifts of food and salt as well as offer them a place of honor among their people.

🐉 **Ten Fists:** See page 175.

🐉 **Ten Fists' Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 175.

🐉 **Achiyalatopa:** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following below are the statistics for the various additional friends or enemies the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



ACHIYALATOPA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 17 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Flint feathers
- **Flint Talons:** Str+d6
- **Fear:** Seeing the Achiyalatopa requires a Guts roll. Zuni Indians suffer a -2 penalty to this roll.
- **Feathered Blast:** On any round that the Achiyalatopa is in the air, it may spin its wings about and throw flint feathers at targets in a Cone Template. Anyone in the template may make an Agility roll to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d8 damage. The Achiyalatopa must be at least 6" in the air to make this attack and may only do so every other round.
- **Flight:** Flying Pace 18" (Climb 6").
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking the Achiyalatopa.
- **Size +4:** The Achiyalatopa is over 10' tall and weighs over 5000 pounds.



DON EMMANUEL NAVAREZ

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6/7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Vow (Serve Spain)

Edges: Block, Charismatic, Command, Noble

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry)

SMILING CLOUD

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8,

Intimidation d8, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6/5; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Loyal, Heroic

Edges: Attractive, Brawny

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry) and bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6) arrows (20).

SPANISH SOLDIER

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Musketeer, Steady Hands

Gear: Light breastplate (+2) light helmet (+2), long sword (Str+d6), musket (Range: 10/20/40; Damage: 2d8), shot & powder (20), horse.



TEN FISTS

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Hindrances: Cocky, Greedy

Edges: Brawny, Iron Jaw, Noble,

Gear: Leather Vest (+1), tomahawk (Str+d8), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (10).

TEN FISTS' WARRIOR

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Tomahawk (Str+d8), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (10).



THE CENTRAL PLAINS

The central portions of North America are, by and large, untouched by European influence. The occasional French trapper or truly independent frontiersman does make the rare inroad into the heart of the continent, but the prevailing culture remains that of the indigenous tribes. In the open plains west of the Mississippi, these tribes are nomadic, often following the vast herd of bison in seasonal migrations.

Hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans, the Mississippi river valley was home to the Mississippians, a native culture most notable for the building of great mounds throughout the central and southern parts of North America. Although they were only a shadow of their might by the time Europeans began explorations into the region, they left a major mark on both the land and the native tribes in the region.

Most notably, the various mounds built by the Mississippian tribes represent an incredible feat of engineering and architecture. At once spiritual and practical, the development of mounds represented a vast undertaking on par with the most complex of urban planning. While other native peoples would come to live in these areas, the creators of such amazing cities proved to be a great mystery not only for what they left behind but the sizable gaps in their story.

THE CAHOKIA MOUNDS

In the fertile land near the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers grew one of the largest cities to predate European expansion through the New World. First founded in the 700s AD, at its height in the 1100s it was a city of over 20,000 people with a well-maintained wooden stockade several miles around. The city encompassed over 120 mounds, the base of the largest of which is roughly the same size the Great Pyramid of Giza. By the time of Spanish and French arrivals in the region, the Cahokia Mounds have been abandoned by their original inhabitants. The nearby woodlands are home to Algonquin-speaking tribes who are unrelated to the builders of the great city.

THE PATH OF KANE



The Forgotten Chief

While traveling through the Mississippi, the heroes are attacked by strangely garbed Indians. After defeating them, they encounter a French trader with a most unusual tale.

BACKGROUND

Like many of the Mississippian settlements, Cahokia was a place of stratified social standing, with a single chief residing at the top of the hierarchy. Since the city and its inhabitants enjoyed wealth and safety far greater than that of other tribal cultures, the inhabitants were largely satisfied with the situation. However, one group, jealous of the wealth and power of the chief, planned to overthrow the leadership of the Cahokia and seize the power and authority for themselves.

Their attack was quick and brutal, the old chief falling quickly to their spears and clubs. The usurpers were confident that their successful act of defiance would inspire others to join their cause. Unfortunately, they quickly learned that the majority of the populace was against them. The city rose and acted quickly to crush the small rebellion. Punishment among the Mississippians was swift and cruel and intended to carry over to the afterlife.

The usurpers were beheaded and their hands severed, with their bodies dumped in a sacrificial pit along with a number of their supporters. The head and hands of the usurpers were taken to a secret place in one of the mounds and hidden away, leaving their spirits in blind, helpless torment for their crime against the ruling order.

The Usurpers Rise

A pair of French explorers came upon the Cahokia mounds, seeking the rumored wealth of the native tribes, as well as the limits of the New World. Their contact with the Illinois Indians now inhabiting the area was friendly enough. The Illinois lived near the Cahokia mounds and warned the Frenchmen away from one particular set of mounds. The Illinois knew little of the history of the mounds, or even exactly why that particular

set was to be avoided, only that it has always been a bad place and terrible things happened to those who came too near.

The explorers brushed aside the talk of wicked bones striking from the earth to investigate one of the smaller outlying mounds. It bore little in the way of construction, but they soon found a opening, with a stone cover, leading to its heart. Unknowingly, they had discovered the secret hiding place of the severed body parts of the usurpers, even now seeking to escape their horrible punishment.

For one of the men, Claude Chauvet, death was slow and painful at the hands of the executed rebels—specifically the hands, that is. They clawed at him, finally tearing his head from his body. The other explorer, Jean-Pierre Alford, watched in horror as a set of skeletal hands and a broken skull took the place of his friend's own flesh. He fled to the nearby Illinois Indians, escaping with his life but perhaps not his sanity.

The Falcon Procession

Since murdering Chauvet, the spirits of the rebel Mississippians have begun expanding their influence throughout the region. As yet, only one has managed to seize control of a corporeal body, but through it they have begun to poison many among the local Illinois Indian tribes, slowly turning them against their own peoples through a movement called the Falcon Procession.

Unlike the Illinois Indians, those of the Falcon Procession hold to the old Cahokia ways. Dressed as Falcons, they dance around as much as they walk, decorating themselves with arrow symbols and falcon feathers. The members screech like falcons as often as they normally speak.

Very aggressive and arrogant, these people, formerly of the lower ends of their society, have gravitated around this hooded figure and his promises of a 'more equitable order. 'When not starting random fights with local tribesmen, they fight amongst themselves or gamble.

Unknown to the members of the order, ultimately the goal of the usurpers is to secure bodies for their spirits. Then, they

plan to overthrow the leadership of the local tribe to they build the power base they were denied centuries ago.

THE FALCONS ATTACK

The terrain near the Cahokia mounds is gentle and rolling, covered with a deciduous forest. Coming from the east, the land descends from a low line of hills into an alluvial plain on the banks of the Mississippi.

Members of the Falcon Procession, followers of the spirits of the Cahokia usurpers, lie in wait for the heroes not far from a nearby Illinois Indian village. The Falcon Procession as yet lacks the power to directly act against members of the local tribes. However, unlike members of the local tribe, the characters are unlikely to be missed, which makes them perfect choices as hosts for the angry ghosts of the fallen city.

Allow the wanderers a Notice roll. Any who fail are surprised during the first round of combat as the Falcons drop from the trees to attack! The Falcons actually attack to knock the heroes unconscious, using their spears to do nonlethal damage (treat as staves, Str+d4). If they are successful, they attempt to carry the bodies away to the Cahokia Mounds. See the sidebar **Captured!**, on the right, in that case.

🦅 **Falcon Warriors (2, plus 2 per hero):** See page 180.

OUTSIDE THE MOUNDS

Once the wanderers reach the Illinois Indians, their initial contacts are peaceful enough. Provided the party is not hostile, they welcome them into their village. The tribes in the area have no problem hosting the heroes, still maintaining enough of the maize farming tradition to keep themselves and the heroes well-fed. Fairly quickly, the Indians reveal that another white man is already taking advantage of their hospitality.

The tribe introduces the party to Jean-Pierre Alford who is relieved to see other outsiders. He tells them the tale of his explorations and the death of Chauvet, but it's apparent the man has been unhinged by the experience. Since he fled the mounds, he's

CAPTURED!

If the heroes are captured at any time, they are brought to a mound just outside the Sacrifice Pit. When they come to, they find themselves under guard by Falcon Warriors in a large hut. Their gear has been taken but kept nearby. Anyone listening to their guards (if they understand Algonquin) hears 'the master saying the other three will come for their bodies'. Jean-Pierre, if he is with the wanderers, confirms that the usurpers most likely will claim their bodies just as one claimed his friend.

Fortunately, the guards are rather idle and soon find themselves playing a game of chunky beside the mound. Chunky is played by rolling a stone disk. The participants attempt to throw spears as close to the disk as possible, so that it stops touching their spear. This distraction gives the heroes enough time to escape. A Stealth (-2) roll allows them to escape the hut. Once they secure their equipment again, it is likely they stumble onto the Sacrifice Pit (see page 178).

🦅 **Falcon Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 180.

🦅 **Chunky Players (10):** Use Falcon Warrior, page 180

been recuperating in the Indian village, but is fearful to leave as the Falcon Procession is actively hunting him.

Should the adventurers mention the ambush outside the village, the Indians explain that the party encountered members of the Falcon Procession. They express great concern about some of those who live in the mounds proper, describing a hooded figure who has formed a following from those of the lowest social standing and is urging any who would come across a white man to capture him. There has been initial resistance to the new group but they are growing in size and gaining some acceptance in the village.

A Streetwise roll will also let the heroes know that the hooded figure has strangely deformed hands, almost skeletally so, and he never shows his face.

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THE HOODED FIGURE

With a Persuasion or Streetwise roll, a few tribesmen agree to help disguise the heroes in native clothing and bring them to see the Falcon Procession. Right now, a large group of tribesmen are occupied with the popular game of *chunkey* and many members of the Procession are also involved. Falcon-garbed dancers whirl and dance through the crowd and around the game participants.

If the heroes choose to walk openly, the Falcon Procession immediately attacks the group. If the heroes are disguised, they find members of the Procession along with the hooded figure. Should they be in disguise, the heroes have surprise on the warriors and dancers. The hooded figure, however, is surrounded by members of his order.

The first two turns of combat present a terrible time for ranged combatants due to the sheer number of spectators at the game. Any Shooting roll that comes up a 1 or a 2 on the die hits an innocent bystander (1-3 for a blunderbuss). After two turns the area has cleared enough to not penalize ranged combat.

The hooded figure flees into the crowd at the first sign of trouble. He uses innocent bystanders and his own followers as cover from any ranged attacks. As per the hooded figure's original orders, the members of the Procession try to capture the heroes, again using nonlethal attacks. Should they manage to overwhelm the party, see the sidebar **Captured!**, on page 177.

While the Procession attacks, the hooded figure flees at blinding speed. He is willing to let his foot soldiers do his dirty work while he leaves an obvious trail for the heroes to follow. Should the heroes overcome the Procession, they can follow the trail left by the hooded figure or simply ask tribesmen where he went.

If you feel the heroes had too easy a time of it, feel free to have them run into more Falcon Processions before they reach the next part.

🦅 **Falcon Dancers (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 180.

🦅 **Falcon Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 180.

THE SACRIFICE PIT

Eventually, the hooded figure's trail leads out of the mounds to the edge of the mounds. This is the site of the old sacrifice pit, filled in over time with soil from seasonal river flooding.

Although the hooded figure is nowhere to be seen, his trail is easy to follow, coming to a field. This open field bears no marks of being disturbed other than by his passing. Still, it has a...violated feel. Each step seems an intrusion, each pace forward as though you were walking on someone's grave.

As the ground rumbles beneath you, you see why; bones explode from the ground, dozens of bound and broken skeletons ripping through the soil under your very feet. Skeletal limbs reach feebly to grasp you while tongueless mouths snap and clatter at you.

The wanderers need to make a Guts check as the sea of bones erupts around them. Four forms appear at the edge of the field, rising upward as well. These skeletons bear no skulls or hands, both hacked off crudely, the arms and legs bearing the tatters of bindings around their wrists and ankles. The field is approximately 20" wide and the bones attack once the party reaches the center of it.

The area is difficult to move through swiftly. If the characters attempt to move through the bone field at more than half their Pace, they suffer 1d6 damage each round they do. If they instead stay still, they find that the bones around them attempt to grab them. Treat as a grapple attack, with the bone field having Fighting 2d8 and Strength 1d8.

The usurpers' skeletons gain a +2 to all Fighting rolls and an additional melee attack at no penalty against any target grappled by the bone field. However, against targets not within the bone field, they are effectively blind, suffering a -6 to all vision-related rolls.

🦅 **Usurper's Skeletons (4):** See page 180.

INTO THE PIT

Once the heroes defeat the Usurper's Skeletons, the bone field goes silent. Past the field, they easily find the tracks of the hooded figure. The tracks lead past several mounds to a mound on the verge of collapse. It is nearly a hundred feet tall and three hundred feet to a side, with the remnants of a staircase built into it.

The trail leads to the top of the mound and what appears to be the remains of a cover stone of some kind. The stone lies to the side, broken, and a five-foot wide hole leads down into the mound. The rope that Jean-Pierre placed to climb down is still in place.

The hole goes nearly 80 feet down until it opens up into a large rough chamber, 7' in diameter. The chamber is completely dark unless the heroes bring their own light source. Draw action cards when the first wanderer reaches the floor as the inhabitants of the mound attack. The headless skeletons from the bone field reform in the chamber as the characters enter.

The embodied usurper is a skull and skeletal hands crudely grafted onto the flesh of Chauvet's corpse. Already the body is desiccated, creaking with each move. The eyes glow with a foul light in darkness. The fingers of the skeletal hands are encrusted with dirt and stone, the tips worn down to sharp edges.

The other usurpers' skeletons have yet to claim suitable bodies and they look forward to their battle with the heroes for just that. They suffer no blindness penalty within the confines of the chamber and are immune to any lighting penalties as well.

Meanwhile the creeping hands attack whoever they can reach. The embodied usurper hangs back and uses its Craven Command special ability to force the heroes to strike at each other until all the party has successfully resisted. At that point, he wades into melee and attacks.

Once the heroes defeat all the usurpers and leave the mound the remnants of the Falcon Procession break apart, the Usurper's power over them gone. The local Illinois



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Indians will be grateful as well, showering gifts upon the heroes. Jean-Pierre Alford thanks the heroes for their help, reassuring them they always have a friend in him.

🦋 **Embodied Usurper:** See below.

🦋 **Creeping Hands (6):** See below.

🦋 **Usurpers' Skeletons (4):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

CREEPING HAND

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d10, Strength d10 (or as former "owner"), Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Notice d4, Stealth d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Scuttle:** Creeping hands roll a d4 running die, instead of a d6.
- **Size -2:** Creeping hands are small.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer -2 to attack rolls against a creeping hand, due to its size.
- **Throttle:** A creeping hand scoring a raise on a Fighting attack has grabbed its opponent's throat. Each round the grip is maintained, the victim must make a Vigor roll opposed by the hand's unearthly Strength or suffer one level of Fatigue. This can lead to Death. The victim may remove the hand with a successful opposed Strength roll.



EMBODIED USURPER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing: d12+2 Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Persuasion d10, Taunt d10

Pace: 20; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Bony Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Craven Command:** The creature can force a target into making a melee attack against an ally within range by winning a test of wills with its Intimidation. Once the ability is successfully resisted, it may

never use it on that victim again.

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the Embodied Usurper must make a Guts roll.
- **Low Light Vision:** The Embodied Usurper ignores penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison; Ignores wound penalties.

FALCON DANCERS

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Shooting d8, Survival d6, Throwing d6

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, First Strike, Level Headed

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry) and bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows (10).

FALCON WARRIOR

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), arrows(10).

USURPER'S SKELETONS

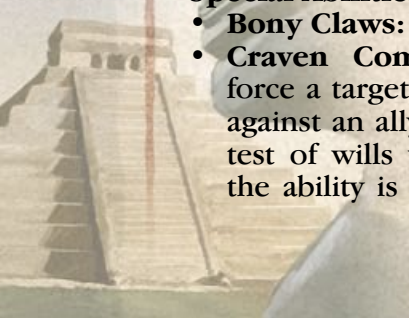
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bone Limbs:** Str+d6.
- **Fearless:** Skeletons are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.



CATHAY AND THE ORIENT

The world's largest continent is perhaps also the most enigmatic. Despite contact with the Old World since ancient Rome via the Silk Road, the Orient remains a land of mystery and wonder. Along with exquisite goods unique to the Far East, European travelers bring back tale of unusual customs, strange practices, bizarre magic, forbidden legends, and long-hidden secrets. The accounts aren't always true, but nevertheless add to the mystique veiling the East.

The Orient is in constant flux and troublesome for adventurers to navigate. Cathay and Nippon, two powerful nations in the Far East, are beginning to limit Western trades and purge European presences under new regimes. The feared Mongols are leaving foot—and hoof—prints throughout the continent, if not still holding the reins in many regions. The West is just starting to discover Hindoostan and its potential for profit, while Tibet remains hidden from most Europeans in the Himalayas.

THE SILK ROAD

THE Silk Road offered the historic avenue of travel to and in the Asian continent. This extensive network of trade routes featured two primary paths, north and south, connecting Europe to major Asian powers like Cathay, Hindoostan, and Persia through the Mediterranean world.

It has lost some of the past luster with the decline of the Mongol Empire, which once maintained large sections of the trade route, and the rise of the Ottoman Musselmen, who effectively block its western terminus from the Old World nations. Further, as ships become stronger and more reliable, the

development of sea-lanes makes transporting goods by water both easier and safer than overland. Furthermore, the isolationist Ming rulers of Cathay have greatly limited passage into that country.

Still, the routes remain conduits for cultural and technological transmission between the continents. The Silk Road sees traffic from traders, merchants, missionaries, pilgrims, soldiers, nomads, scholars, and explorers nearly every day. And, of course, all of these provide tempting fodder for bandits who prey upon the rich or weak.

CATHAY

CATHAY is in great turmoil at this time. The ruling Ming Dynasty is fast approaching the twilight of a nearly 300-year reign, with the looming threat of an invasion by the Manchu. The secret societies that contributed greatly to the empire's rise have become increasingly disgruntled with the regime. The empire's fracturing leadership, the ever-worsening conditions for peasants, and general ineptitude stir dissension among former supporters. Public demonstrations of resentment are occurring more frequently than the reigning officials would care to admit.

European foreigners also capitalized on the weakening government. British ships forced their passage into Cathay ports, while the Portuguese attempted to colonize the provinces of Canton and Ningpo. The Empire has countered with edicts intended to stem Western influence. One such law forbids all contacts with foreign visitors without Imperial approval. Thus, non-Cathayans must be extremely cautious when wandering the

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CATHAYAN SUPERSTITIONS

People in Cathay avoid using the number “4.” It is considered unlucky or even cursed because the pronunciation for “4” is similar to “death” in the Mandarin language.

The number “8” is considered the luckiest because it also sounds like “prosper.”

Do not step on the threshold when entering a room, especially the front door, or you’re tagged as an unwelcome jinx.

Beating someone with a broom will rain bad luck on that person for years.

A person clipping toenails or fingernails at night will be visited by a ghost.

country, especially in major cities and harbors where xenophobic officials await opportunities to curry favor with their superiors at the expense of “foreign invaders.”

While there are the rare few missionaries making forays for Christianity in Cathay, Buddhism and Taoism remain the clear, dominant religions. Buddhists aim to free their souls from material pleasures and sins so to achieve nirvana, the state of total enlightenment. Taoists seek “The Way” of the universe and actively pursue knowledge relating to the supernatural. That search sometimes results in scientific breakthroughs—one discovery of Taoist alchemists was gunpowder. Monasteries and temples dot the landscape of Cathay. These are often more receptive and generous toward needy foreigners than the commoners, once the monks and priests overcome their initial distrust.

The color of clothes often signifies a person’s status in Cathay. Purple, turquoise, and vermilion are reserved for officials. The Emperor and his personal agents don yellow. Commoners tend to wear black and hues of duller or less vibrant shade. White is considered the color of mourning, thus usually shunned as a sartorial choice.



BREATH OF THE YETI KING

LEAD In: The wanderers are traveling in northern Cathay when they encounter freakish weather, stranding them in a nearby village. Or, they decide to travel here and investigate this phenomenon, suspicious of something supernatural.

The heroes can research the disaster from any appropriate location in the world with a Knowledge (Occult) roll. On a success they find some obscure references to a similar incident occurring more than 500 years ago in Nepal, and attributed to the “Yeti King.” Regardless, they realize they have to go to Tibet in order to find out more about this.

BACKGROUND

Lhasa, as is the whole of Tibet, is experiencing the worst snowstorm in the country’s history. The blizzard has raged on all through the day, then all through the night. The non-stop, pelting snow already buried numerous villages and small towns and is showing no sign of stopping. Overhead, just the dim outline of the sun is able to pierce the dense sea of hazy clouds on occasion. Lhasa is slowly grinding to halt, as more and more people are finding it difficult just to leave their house.

In truth, Tibet has fallen under the “Breath of the Yeti King.” The Yeti King has seized control of winter and desires to entomb Tibet in ice and snow, so he and his yetis may descend down the high mountains to rule the new eternal winterland.

WHITEOUT

Traveling through northern Cathay near the edge of the Himalayan Mountains, the party encounters an abrupt and startling change in weather conditions. Over the course of barely a couple of miles, the weather transforms from a sunny, clear and somewhat warm day into near blizzard conditions. The change is so sudden, the characters can almost see a line where the blizzard begins.

After a mile or so of traveling through the frigid conditions, they begin to encounter abandoned farms and homes. Should they

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explore any of these, they find that the inhabitants have departed recently, but in some instances domesticated animals appear to have fallen prey to large beasts. The livestock have been killed—and partially devoured—by large, clawed beasts of some sort.

Regardless of whether the heroes stop to investigate any of the former habitations, they soon run afoul of a small hunting band of yetis. The large, white-furred humanoids rush out of the blowing snow to attack. Their coloration gives them a sizeable advantage in the white landscape; heroes must make a Notice roll (–2) to avoid being surprised the first round.

The creatures fight until at least half their number is defeated and then flee into the whirling winds of the strange storm. Tracking them through the gusting winds is impossible; any tracks are wiped away within moments.

 **Yetis (1 per hero):** See page 186.

CHEMBAL

As darkness nears, the winds abate somewhat. With improved visibility, the heroes spot the flickering glow of a fire ahead in the gloom. The warm promise of a fire shines through the window of a small farmhouse not far from their path.

The owner of the house opens the door to the wanderers and beckons them to come inside. The man is aged and moves slowly in the chill of the unnatural cold pouring through his doorway. He introduces himself as Chembal, a scholar of Cathayan lore.

Should the party ask Chembal about the strange weather, he tells them that spring did not come this year. A terrible blizzard swept down from the high mountains to the north. Every day, it advances a little further into the countryside. He is also only too happy to explain what he believes to be the cause.

“It is the Breath of the Yeti King, but no one will believe me. They dismiss it as fairytale for children. They ignore the legends of our ancestors—an identical event occurred 500 years ago. If not for the great hero Ang, who defeated the Yeti King then, all of Cathay would have been blanketed in snow!”

If the wanderers show interest in taking action, Chembal tells them what they must do.

“Ah, I sensed the souls of heroes amongst you! None but the bravest would have ventured into the teeth of this storm. You must make the arduous trek to the fabled Bell of Seasons and ring it once—and only once. This will awaken spring to return to our land and end the blizzard’s onslaught.”

He explains the gods supposedly hid the bell in a small monastery, in the high mountains to the north. The winding tunnel which leads to the monastery, which he calls the “Throat of Seasons,” is both concealed and likely trapped. Chembal provides them with directions to the monastery and tells them the monastery was only a few days travel before the blizzard, but now, it may take them a week to reach it.

A ROUGH AND TUMBLE JOURNEY

The trip to the hidden monastery is difficult and fraught with peril. If they have no appropriate gear themselves, Chembal provides the wanderers with a small collection of fur-lined clothing and cloaks, to better shield them against the worst of the weather.

The journey requires six days of travel into the foothills of the nearby Himalayan Mountains. Every 4 hours the heroes trudge through the frigid storm sweeping the countryside they must make a Vigor roll (–1) due to the low temperatures. Failure means the character gains a Fatigue level. Wearing the fur-lined clothing from Chembal (or their own if they have similar gear) gives a +1 to the roll.

The only way to recover the Fatigue levels lost to the blizzard conditions is to find warmth and shelter. The region is almost totally abandoned by humanity, so finding a warm, toasty inn is out of the question. Fortunately, a successful Survival roll allows the adventurers to either find or fabricate suitable shelter to rest out of the fury of the storm.

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BLIZZARD

On the third day, shortly after the party begins the climb into the mountains, the blizzard's intensity picks up severely. The fierce storm rages for $1d4+2$ hours. Each hour during that time, the heroes must make a Vigor roll (-2) or suffer a Fatigue level. As before, Chembal's clothing adds a +1 bonus. The party can also attempt to find or make shelter from the worst of the storm with a Survival roll (-4).

Any character who rolls a 1 on the Vigor roll (regardless of the Wild Die) not only suffers a Fatigue level, but has also wandered off the steep mountain trail. Allow the adventurer an Agility roll (-2) to catch herself before she stumbles over a cliff. Failure means she suffers a fall of $1d10 \times 10''$. Assuming she survives, she can climb out with a successful Climbing roll for each $10''$ fallen.

YETI HUNTING PARTY

Early on the fourth day in the mountains, the wanderers encounter a group of yetis dispatched by the Yeti King to stop them. The

yetis lay in ambush for the party in a mountain pass. Thanks to their natural coloration, they gain a +2 bonus to stealth checks as they wait for the party to enter the trap. Any character failing a Notice roll versus the yetis' Stealth roll is surprised the first round of combat, giving them the Drop.

The yetis erupt from deep snow drifts all around the explorers and fight to the death.

❧ **Yetis (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 186.

AVALANCHE

Late in the afternoon of the fifth day of their journey, the heroes hear a low, loud rumbling in the mountain peaks above them. Looking up, they see a billowing cloud rushing down the mountain slopes toward them—an avalanche!

Each wanderer must make an Agility roll as the wall of snow and ice crashes down around them. On a success, he manages to leap clear or find a rock, crevasse, or other such place to take shelter. All who fail are swept away by the avalanche, tumbling $10 + 2d10''$, taking $1d6$ damage for each $5''$, rounding up. A roll of 1 on the Agility roll, regardless of the Wild Die, means the unfortunate traveler is instead carried $20 + 2d10''$.

THE MONASTERY OF SPRING

Shortly after dawn on the sixth day of the quest, the adventurers come to a mammoth chasm, spanned by only a tattered rope bridge. Just as the heroes ponder the prudence of crossing a seemingly bottomless gorge on aged, wobbly ropes with room for just single-file movement, a large number of yetis appear behind them to cut off the only avenue of retreat.

It's clear to the explorers they can either charge the monsters or tread across the rickety bridge. If they make a Smarts roll, they realize the yetis cannot step on the bridge, for the weight of even one of them will snap it right off and plunge all creatures on it to their doom. This hardly means the heroes can take their time crossing the pit, however,

as the yetis not engaged in melee start hurling rocks (Str+d4) at those getting on the rope bridge.

The gulch stretches for a good 40 yards (20"). Moving across the rope bridge is relatively easy at half Pace, but requires an Agility roll if moving at full Pace. Any wanderer foolish enough to run must roll Agility (-2). Any one hit with a thrown rock who suffers enough damage to be Shaken or wounded must make an immediate Agility roll (with the appropriate penalty if applicable).

Failing any of those rolls means the character loses his balance and is in danger of falling. Allow him to make a second Agility roll to grab a rope; if that one is failed, he falls into the 30" chasm, suffering 10d6 damage.

More than four persons setting foot on it causes the ropes to snap and collapse.

🐾 **Yeti (2 per hero):** See page 186.

THROAT OF SEASONS

After crossing the rope bridge, the heroes soon meet a dead end, their passage blocked by a solid cliff face. A successful Notice roll uncovers a tunnel camouflaged by snow and rocks. Once found, it is easy to clear the opening and enter the tunnel.

Just as the legends claim, the tunnel is trapped. Wanderers specifically spending an action searching for traps may roll Notice (-2) to find them. The traps can be disarmed with a Lockpicking roll, but on a roll of 1 (regardless of the Wild Die), the trap is triggered.

Each trap is a single-use device and triggered when the first explorer crosses the center line of the appropriate room. The Throat of Seasons has four traps, each representing a season, in the following order:

Spring: Acidic rain shower; covers entire room, Damage 2d6+2; with an additional 1d6 damage each round for the next 1d4 rounds; successful Agility roll (-2) reduces damage to 1d6+1 and negates continuing damage.

Summer: Scorching steam; cone template based at the center point of each side wall apex; Damage 2d6; successful Agility roll (-2) avoids damage.

Autumn: Constricting net of vines; as the *entangle* spell in a Medium Blast Template centered in room; treat as Magick d8 for casting purposes; victims suffer 1d6 damage per round if partially entangled or 2d6 if fully entangled; effects continue as long as victims remain in area.

Winter: Large ice blocks slide from the walls to pummel everyone inside the room; Fighting d8, damage 3d6.

The tunnel ends in a wide, open cavern, and the heroes can see an outdoor pavilion just beyond it. But they also see sitting in the center of the cavern on a crude throne of ice an enormous yeti, no doubt the Yeti King. He is flanked by two other yetis. With a great roar, the Yeti King rises and all three creatures charge the heroes!

🐾 **Yeti (2):** See page 186.

🐾 **Yeti King:** See page 186.

WAKING SPRING

The pavilion affords a breathtaking panoramic view of the surrounding summits and a frigid river below. Inside is a nearly man-sized bronze temple bell. Beside it hangs a hefty ramrod.

Clanging the ramrod against the bell once calls forth spring. The heroes see the snowfall recede and eventually stop altogether. The sky clears, the waters gradually unfreeze and resume flow. They have foiled the Yeti King's scheme.

Ramming the bell two consecutive times heralds summer, thrice brings autumn, four times recalls winter. Arousing multiple seasons at once induces a catastrophic unstable weather pattern as the seasons clash in confusion. Feel free to throw whatever natural hazards at the party you desire.

Tales of the brave band of heroes' releasing the land from the grip of winter quickly spreads amongst the peoples of northern Cathay and beyond, gaining the wanderers a +2 bonus to all Persuasion rolls while in the country.

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RUMOR

"People are seeing ghosts and hearing noises at night around the old Wonglong Teahouse in the Lo Mita District which burned down a half-year ago. The fire killed several people. Perhaps their spirits are now haunting the place?"

This rumor leads to the **Savage Tale: New Year Nightmare**, on page 193.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

YETI

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d10, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Thick hide and fur.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Frenzy:** A yeti may make an additional Fighting attack each round at -2.
- **Immunity:** Yetis are immune to cold-based attacks and effects.
- **Size +2:** Yetis range from 8-9' tall.



The Yeti King

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Thick hide and fur.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Cold Breath:** Once per round as an action the Yeti King has the mystical ability to breathe a chilling blast of ice and snow to encase its foes. Treat this as the *entangle* spell but with a Cone Template, opposed by the creature's Shooting roll. In addition, any fully entangled targets

suffer 1d6 cold damage per round. Yeti King cannot make any other attacks when he uses Cold Breath.

- **Combat Reflexes:** +2 to recover from being Shaken.
- **Immunity:** The Yeti King is immune to cold-based attacks and effects.
- **Improved Frenzy:** The Yeti King may make an additional Fighting attack each at no penalty.
- **Size +2:** The Yeti King is nearly 10' tall.



BEIJING

BEIJING is the capital of Cathay, renowned for its opulent palaces and temples surrounded by towering stone walls and gates. It is not only the largest city in the country, but the entire world as well, with a population of nearly three-quarters of a million people.

The Great Wall stretches across the Northern Beijing Municipality, while major rivers, including the Yongding and the Chaobai, flow through the city in the southern direction. The city is symmetrically laid out in a grid of straight streets. Square and rectangular buildings, usually of red brick and roofed with green-glazed ceramic tiles, line the passages.

Large markets in prominent sectors like Tiananmen Gate, Universal Peace Bridge, and Second Ring Road stay open all hours of the day. Consumers can find—and haggle over—bronze, silk, wood, the ever-popular rice and millets, and other commodities in specialized warehouses. Street vendors offer sweets, meat buns, and skewered mutton to keep pedestrians' mind off hunger. During holidays and festivals, these crowded markets become a veritable sea of carriages.

Most notable among Beijing's numerous pagodas and temples is Tiantan, the Temple of Heaven. Located in the southeastern Beijing, it is the site for the Ming Dynasty emperors' traditional annual prayer to Heaven for good harvest.

Because the Emperor is touted as the Son of Heaven, it is important to chart the movements of celestial bodies. This task falls on recruited Muslim scholars (and, later on,

Jesuits) at the Beijing Ancient Observatory, using an array of bronze astronomical instruments, sundials, and armillary spheres.

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

At the heart of Beijing is the Forbidden City, the imperial palace compound that is the Emperor's home. The complex contains nearly 1,000 buildings with almost 9,000 rooms, totaling up to 8 million square feet of space. The structures are built from precious wood logged from the jungles of southwestern Cathay, and large blocks of marble from the finest quarries around Beijing. The floors of major halls and chambers are paved with "golden bricks," specially crafted in the Suzhou Province.

The Forbidden City is surrounded by a 25' high wall and 28' wide moat, guarded by towers at each of the four corners. The wall is gated at all sides: the Gate of Divine Might to the north, the Meridian Gate to the south, and flanked by the East Glorious Gate and West Glorious Gate.

The palace is divided into two parts: the Outer and Inner Courts. The Outer Court is used primarily for ceremonies. The Inner Court, also known as the Back Palace, is where the Imperial courtiers present civic and national issues and advise the Emperor on day-to-day affairs of state. The Emperor resides in a double-eaved building called the Palace of Earthly Tranquility. His children and concubines are normally housed in a series of courtyards and minor palaces to the east and west.

True to its name, the Forbidden City is strictly off-limits to all civilians on the penalty of death. For foreigners, only invited dignitaries are permitted—and such invitations are rare. Usually, non-natives (and Westerners in particular) cannot approach within sight of a gate before they are accosted by guards and severely interrogated.



REIGN OF THE GREEN SNAKE

LEAD In: The wanderers chance upon an abandoned temple some distance outside the city, just after sunset. Drawing near, they hear shouts from inside the temple.

BACKGROUND

Hei Daosing currently holds the second longest active service record for a eunuch in the Forbidden City, behind only Tang, who refuses to retire like everyone else. In his fifties, Hei has stern silvery grey hair and long brows. He is convinced Cathay needs a superior ruler like himself to tighten the nation's affairs and eradicate "evil" foreigners.

As one of Emperor Wanli's personal attendant eunuchs, Hei has closely observed Wanli's vices. He should, since he planted several himself. One of the most popular has been regarding the Emperor's unyielding desire for royal luxury over proprietary governance.

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YI MONG, SNAKE SPIRIT

Yi Mong is an “evolved” snake, a creature that somehow gained human sentience and desired to become fully human in Cathay mythology. It is attained through intimacy with a human and slowly draining his chi to keep as the creature’s own. The chi’s potency supposedly also correlates to the target’s status—therefore, no one has more a robust chi than the Emperor.

In human form, Yi is a delicate beauty with full, waist-length black hair, playing up the part of a weak female. In her true form, she becomes a green serpent of great size and viciousness with a human head and human speech.

Wanli’s three equally unfit heirs make the throne vulnerable to anyone in position of power. Hei has schemed to gain the monarch’s ear, manipulate him, and attain the necessary position to move on the throne himself. All Hei needed was to convince Wanli to declare him as the official successor—and, of course, expire expediently to make way for Hei’s ascension.

THE SERPENT’S BITE

A snake spirit, Yi Mong, provided Hei his final tool. In her natural form as a green serpent, Yi had observed the Emperor during his frequent jaunts through the Imperial Woods and read clearly the accompanying eunuch’s machinations. Taking the shape of a sensuous young lady, Yi approached Hei and divulged her own intention to ascend to full humanity by siphoning the Emperor’s chi, thus killing him. In exchange for the eunuch’s cooperation and protection during the lengthy endeavor, she promised to secure the throne for him.

Portraying herself as a frail girl who accidentally wandered into the forest and injured herself, the Emperor took her in on Hei’s advice. Yi effortlessly became Wanli’s favorite

concubine, ravishing him into neglecting official duties and surrendering more powers to Hei. The Imperial Court grew increasingly corrupt, all the while the Emperor’s vitality waned from the evil spirit’s draining.

But the Emperor is not without his loyalists. Though few in number, they are committed to preserving the rule of the Ming Dynasty. Tang Chowzhe, the eldest of the eunuchs, has staunchly opposed Hei’s imperial ambition.

BANDIT AMBUSH

As the wanderers travel the wilderness outside Beijing, the sounds of shouting draw their attention to an apparently abandoned temple. As they approach, two men chase an elderly gentleman out of the old temple and encircle him alongside their armed comrades. It is obviously an ambush.

The old man is Tang Chowzhe. He has come incognito to meet an allied magistrate who has uncovered crucial evidence against Hei—or so he was led to believe. Hei already knew about the magistrate and forged a message to set up the trap. The assassins are local bandits bought by Hei to do the deed.

After the heroes dispatch the bandits, the eunuch is grateful of his rescuers. The white-browed sexagenarian speaks limited English. He once served as the Emperor’s unofficial interpreter back when he still had some interest in foreign trading. He reveals his identity to them in basic, heavily accented English and explains Hei’s treachery. Because his fellow countrymen are becoming ever less trustworthy, he asks for their aid in exposing Yi, whom he suspects is an evil entity of some kind.

In return, Tang offers the heroes the privilege to interact with Cathay citizens freely and travel anywhere in the country—including restricted visits to the Forbidden City—provided they are successful.

🐉 **Bandits (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 191.

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MAIL CALL

If they accept his proposal, Tang takes them to a friendly merchant's mansion in Beijing, where the heroes can stay as guests. Tang then drafts a letter for the heroes to deliver to a monk in the Yuanwen Monastery across town. He informs them that they should receive from the priest a talisman pivotal to the goal.

Tang suggests that they do so the next nightfall to better avoid Hei's Black Guards roaming the city. He warns them to stay put until then before hurrying back to the Imperial Palace.

Trying to deliver the letter in broad daylight is risky. All attempting heroes must each succeed a Persuasion or Stealth test to not arouse suspicions. Either roll receives a -2 additional penalty for foreigners, unless wearing native clothing or sufficient disguise. Failing the roll—or not even attempting to blend in—results in a commotion that quickly attracts the attention of the city guards.

As Tang suggested, it is much easier in darkness, with no roll necessary to reach the monastery unnoticed.

Once they arrive at Yuanwen and show Tang's letter, the characters are rushed to the inner chamber to meet a blind monk, Gao Sheng. Gao hands them a purple silk wrap, inside which is a octagonal hand mirror with Buddhist scriptures inscribed around its jade rim.

Anyone able to comprehend the Cathayan language understands this is the Mirror of Truth, and when shined on a shapeshifter—such as a snake spirit—forces the creature to revert it to its true form. Otherwise, each hero may try a Smarts test to decipher its function from Gao's gesturing.

🐉 **City Guard (8):** See page 223.

ATTACK OF THE BLACK GUARDS

By the time the wanderers arrive at the monastery, Hei has imprisoned Tang on false charges. He has also tasked the Black Guards with hunting down Tang's associates. A small army arrives at the monastery's door moments after Gao Sheng presents them with the Mirror of Truth.

Gao quickly realizes the hopelessness of the situation and urges the adventurers to exit through a secret passage while he and the monks cover their leave. He also gives

ARTIFACT: MIRROR OF TRUTH

The light reflected from this mirror dispels *shape change* and nullifies similar special abilities instantly, turning the creature back to its original form for as long as it remains in the light.

This action requires a successful Agility roll to hit the creature with the light. Each round thereafter, the wielder must win an opposed Agility test with the target to maintain the effect.

The Mirror of Truth does not work in total darkness.



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them a map depicting a hidden tunnel into a wine cellar under one of the palaces in the Forbidden City, from where they can sneak into the dungeon and free Tang.

Should any of the wanderers feel compelled to stand with Gao and his monks, he reminds them that if they are captured all is lost. As long as they remain free, there is a chance to free Tang and defeat Hei. If this isn't enough to convince the heroes to retreat, allow them to make a valiant stand.

Over 50 Black Guards are in the initial force assaulting Yuanwen and an additional 10 more arrive every 5 rounds until a total of 100 is reached. It is inevitable that the defenders will fail under such numbers. However, the Black Guards are under orders to take prisoners regardless of the cost and use non-lethal attacks. All captured heroes eventually share the same cell block with Tang.

🐉 **Black Guards (100):** See page 192.

JAIL BREAK

Following the map, the heroes emerge in a cellar sharing the same sub-level with the dungeon that currently holds Tang, some of his confederates, and perhaps other heroes who have been captured. Following Gao's map leads them quickly to the cell block.

Hei's sweeps have left the palace lightly manned. There are only five Black Guards at the main junction to guard the prisoners at this time. Also, the area is isolated enough that, unless the heroes use firearms, the sounds of battle do not draw outside help. The guards carry the keys to open the cells.

🐉 **Black Guards (5):** See page 192.

INFILTRATING THE PALACE

Tang looks a bit worse for wear, but otherwise in sufficient spirit. If the heroes tell him they have the Mirror of Truth, Tang leads them back to the cellar and then topside unseen through a series of remote passages, ending in a side entrance with the Main Palace in close sight. Tang believes the best action is to confront Yi Mong in the Emperor's presence, using the mirror to reveal her true nature. And if Hei is there too, so much the better.

If agreed, the group heads for one of the Emperor's chambers. Tang surmises the Emperor and Yi Mong are likely to be there, as it is the spirit's favorite because it overlooks the Imperial Woods. Not surprisingly, Tang knows every twist and turn of the Forbidden City, even those that "do not exist." (While within its confines, his intimate knowledge enables the heroes to gain surprise on the opposition while moving through it.)

Unless the heroes formulate a clever scheme of stealth to circumvent the Black Guards roaming the palace completely unnoticed, they encounter a group of four en route through the palace. Reinforcement arrives in the form of four additional guards after six rounds, drawn by the noise of combat.

A second set of four Black Guards patrols the destination floor. Fortunately, Tang recognizes their captain as someone who, though not overtly demonstrative, also disapproves of Hei's skullduggery. With a successful Persuasion test (with Tang interpreting if necessary), the captain orders his men to stand down, letting Tang and the heroes continue on peacefully to the chamber.

🐉 **Black Guards (see above):** See page 192.

IN THE COIL OF A VIPER

The wanderers arrive in time to interrupt another of Yi's chi-siphoning rituals, this one expertly disguised as a playful lovers' dance. A Magick or Knowledge (Occult) roll recognizes it as such.

Emperor Wanli appears gaunt and enervated, yet still enthralled with Yi. He, much like the dynasty, is on his last legs. He appears to be in even worse health than his late-fifties age would indicate: gaunt and shriveled features, dressed in a regal robe several sizes too big for a depleted, feeble frame, with bloodshot eyes.

Tang does not allow the heroes to touch or harm the Emperor under any circumstance, and does not engage as a combatant. The Emperor is incensed at the intrusion while desperately shielding his concubine with his weakened frame. The adventurers must win an opposed Persuasion test against Yi Mong

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to convince the Emperor to see proof of Yi Mong's true nature. On a failure, he calls for the guards.

Regardless of the test's outcome, Hei now rushes into the chamber with a band of fully armed Black Guards. If the Emperor is convinced to listen, he stops Hei and lets the heroes use the Mirror on Yi, fully confident it will do nothing. If the Emperor was not swayed by their argument, he allows Hei and his guards to attack. In that case, the heroes can try to use the Mirror on Yi during combat, but with a -2 penalty due to cover from the Emperor and the general chaos of the fight.

Should the wanderers expose the conspiracy by revealing Yi Mong's true form to the Emperor, he immediately slumps in shock and disbelief. Treat him as Shaken. Yi Mong and the Black Guards immediately attack the party and Hei lunges at the Emperor with his dagger.

After Yi Mong suffers two wounds, she seeks to escape by leaping out a window and into the Imperial Woods, then using *burrow* to flee. Hei and the Black Guards, fully aware of the punishment for their betrayal, fight to the death. After a minute of combat, imperial soldiers arrive to protect the Emperor—or arrest the heroes if they've failed to prove their case by this point!

- 🐉 **Yi Mong:** See page 192.
- 🐉 **Emperor Wanli:** See page 192.
- 🐉 **Hei Daosing:** See page 192.
- 🐉 **Tang Chowzhe:** See page 192.
- 🐉 **Black Guard (2 per hero):** See page 192.

AFTERMATH

A successful conclusion to this adventure indeed earns the heroes permission to explore Cathay unhindered. They have made powerful connections in Tang and Emperor Wanli, able to request and receive a royal audience—an honor rarely bestowed on foreigners. Unfortunately, the Emperor's reformation comes too late to prevent the Ming Dynasty's ultimate downfall.

If the adventurers failed, any survivors are wanted as enemies of the state under Hei, who eventually assumes the throne when



the Emperor's health finally fails. They find it virtually impossible to travel anywhere in Cathay except for the country's most remote regions—at least until Hei's tyranny succumbs to the Manchu invaders only a few years later.

Should Yi Mong make good her escape, she could return to exact her revenge on the heroes later—at almost anywhere thanks to her shapechanging ability!

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

BANDIT

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: -2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5/6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

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Hindrances: Greedy, Mean.

Edges: —

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands), leather armor (+1).

BLACK GUARD

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Vow (serve Hei Daosing)

Edges: Quick

Gear: Dao (Str+d8) or spear (Str+d6) or bow (12/24/48, 2d6), chain hauberk (+2), arrows (10).

EMPEROR WANLI

(The stats for Wanli are abbreviated for this adventure to reflect his present debilitated condition.)

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

Charisma: +2

Edges: Noble

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



HEI DAOSING

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Throwing d8

Charisma: +2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Cocky, Jingoistic, Vow (wants the throne)

Edges: Noble, Quick Draw, Two-Fisted

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), poisoned needles(10) (Range: 2/4/8; ROF 2; Damage: str+1, +1 level of fatigue if target fails Vigor (-2) test), reinforced robe (+1).

TANG CHOUZHE

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d8, Language (English) d4, Persuasion d6, Riding d4

Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Elderly, Vow (serves the Emperor)

Edges: Noble

Gear: Ornate dagger (Str+d4).



YI MONG, GREEN SNAKE

SPIRIT

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Magick d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6/11

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str.
- **Constrict:** Yi entangles her victim when she succeeds a Fighting roll with a raise on her bite. The round she entangles and each round thereafter, she causes damage to her prey equal to Str+d6. The prey may attempt to escape on his action with a successful opposed Strength roll. She may entangle up to four preys at once due to her great size.
- **Fear:** Yi is a frightening creature to behold.
- **Human Form:** Yi can transform from a large green snake to any female human with a successful Spirit roll. The action takes one full round. She can maintain each change for up to a full day before she must revert for at minimum an hour.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking Yi due to her large size.
- **Luck:** Yi is blessed with luck, and has one additional Benny.
- **Size +5:** Yi's serpent form is over 20' long in her snake form.
- **Sorcery:** Yi Mong possess magical abilities, which gives her Arcane Background (Sorcery) and *burrow* and *speak language* powers.
- **Very Attractive:** Yi Mong's human form is very beautiful, giving her Charisma +4.

NEW YEAR NIGHTMARE

LEAD In: The wanderers learn of a recent rash of supernatural hauntings in Beijing's Lo Mita District. Alternatively, they may encounter one personally on a visit to the mysterious Madam Tam's Ration Shop.

(This adventure may take place at any time, as there is no specific time required for the beast's resurrection.)

BACKGROUND

In the folklore of Cathay, the new "year" was not a celebratory occasion, but literally the name of a horrifying beast, Nian, that would embark on a night-long slaughter on the final hours of every year. Rather than rev- elries, people would congratulate each other for surviving the night when they meet the next day.

However, the Nian has not appeared for centuries. Legend tells of a brave archer who tracked the gargantuan beast and, when the creature tried to tempt him with a gift of great power, chose to slay it with a magic arrow instead.

What the legend omits is that the hero returned to the sorcerous cabal that forged him the arrow. They immediately regretted their part upon his recount of Nian's offer. From then on, the wizards of Tuyiang—or the Smoke of the Earth—have been hunting for the body of the great beast, hoping in its revivification they may curry the power that their agent foolishly refused.

Now, after generations of persistent searching, the Tuyiang have discovered the monster's resting place. It lies directly beneath the Lo Mita District in Beijing.

Ruthlessly, the sorcerers set fire to a teahouse that had been constructed, unbeknownst to the builders, above Nian's body. While the building was not consumed entirely, the Tuyiang made certain that no one escaped alive from the blaze. The ruin now hides their digging efforts.

GHOSTS IN LO MITA

While in Beijing, rumors of hauntings and ghostly apparitions appearing in the Lo Mita market district reach the heroes. The locals are quite willing to discuss the events and regale anyone expressing remote interest in the topic with wild tales and rumors. Accounts of the haunting include ghostly sightings, strange tremors and rumblings in the area late in the evening, and a wide range of portents and omens ranging from chickens laying eggs with rotten yolks to tea that cools slightly quicker than one might normally expect.

It quickly becomes clear to the party that the Lo Mita District is on the verge of outright panic. No small number of the residents has already left the district and many more are considering following suit.

Unfortunately, the sheer volume of events attributed to the haunting makes sorting through the rumors to get to any underlying facts quite difficult, as the inhabitants of the district are very superstitious. However, a Streetwise roll points the wanderers toward a small food shop in the district, Madam Tam's, as a local clearinghouse for information of a more esoteric nature.

MADAM TAM'S RATION SHOP

To normal eyes, this shop is of ordinary variety, offering goods found in any typical Cathay grocer. The proprietor, Madam Tam, is renowned in Lo Mita for her unusually tasty, refreshing trademark rations, a delight that has drawn travelers from afar. However, she is also an accomplished alchemist, a fact known amongst Cathay's seasoned occult practitioners.

A lady in her late forties, Madam Tam is short (even by Cathay standards) and jovial. She has secretly been studying alchemy since a young age. She prefers to disguise her alchemical studies as nothing more than exotic food preparation.

To those versed in the occult, the trap- ings of the arcane are obvious throughout the interior. Mixed amongst the mundane foodstuffs, an observant and knowledgeable patron can find everything from alchemical

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ingredients to carefully disguised mystical wards. Madam Tam can be a tremendous ally if treated respectfully.

Madam Tam keeps her fingers on the pulse of the Lo Mita District, particularly in matters that border on the occult. Once she is convinced of the wanderers' good intent, she tells them that the majority of the early—and presumably more reliable—accounts of hauntings occur in the vicinity of the old Wonglong Teahouse. About six months ago, a terrible fire ravaged the teahouse in the early morning hours, claiming the lives of the owner, his family, and several servants.

No one knows exactly how the fire was started, but the claims of ghosts and apparitions began not long after the tragedy occurred. Perhaps, she suggests, the teahouse holds the key to the hauntings.

EARTH, SMOKE... AND MIRRORS

The Tuyiang are behind the supposed phantasmal manifestations. Lo Mita is a comparatively poorer section of Beijing and its

residents are particularly prone to superstitions. The sorcerers are preying on this to convince the locals to vacate the premises.

Indeed, the staged haunting over the past weeks has already succeeded in driving some residents out of town. Most of the rest of the populace remain hidden in their homes at night. Even the city constables have begun to give the district a wide berth.

The sorcerers are using the burned ruin of the Wonglong Teahouse as their base of operations. When night falls, a team of Tuyiang leaves to scare off wanderers nearby, or even kill if necessary.

If the characters set up a watch on the teahouse after sunset, allow them Notice rolls to spot the Tuyiang leaving the ruins. If they succeed, they catch sight of a group stealthily moving through the district, obviously up to no good.

The heroes can attempt to shadow the team by making a Stealth roll. If they succeed, they observe the group using a combination of crude disguise and sorceries (such as *elemental manipulation*, *fear*, and similar spells) to frighten any residents unwise enough to not seek shelter after dark. Eventually, the sorcerers wend their way back to the ruins of the teahouse and slip inside.

On a failure, the sorcerers spot the party. The Tuyiang don't reveal this, but instead lead the wanderers to a remote lot where they attempt to lay an ambush for the party.

♣ **Tuyiang Sorcerers (1, plus 1 per hero):** See page 196.

THE WONGLONG TEAHOUSE

The Wonglong Teahouse is badly damaged by fire. At one time, this was a two-story structure, but much of the upper floor was effectively destroyed in the blaze. The interior walls were mostly consumed by the flames, leaving the lower floor a single large room. However, large piles of burned debris litter the area providing ample cover and making the ruins the equivalent of difficult terrain to anyone attempting to move through it.



The lesser sorcerers keep themselves well hidden inside the teahouse in daytime. It is nearly impossible to spot any of them without actually entering the premises (Notice -4).

There are two sentries watching from the upper level at all times, and one member per hero guarding the ground level. The sentries are active: allow them Notice rolls to spot anyone approaching. If they succeed, the watch gives sufficient advance warning for some of the sorcerers to hustle into various spots outside the building and delay or divert the heroes from the teahouse with their magic.

Should any of the wanderers enter the teahouse during the day, the Tuyiang don't immediately attack. Instead, they claim to be itinerant priests volunteering to cleanse the site of malignant spirits responsible for the haunting spree. They may offer to "help" the heroes purge the poltergeists so as to distract—or perhaps even ambush—the characters at the right time. They attack if the heroes do not appear persuaded by their tale.

If the wanderers describe any encounter with the sorcerers to Madam Tam, she identifies them as Tuyiang and relates the folklore behind both the group and Nian. Faced with evidence that the Tuyiang are active, she voices a suspicion that the sorcerers are seeking the body of Nian for some nefarious purpose—possibly to even reawaken the beast!

Madam Tam urges the adventurers to take any action necessary to stop the band of magicians immediately. If Nian is roused, the death and horror the creature will inflict may be boundless.

 **Tuyiang Sorcerers (4, plus 1 per hero):** See page 196.

BATTLE FOR THE FATE OF UPCOMING YEARS

Tuyiang's leader is an aged, yet formidable sorcerer named Jungwu. Jungwu is the 122nd in the long line of Wizards Supreme for Tuyiang. He wears a dark-blue robe customary for Tuyiang members, but adorned

with a large ying-yang symbol on the back and Cathay characters for "Wizard Supreme" on the collar.

Jungwu spends his every waking moment in the basement of the Wonglong Teahouse with a Tuyiang lieutenant. The two command a summoned large, red-skinned ogre demon. Armed with a huge pickaxe, it chips away at Nian's rocky prison. The reverberations some residents heard were actually the result of the demonic brute digging through hard rocks to unearth Nian.

The passage into the basement is blocked with charred furniture and shelves, removable by three rounds of work or in a single one by succeeding on a Strength roll (-2). The room has been greatly expanded into an enormous cavern. Despite the cave's immensity, its end reveals just the partial side of a buried Nian's face, an arrow plunged deeply into the monster's flesh a few feet beneath a monstrous eye that is currently closed.

Jungwu orders his lieutenant, the ogre demon, and any of the Tuyiang sorcerers still remaining from previous encounters, to attack any wanderers who have entered the basement. Meanwhile, he attempts to pull the arrow from Nian. This requires five successful Strength tests, with each raise counting as an extra success. Jungwu may ask for another member of the Tuyiang's aid only if one can be spared from the fight. However, he never commands assistance from the demon as he fears it may receive Nian's favor for doing so.

Assuming a hero gets past the opposition, he may either attack the Tuyiang leader or engage him in a tug of war over the arrow. Jungwu fights any adventurer who attacks him, but immediately returns to attempting to remove the arrow at his first opportunity.

Should a character attempt to prevent Jungwu from removing the arrow, he must make an opposed Strength roll against the sorcerer. If the wanderer wins the test, he prevents the sorcerer from making any progress on removing the arrow. Additionally, if he wins the test, with each success and raise, he also cancels a prior successful roll for the Tuyiang, shoving the arrow back into the creature.

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When all of Jungwu's successful Strength rolls have been cancelled, the hero pushes the arrow completely into the creature, causing the eye to jar open in agony. This calls for an immediate Guts roll for everyone in the room.

Nian's ensuing thrashing shakes the building violently. Masonry and debris begin splummeting down and it is obvious that the ruin will soon collapse. Anyone still inside after five rounds suffers 3d10 damage from the falling wreckage. However, the monster is now buried forever, its bulk sinking toward the heart of the earth.

On the other hand, if Jungwu succeeds in removing the arrow, the beast awakes. Nian bursts from the earth causing 2d10 damage from a storm of debris to all in Large template centered on the creature. It inflicts significant damage to the Lo Mita District as it takes to the air and disappears into the clouds. The creature offers its rescuers no reward, leaving any remaining Tuyiang dumbfounded.

Worst yet, everyone in Cathay now has many unhappy new years to endure...

☞ **Jungwu:** See below.

☞ **Tuyiang Sorcerers (4, plus 1 per hero):** See below.

☞ **Ogre Demon:** See below.

☞ **Tuyiang Lieutenant (2):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



JUNGWU

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Magick d10, Notice d6, Taunt d8

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), Strong Caster

Gear: Knife (Str+d4).

Powers: *Animate hand, boost/lower trait,*

curse, deflection, fear, fly, grave speak, puppet, spirit ward, summon spirit, zombie.
Treat as a Veteran character.

MADAM TAM

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

Skills: Guts d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d10, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Healing d10, Magick d10

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

Hindrances: Loyal, Pacifist (Minor), Small

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery), Scholar

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), spell components.

Spells: *Boost/lower trait, environmental protection, speak language.*

Treat as a Seasoned character.

OGRE DEMON

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (1)

Gear: Massive pickaxe (Str+d10).

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Thick hide.
- **Size +3:** It is over 8' tall with pot-belly and massive arms and legs.
- **Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes at -2.

TUYIANG LIEUTENANT

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Magick d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

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

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery)

Gear: Dao (Str+d8), spell components.

Powers: *Armor, dispel, enchant weapon, smite.*

Treat as Seasoned character.

TUYIANG SORCERER

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Magick d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6

CATHAY AND THE ORIENT

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

Hindrances: Anemic

Edges: Arcane Background (Sorcery)

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), spell components

Powers: Choose two from *elemental manipulation*, *entangle*, *fear*, *obscure*, and *summon beast*. Treat as Novice character.

HINDOOSTAN

MUSSELMEN armies conquered much of Hindoostan and its populace in the 16th century. The country is currently ruled by Jahangir, the Mogul Emperor. Although Jahangir is a Musselman himself, he remains tolerant to all religions within Hindoostan—a wise decision since virtually every aspect of Hindoostani life is governed by religious beliefs.

Most Hindoostani hold an accepting outlook when dealing with situations which cause pain or suffering, for they view them as “working off” their karmic debt. Therefore, many Hindoostani are less likely to hold long grudges. Conversely, doing good deeds builds good karma for the next lifetime and ensures its prosperity, until one is so fortunate as to be completely free of sins and ascend the mortal world.

Even under the Mogul emperors, the country continues to have one of the most rigid social systems in history. Everyone is born to his station, or caste, for his entire life, without any movement in social status possible, ever. Priests and teachers, associated with the color white, top the social tiers, followed in order by warriors (red), then farmers, merchants, and finally artisans (brown). The “untouchables” are polluted laborers, derelicts and outcasts who are a caste only in name. They are universally shunned and doomed to an underprivileged life.

Jahangir is also very open to foreign trade, entertaining representatives from many countries. Hindoostan’s location astride the Silk Road has long made it a crossroads for trade in the region and both Musselman and Cathayan merchants can be found here. Of the Europeans, the Portuguese have had the most success in Hindoostan to date, but the

HINDOO SUPERSTITIONS

Tuesday is an unlucky day for making purchases or deals.

It is lucky to eat no meat on Mondays.

Cattle are considered sacred and eating beef is punishable by death.

Never speak a traveler’s destination as he departs or eavesdropping goblins may hear.

ties available in the country and have begun making overtures to the throne.

BOMBAIM

Nestled at the mouth of the Ulhas River off the western Hindoostan coast, Bombaim sits astride an archipelago of seven islands and grew from seven independent villages, each on one of the islands. The Portuguese have controlled Bombaim and the nearby territory since a treaty with the Mogul Empire awarded them the lands in 1534.

The Portuguese have invested a limited amount of money and effort in developing the city into an important trading port. To date, they’ve improved the port facilities, constructed several small forts, a factory, and Bombaim Castle—which is actually more of a manor house. Paved roads are few and far between in the city, as are buildings more than two stories in height. The common

RUMOR

“My Persian contact just warned me to stay away from Isfahan for a while. He mentioned an underground auction dealing in slaves—with a high demand for Europeans.”

This rumor leads to the **Savage Tale: Blood Bids**, on page 220.

THE PATH OF KANE

home is often a thatched roof over four mud walls on a patch of dirt, with beads curtaining off the quarters inside.

The Portuguese have supported the spread of Christianity and specifically the Catholic Church in the region. St. Andrew's Church was constructed by the Jesuits over a quarter-century ago and the Portuguese Inquisition followed not long after. Inter-marriage between settlers and locals is encouraged, but the Inquisition is not above forcible methods of swelling the ranks of the faithful either. To date, there have been over 10,000 conversions to Christianity since the Portuguese took control of the area.

Just a fraction of Bombaim's residents truly enjoy good wealth. Those who do are mostly traders sanctioned by the Portuguese. The primary exports are currently coconuts and coconut fiber. The foreigners employ natives as inexpensive laborers. The general living condition is poor—and the inflexible caste system doesn't make it any easier.



A STITCH IN TIME

LEAD In: While in Bombaim, the wanderers hear news of a four-armed baby girl's birth, as well as the hysteria that she is Kali incarnate.

BACKGROUND

Rajan Shreeyash and his wife are finally welcoming a newborn child to their twelve-year union. There's just one obstacle barring

ADVENTURE LINK



This adventure works best as a follow-up to the **Savage Tale: A Thread Unspun**, on page 57.

In that case, the party is escorting a garment that has become cursed from Rome to Bombaim via southern route of the Silk Road, specifically seeking Rajan Shreeyash, the article's tailor, to restore it to its original condition and release the soul of the man trapped within.

any celebration: They fear the baby is a living incarnation of Kali, the Hindoo goddess of death. This is because the child was born with four arms; two normal arms with two vestigial appendages beneath them.

Word of the deformed infant's birth has greatly perturbed the Bombaim community. As the news spreads, more have banded in a massive uproar against the child whom they consider the harbinger of ultimate evil and doom, adding to the couple's distress.

There are a few rare individuals who absolutely do not wish Indira dead or even the slightest harm—the Thuggees, fervent members of Kali's death cult. They took the child's birth as a utmost blissful omen and rejoiced that the Dark Mother is at last reborn to sow eternal strife and destruction in the mortal world. For them, there is no greater purpose than to protect, nourish, and worship her divine flesh form until such glorious commencement.

DEATHS NONE TOO MERCIFUL

In Bombaim, the wanderers can sense the brewing tension long before they ever near the family's residence. A large horde has gathered before Rajan's shop, as they have each day for the past two weeks. They surround the frazzled father, who tries pleading and reasoning with the throng and occasionally trades angry barbs with riled individuals, but he is clearly losing the battle. The man is clearly weary of the daily battle, and the only strength behind his fight comes reflexively from the basic parental instinct to protect his child.

The heroes arrive on the scene of potential riot. The fire is further fanned when Niral emerges with Indira clutched tightly and joins her husband in futilely defending their daughter. Unknown to either the characters or the Shreeyashes, a band of Thuggees disguised as townsfolk watches the developments from a nearby alley.

The heroes can attempt either an Intimidation or Persuasion roll, at a -2 penalty due to the emotional state of the crowd, to defuse the situation. If successful, they convince the crowd to slowly disperse, but not with-

out parting shots about the dangerous seed they're helping to harbor. The Thuggees slip away with the departing locals.

A failed roll has the mob closing in menacingly on the wanderers and the tailor's family, obviously deciding to take matters into their own hand. Allow the party to make a second attempt to sway them, this time at -4. If that fails, they swarm the heroes and the Shreeyashs, particularly Niral, swiping at her to wrest the baby away.

One round after combat begins, the Thuggees toss several crude smoke bombs into the crowd, then charge the disoriented mass with their daggers and garrotes drawn, assaulting anyone in their path as they move to snatch Indira. Naturally, the cultists have no compunctions about leaving a trail of corpses, especially of those advocating for Indira's death, sparing only Rajan and Niral for trying to protect their goddess.

If the Thuggees fail to kidnap Indira or the heroes talked down the boycotters, they return to the shop late at night. While two stand as lookouts, the rest sneak through either the back door or windows into the family quarters at the rear half of the single-story building. Should this tactic fail, they become more creative, using ambushes, diversionary attacks, disguises, poisoning, and other lows to accomplish the goal.

Regardless, the number of people congregating outside Rajan's shop to persecute the family only multiply each day afterward. It becomes increasingly difficult to keep peace, giving the adventurers an additional cumulative -1 penalty every day to their rolls to pacify the masses.

🐉 **Rioters (40):** See page 202.

🐉 **Thuggees (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 202.

THE TAILOR'S BARGAIN

Assuming the party arrives with the garment from the **Savage Tale: A Thread Unspun**, they find poor Rajan is too distressed to repair the cursed shirt. Rajan recognizes the attackers as members of the Thuggee cult by their garrotes. Once Indira is kidnapped, Rajan agrees to start restoring the garment

if the heroes rescue his daughter. If they have not arrived in Bombaim as a result of that adventure, he instead throws himself on their mercy—obviously they are good souls since they chose to save his family from the mob in the first place.

Should the wanderers prove successful in thwarting the Thuggees' initial attempts to seize the infant, he instead begs them to locate their secret temple so he can at least request the officials' help. In this case, soon after the heroes depart the residence, the cultists succeed in finally abducting the child.

FINDING THE THUGGEES

The heroes run into resistance in their search as soon as they begin. Not only are they outsiders, but in the eyes of the local populace they are working to perpetuate the life of Death itself. All Streetwise, Persuasion, and Intimidation rolls receive a penalty of -2 when applied to the local residents as a result. Worse, failure results in the citizens giving misleading information or outright lying to confound their efforts.

With a result of 1 on any skill check to gather information (regardless of the Wild Die), the wanderers inadvertently contact a Thuggee informant who lures them into an ambush in a deserted alley nearby.

Once they have at least three successful rolls in any combination of Streetwise, Persuasion, or Intimidation tests, they cull enough evidence to deduce the general location where the cultists perform their forbidden rituals (and Indira is likely kept if she has been kidnapped by this time).

🐉 **Thuggees (1 plus 1 per hero):** See page 202.

INTO KALI'S DEN

The shrine is accessible through a tunnel under a dilapidated trinket shop, manned by two extremely rude Thuggee initiates to ensure there won't be any repeat customers—or customers, period.

They maintain the façade of shop owners as long as they can, but as soon as they sense hostility from the heroes or something is amiss, they tug a rope that runs across the

THE PATH OF KANE



top of the walls, which sounds alarm bells in the shrine below. The two then attack. The initiates are alone in this fight; the rest of the cult stays below hoping to remain hidden, but ready to ambush any interlopers.

The tunnel is beneath the floorboards of the shop's back room. A simple Notice roll is all that is necessary to find it. Beneath the trapdoor, which is just big enough for one person at a time, is a 12' rope ladder.

Thuggees (2): See page 202.

INTO THE TUNNELS

If the alarm bells were sounded, there are two Thuggees hidden near the bottom of the ladder. They are armed with crossbows and fire at the wanderers coming down the ladder. They receive +2 bonus on their Shooting rolls due to their targets' confined movement on the ladder.

The dry-mud tunnel, lit with dim lanterns, is 2" wide and low ceilinged. Anyone with the Brawny Edge has to duck his head and suffers -1 to all his Fighting rolls in here.

Thuggees: (2): See page 202. In addition to their normal gear, they are also armed with crossbows.

TRAPS AND ASSASSINS

About 10" into the tunnel is a poison gas trap triggered by a pressure plate. Detecting the trap requires a Notice roll (-2) and requires an action unless the character has Danger Sense. The trap can be disarmed with a successful Lockpicking roll; however on a roll of 1 (regardless of the Wild Die), the trap is activated. The trap only triggers once.

If the explorers trip it, the trap releases a cloud of gas in a Small Burst Template centered on the trigger point. Anyone within the cloud must make a Vigor roll each round or be knocked unconscious for 2d6 rounds. The cloud lingers for two rounds before dissipating.

When the trap is triggered (or detected, but before it can be disarmed), assassins emerge from hidden alcoves in the wall 2" behind the last hero and attack. The wanderers must win a Notice test versus the assassins' Stealth or be surprised.

During the fight, any character rolling a 1 on the Fighting or Agility die, regardless of the Wild Die, inadvertently steps on the plate and releases the gas from the walls. The assassins know where the plate is and there's no chance of them accidentally triggering the trap. And, obviously, if the party has already triggered the trap, the Thuggees do not enter the cloud until after it has dissipated.

Defeated or unconscious heroes are bound, taken to the Shrine of Kali and used for sacrifice in 1d6 hours—giving them some time to formulate an escape.

If not alerted, the passage is clear except for the gas trap, which is still armed.

Thuggees (one per hero): See page 202.

THE SHRINE OF KALI

The tunnel eventually leads to a closed wooden door with a carved representation of Kali. It is locked but can be opened with a simple Lockpicking roll. Alternately, the party can batter it down; the door has Toughness 10.

CATHAY AND THE ORIENT

Inside, the shrine is 12" x 15" in diameter. There are two small statues of Kali on either side and a larger one at the back. In front of the larger statue is an altar. On it rests Indira in a small cradle. On her forehead is a freshly drawn bloody half-moon similar to that seen in depictions of Kali. Otherwise, she appears to be well-cared for by her captors.

There are several Thuggees and a man who is obviously the priest for this particular branch of the cult. The high priest motions for his followers to stand back and appeals to the wanderers.

"Why do you seek to take this child from us? We mean this child no harm. She is sacred to us and we will protect her from all danger at the cost of our very lives. As you have seen, the ignorant mob fears her and would take her life. Her family cannot protect her much longer. She is much safer with us."

He debates with the characters as long as it appears they may be swayed by his arguments. The priest refuses to allow the heroes to take the child or to grant her family access to Indira under any circumstances. Should the party agree to leave Indira with the cult, he allows them to leave unmolested.

If it becomes obvious that the adventurers have no intention of leaving the child behind, the priest commands his followers to attack the unbelievers. He then immediately steps on a hidden pressure plate which opens a moat around the altar.

The 1" wide, 2" deep muddy chasm is filled with countless venomous snakes. It requires an Agility roll to leap across the pit. Failure lands the character inside the pit. Anyone falling into it is attacked by 1d6 vipers each round. There are simply too many vipers in the pit to kill short of some large area of effect attack like flooding it with burning oil or the like. Escaping requires a Climbing roll or help from another party member.

Pulling down the highest arm of the either of the smaller statues closes the pit. The cult members all know this, but are unlikely to do so during the battle.

The high priest and all his followers fight to the death to protect what they see as the manifestation of their deity on Earth.

 **High Priest:** See below.

 **Thuggees (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 202.

 **Pit Vipers:** See page 202.

THE FORTUNE TURNS

Rajan is ecstatic should the heroes succeed in returning Indira. If you're running this *Savage Tale* as a solo adventure, he thanks the characters profusely for their brave deeds and promises to provide them any assistance they may need that is within his power. Rajan and his family pack up their belongings that very day and depart Bombaim to seek a new home and hopefully a new life.

THE MENDED GARMENT

If the party is following up on the events of the *Savage Tale: A Thread Unspun*, Rajan brings out the shirt, fully mended. Indira seem to take an immediate liking to it, crying and reaching for the shirt. If the wanderers comply with her parents' suggestion of letting her rest wrapped in the garment for the night, a miracle happens next morning. Her vestigial arms disappear, with no sign of them remaining whatsoever!

In light of the wondrous turn of event, the residents quickly revere Indira as an avatar of Vishnu, the god of goodness and mercy, instead. Most proclaim the entire affair to be a test from Vishnu all along. All who have been vitriolic apologize profusely and bear gifts to seek the family's forgiveness.

It is a sign to the heroes, too, that the garment is again blessed, ready for its journey back to Rome.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this *Savage Tale*.



HIGH PRIEST

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Notice d6, Shamanism d10,



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Stealth d8

Charisma: -6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty, Mean

Edges: Arcane Background (Shamanism), Quick, Strong Caster

Gear: Garrote (see below), fetish bag.

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, curse, deflection, fear, obscure, smite, spirit servant, spirit ward, summon beast, vision quest.*

Treat as a Veteran character.

Special Abilities:

- **Garrote:** With a successful Called Shot to the head, the high priest loops his scarf around a character's neck. Treat this as a grapple, except each round the victim must make a Vigor roll opposed by the priest's Strength or gain a level of Fatigue. This can lead to death and Fatigue is only recovered once the hold is broken.

PIT VIPER

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d12

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 2

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str.
- **Poison:** Snakes this size do little serious damage with their bite, but may inject deadly venom. A character bitten by a rattlesnake or similar viper must make a Vigor roll at -2. With a success, the bite area swells and becomes numb. The victim becomes Exhausted until healed. With a failure, the victim becomes Incapacitated and must make a second Vigor roll or die in 2d6 minutes.
- **Quick:** Snakes are notoriously fast. They may discard action cards of 5 or lower and draw another.
- **Size -2:** Most venomous snakes are four to six feet long, but only a few inches thick.
- **Small:** Anyone attacking a snake must subtract 2 from his attack rolls.

RIOTER

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge

(one trade) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances & Edges: —

Gear: Club (Str +d4).

THUGGEE

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8, Shooting d6

Charisma: -6

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

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean

Edges: Quick

Gear: Garrote (see below), club (Str+d4).

(Thuggee purists use only cords to prevent shedding blood, the far more common cultists are perfectly willing to adapt whatever weapon would get the job done)

Special Abilities:

- **Garrote:** With a successful Called Shot to the head, a Thuggee loops his scarf around a character's neck. Treat this as a grapple, except each round the victim must make a Vigor roll opposed by the Thuggee's Strength or gain a level of Fatigue. This can lead to death and Fatigue is only recovered once the hold is broken.



SHADOW OF THE RAKSHASA

LEAD In: The wanderers encounter a young woman on a trail through the jungle. She is carrying a large basket of food and crying.

SANTHA'S TALE

Late in the afternoon, the heroes meet a beautiful young woman as they pass through a heavily forested area or jungle. She is carrying a large basket filled to overflowing with a variety of foodstuffs: fruits, vegetables, bread, etc. Although there is nothing obviously wrong, the woman is weeping and wracked by sobs.

CATHAY AND THE ORIENT

Should they approach her, she introduces herself as Santha and explains her plight.

"My village has been plagued by rakshasas—man-eating demons of the forest—for many years. To keep the creatures at bay, we must send them offerings of food every year or they will descend upon us and slay everyone. This year, I was chosen to make the delivery of our offerings."

Santha makes it clear that not only is she delivering food, she is part of the offering. Each year, one of the villagers is selected to be a sacrifice to the rakshasa. This year, the curse fell to her.

If the heroes offer to help her, particularly by slaying the rakshasas, Santha's spirits immediately pick up. She is reluctant to return home to her village, claiming that until the rakshasas are slain the other villagers are likely to kill her for shirking her duties. She's also afraid to remain in the jungle alone because of the rakshasas themselves.

Should the wanderers prove to be slow on the uptake, Santha eventually just asks if she can remain with the party as it's far safer than any of her other options. She seems frightened by the prospect of meeting the demons herself, but insists she is safer with the heroes than by herself. She adds that the party likely needs her to lead them to the lair of the rakshasas which is hidden deep in the depths of the jungle anyway.

DECEIVER

In reality, Santha is herself a rakshasa. Not only that, but she is actually the leader of the rakshasa band. The demons are deceitful creatures that delight in trickery and this is part of a scheme of the rakshasas to play with their victims before devouring them.

She invests a fair amount of her charm and effort into taking the measure of the party, determining any weaknesses, as well as which members pose the biggest threat to her brethren. She does this by encouraging the brave heroes to brag about their accomplishments and impress her with tales of their travels.

RAKSHASAS

Native to Hindoostan and seldom encountered outside its borders, rakshasas are a race of demonic shapechangers with a fondness for human flesh. They are terrible warriors but favor the use of deception and illusions to gain the upper hand in any encounter.

Even when not shapechanged, these creatures vary greatly in form. Some are cadaverously lean while others are monstrously fat with sagging bellies. Some possess unnaturally long arms and others may be mere dwarfs. No two look exactly alike, but most have enormous fanged mouths reminiscent of a tiger's maw and long, bony claws.

The statistics provided at the end of this Savage Tale are for the average rakshasa. These creatures can vary greatly in power, however. Some are immune to all attacks except for blessed weapons. Others have multiple limbs or even heads. Individual rakshasas of unusual ability may even master spells of shamanistic or arcane nature.

The only flaw to the rakshasa's plan is that there is no village nearby. She refuses to return to the village even with the protection of the party. Santha claims even should the mighty adventurers protect her from harm, she would be forever shunned by her people for cowardice. If pressed, she agrees to lead them to the small community, while in reality simply leading them to same trap the demons had already laid for them.

Santha: Use the stats for a rakshasa, found on page 205. Santha is a Wild Card.

TRAVELING MAN

Santha leads the travelers further into the jungle, but along a fairly well-traveled trail. About an hour or so after they meet here, the group encounters a lone man leading a pair of donkeys. The pack animals are burdened with large rolls of cloth.

The man introduces himself as Naresh Kidwai and tells the party he is a traveling merchant. He deals primarily in clothing and



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expensive cloths and is returning to Delhi (or other nearby city) after a trip to the countryside.

Santha quickly warns him of the rakshasas in the area. Naresh appears genuinely concerned for his safety and asks if he may travel with the wanderers as they pass through the area. If they try to dissuade the man by telling him they are actually planning to do battle with the creatures, Naresh becomes even more insistent. *"If you are such mighty heroes, then indeed I will be much safer with you than by myself!"*

Contrary to what the characters are likely to assume, Naresh is exactly who he claims to be. However, unknown to him, one of his donkeys has been replaced by a rakshasa! The demon was just about to dispatch the man when the wanderers arrived. Recognizing Santha, it decided to follow her lead.

Even if the party has somehow divested itself of Santha, the encounter progresses in the same manner.

🐉 **Rakshasas (2):** See page 205.

AMBUSH!

Less than an hour after they encounter Naresh, twilight begins to fall. Santha begins to look nervous and tells the party there is no way they can reach the lair of the rakshasa at night. Besides, she adds, the creatures are more vulnerable during the daytime, so waiting until the next sunrise is the best plan of action.

If asked about any other specific weaknesses or powers the rakshasas have, Santha makes up a few, perhaps claiming the creatures are susceptible to weapons made of brass or are repulsed by salt. Naresh quickly disagrees, saying that he has heard that the monsters can change shape and have poisonous claws. He adds that he has heard many tales of the demons and is certain that they are susceptible to fire.

Santha laughs at these and says that obviously Naresh has been played the fool. Naresh is correct, of course, but Santha seeks to mislead the wanderers as long as possible.

The rest of Santha's band moves into place near the group's campsite. Later that night, the rakshasas attack the party. The monsters wait until the adventurers bed down for the night, choosing to attack when the least number of characters are on watch if possible.

There are two rakshasas lurking in the jungle. They spring out to attack, focusing at first on any heroes standing watch. These monsters are in their true forms and necessitate Guts rolls from the explorers (and Naresh) upon their appearance.

As soon as the battle is under way, Santha and the rakshasa masquerading as a donkey change form and join in. Naresh joins in the battle only if he is attacked himself. Otherwise, he cowers in fear. Once half their number are slain, the remaining monsters attempt to flee into the jungle.

🐉 **Naresh:** See page 205.

🐉 **Rakshasa (3):** See page 205.

🐉 **Santha:** Use the stats for a rakshasa, found on page 205. Santha is a Wild Card.

THE RAKSHASAS' LAIR

The wanderers can pursue the fleeing demons, but finding their trail through the jungle in the dead of night is nearly impossible. Only by succeeding on a Tracking roll (-4) are the heroes able to follow the creatures.

The next morning, it is much easier to find the demons' tracks. A simple Tracking roll suffices to pick up their trail. The tracks lead a few hundred yards into the jungle to the ruins of an ancient stone structure. A partially collapsed stairwell leads down to an underground chamber 4" x 4".

The room is cluttered with gnawed bones (mostly human), discarded and bloody clothing from other victims, and a wide variety of rotting substances which the monsters seem to use for bedding. Also inside the room the remaining rakshasas hide from the light of the sun.

The creatures attack any explorers entering the chamber, but do not leave it to confront

CATHAY AND THE ORIENT

their foes during the daylight hours. The shadows in the underground room are sufficient to protect the monsters from the effects of the sun's rays, but ingenious heroes may find a way to capitalize on the rakshasas' weakness to daylight, perhaps using mirrors or similar devices.

Should the heroes succeed in defeating them, they can search the disgusting piles of offal for any items of value. This requires a separate Guts roll against nausea. Any characters resisting the effects of nausea may make a Notice roll. On a success, they manage to dig a variety of trinkets out of the mess worth £150; on a failure, they only find £25 worth of items.

Regardless, if Naresh survives, he is very impressed with the wanderers' prowess. Although he has nothing of real value to offer them as a reward, he does travel far and wide across Hindoostan and his tales of the party's bravery provide a +1 bonus to all Persuasion and Streetwise rolls made while in Hindoostan from this point on.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

NARESH

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Area Knowledge: Hindoostan) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8

Charisma: +0

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

Edges: Connections (various merchants and local officials)

Hindrances: Loyal

Gear: Knife (Str +d4), donkey, various bolts of cloth.

RAKSHASA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation

d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d6, Tracking d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Claw/Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Fear:** Anyone who sees a rakshasa in its true form must make a Guts roll.
- **Immunity:** These creatures suffer half damage from non-magical attacks.
- **Poison -2:** In its true form, a rakshasa's claws are venomous. If the demon causes at least a Shaken result with its claws, the victim must make a Vigor roll (-2) or suffer an additional wound.
- **Pyrophobia:** These creatures have a fear of fire. They must make a Spirit roll (-2) to attack any character carrying a flaming torch or to cross over a fire.
- **Shape Change:** As an action, a rakshasa may change its shape, adopting the form of any animal or human. It gains all non-magical abilities of that form.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Rakshasas suffer normal damage from fire.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** In direct sunlight, rakshasas lose their immunity and suffer normal damage from all attacks.

Nippon

ALSO known as the Land of the Rising Sun, Nippon means "sun's home" in the native tongue. Legend attributes Nippon's creation to the sun goddess, from whom the emperors were descended. Since the island nation's first contact with the West in 1543, it has seen an influx of Jesuit missionaries and traders from Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, and England. Currently, however, the shogun ruler has begun an attempt to remove Christian missionaries from the land.

Animism, the idea that trees, mountains, rivers and other natural formations possess an animating power or spirit, is at the core of many Nipponese mythologies and beliefs. Pleasing these spirits drives this native pagan faith. Hence, it is common to see the occasional small temples or monument devoted to local spirits along the roadside. Travelers often stop briefly at these to pay respect to avert incurring misfortune on their journey.

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NIPPONESE SUPERSTITIONS

Do not pass food from one set of chopsticks to the other.

Do not sleep with your body pointing north, because that is how bodies are laid to rest.

Whistling at night may lead to you receiving a visit from a snake (or worse!).

It is bad luck to step on the cloth border of tatami floor mats.

Breaking a comb is bad luck.

However, these spirits are not always benevolent in nature, nor are they immune to mortal manipulation of a more direct sort. Sorcerers can seize control of the spirits inside objects, such as trees and rocks, using the spirits to animate the object to do their bidding.

Nippon is a land of strict and complicated customs, developed over centuries. Nipponese take great offense to any transgressions, even those seen by foreigners as innocent and inconsequential. Just misusing a person's title even slightly often terminates a business deal. Not bowing deeply enough to a samurai warrior or a lord can get a peasant killed. Visiting potential new friends, associates, or any home for the first time without a gift is certain to earn the host's ire.

Everyone travels on the left side of the street in Nippon. This is because most samurais, like common folk, are right-handed,

RUMOR

"Some white men from Russia came to Edo and talked to a couple of good fighters. Supposedly they took them to Moscow to compete in a tournament."

This rumor leads to the **Savage Tale: Ring of Death**, on page 70.

so the katana is sheathed on the left. Therefore, walking on the left side minimizes inadvertent pedestrian contact with the sword. All samurais believe their katanas symbolize their soul. It is rare that a samurai ever grants another leave to touch his katana and touching one without consent is a grave insult to the owner's honor that is restorable only by killing the offender.

Edo

Formerly a small fishing village, Edo (which will eventually become known as Tokyo in 1868) is currently home to over a hundred thousand citizens and growing rapidly. The city is located on the eastern part of Honshu, the main island of Nippon, and to the northwest of Edo Bay, near the mouth of the Sumida River. Within Edo's vicinity are numerous islands, including two major chains: the Izu Islands and the Ogasawara Islands.

By 1610, Edo has grown to become the center of military power for Nippon's shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu. As such, samurai warriors and soldiers nearly match civilian residents in number and are more frequently encountered here than most other towns. Due to the suspicion of Jesuit missionaries' involvement in recent revolts, Edo is in the process of purging Western influences, and all foreigners will be met with intense scrutiny.

Edo is built around the shogun's castle. Closest to the castle are rich mansions of the daimyos, or feudal lords. Beyond those estates, the homes and businesses extend to the northeast down to the waterfront. As northeast is considered a dangerous direction in Nippon, this region is also rife with temples built to guard the populace against evil spirits.

Summers are hot and humid in Edo and the winters generally mild with cold spells and sporadic snowfalls. Typical of most of Nippon, it is prone to earthquakes. Fire is also a constant threat in the city since the closely packed wooden homes are heated almost exclusively by charcoal fires.



The One-Eyed Sea Serpent

LEAD In: Piracy has been on the decline in the waters near Nippon for the last decade. However, there has been a recent upswing in activity near Edo. The wanderers have been hired onto a Nipponese merchant vessel due to an increase in pirate attacks in the waters near Edo.

Alternately, you can use this Savage Tale as the heroes first arrive in Nippon, as the pirates attack their ship before it reaches Edo.

BACKGROUND

Masahita is a particularly unpleasant pirate in his thirties with one eye, mangy black hair, long dark eyebrows and beard, and a penchant for collecting Europeans as personal slaves or to traffic on black market.

Masahita has managed to retrieve the precious lost eye belonging to the legendary sea serpent known as Gokura. Its possession enables Masahita to summon and control the giant sea serpent at will. It's almost fitting that the one-eyed pirate captain would come into command of the one-eyed sea serpent.

With this newfound power under his control, Masahita and his band have begun to wreak havoc along the Tokyo Bay and coastline.

NO BOARDING NECESSARY

If the wanderers are hired to protect a Nipponese vessel, they are offered £10 each to take passage aboard a merchant ship departing Edo en route to Ryukyu (Okinawa). The ship is what is known as a "Red Seal ship" and is roughly the same size as a European galleon, although it is not armed with any cannon. The ship is fairly crowded by European standards with over 200 crew and passengers in addition to the party.

The ship isn't long out of Edo Bay when lookouts alert the crew to the approach of an unknown ship. The new ship is considerably smaller than the one on which the wanderers are sailing and the crew of their own vessel estimates it is unlikely to hold more than 50

people at most, even if packed to the gunwales. Nevertheless, the crew, wary of pirates, begins to make what preparations they can. Still, the smaller ship does not seem too great of a threat to the larger merchantman.

When the smaller vessel, the *Torushiro*, sails within shouting distance, its captain appears on deck. The one-eyed pirate captain Masahita offers the vessel a chance to surrender and be boarded peacefully. The merchantman's captain defies the pirates. It's clear that there are even fewer pirates aboard than at first thought—maybe no more than two dozen.

Even though the merchant vessel is not a warship, the pirates cannot hope to overcome nearly ten-to-one odds.

Masahita laughs contemptuously and points a palm-sized box at the hull, lifting the lid briefly as he does so. Heroes who succeed on a Notice roll catch a glimpse of a glistening orb of some sort within the box before the pirate snaps it shut.

Within moments, the wanderer's vessel is violently battered and rocked. All aboard must immediately make Agility rolls (–2) to remain standing. If they are grasping a solid handhold such as a railing or mast, they receive a +2 to the roll. Any who fail suffer 1d6 damage from tumbling across the deck. Anyone on deck at the time falls overboard on a result of 1 on the Agility roll (regardless of the Wild Die).

GOKURA

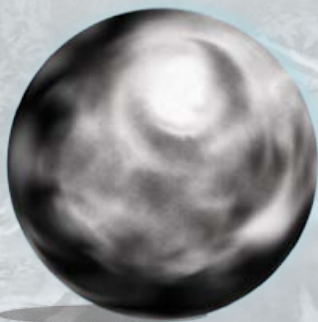
Gokura is a sea serpent (Japanese for "giant snake"), a humongous cross of sea serpent and dragon. It was a tremendous menace to sailors and the like until a sea god defeated it in a battle, took one of its eyes, hid it on a remote island temple, and cursed the monster to serve whoever should come into possession of the eye, to ensure Gokura has learned its lesson.

Gokura is over 80' long and covered in dark green scales. It can easily topple ships and destroy ports or pearl beds.

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ARTIFACT: THE EYE OF GOKURA

According to legend, this small ebony orb is actually the eye Gokura lost in a battle against a sea god. Though detached, Gokura can still see through it, but whoever possesses it has the power to mentally command the sea serpent to his will.



It does enable a limited empathic bond, though, permitting the owner to sense Gokura's desire to have its eye returned. If a hero does so, the eye grows in size, magically reattaches and Gokura swims away content, never to bother anyone again. That hero earns one benny immediately.

The Eye of Gokura's magic does not function outside of the waters surrounding Nippon.

Heroes looking for the source of impact see a massive sea serpent coiling just beneath the waves. With a successful Notice roll, they can also determine it's missing an eye.

Gokura's assault capsizes the ship after three rounds, throwing everyone aboard into the water and scattering the cargo among the slapping ocean wave.

IN THE WATER

Once the ship is overturned, the sea monster sinks beneath the waves. The pirates bring the *Torushiro* close to the wreckage. The pirates split their efforts between looting valuables and evaluating the potential value of any survivors. The player characters are singled out as potentially valuable for ransom or to sell as slaves. The pirates make it clear they will pull the wanderers from the ocean if they surrender.

Attempting to fight from the water is, at best, a losing proposition. Any firearms are likely to be useless at this point. Matchlocks simply won't light and wheellocks function only on a roll of 1 on a d6. Reloading is simply out of the question. The deck of the pirate ship is too far above the waves to allow any melee attacks either. Even if a hero has some way to attack the pirates from the

water, she cannot use two-handed weapons and is limited to the lowest of her Fighting (or Shooting) and Swimming skills.

The pirates recognize the potential monetary value of the adventurers on the slave market (exotic slaves always fetch a higher price). However, they are not foolish. Anyone brought aboard the *Torushiro* is disarmed before they are brought completely aboard. If possible, they use nonlethal attacks whenever possible to subdue any wanderers who resist if possible.

🐉 **Gokura:** See page 211.

🐉 **Pirates (20):** See page 212. Five are armed with a flintlock blunderbuss (Range 10/20/40, Damage 1-3d6), shot & powder (10).

🐉 **Masahita:** See page 212.

AVOIDING CAPTURE

It is possible some or all of the wanderers may escape capture by the pirates. It's recommended that you try to keep the group together if at all possible. Stress that they are miles from shore and if separated, it's unlikely any heroes who escape will be able to assist their captured comrades in any timely fashion.

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If you can't keep the group together, it's still possible for you to reunite the groups before the climax of the *Savage Tale*, but it will take some fancy game mastering to accomplish.

Any characters who avoid capture find themselves in fairly dire straits. They are three miles (or 2640") from shore with no rescue in sight.

The water is choppy, but not rough. Characters move at half their normal Swimming Pace, but only need to make checks every hour to avoid Fatigue. Heroes without Swimming (or those just wanting to play it safe) can grab onto a piece of wreckage to use as a crude flotation device. This provides a +2 to all Swimming rolls, but limits the adventurer's swimming Pace to only 1".

The distance to shore means it's likely that it will take between 1 and 4 hours to make the swim depending on the characters' Pace.

Once ashore, it takes another 6 hours to walk back to Edo. In the city, assuming they remember the pirate captain was one-eyed, the party can attempt Streetwise rolls (-2) to identify him as Masahita. The same roll gives them the location of his hideout on an island south of Edo Bay.

From this point, the heroes can hire a boat that night to take them to the pirate's island—at an exorbitant fee, of course! The trip to the island takes most of the night and the party arrives shortly before dawn. The boat captain puts them ashore on the western side of the island, opposite the *Torushiro* which is docked on the other side.

From there, the characters should be able to find their captured party members and coordinate the rest of their efforts.

MASAHITA'S ISLAND

Escorted by the sea serpent, Masahita and the pirates return to their hideout on a small island off the shore between Edo and Yokohama, with all the loot and captives. The pirates have a small camp on the eastern side of the island near a natural bay. On the opposite side, separated from the camp by a narrow stretch of forest and a low hill, is a makeshift holding pen for any captives.

The pirate camp is a rough ring of 10 makeshift shelters, mostly tents, each housing two or three of the crew. One of the shelters is a crudely constructed hut that serves as Masahita's dwelling where he stays alone. In the center of the ring is a large firepit that serves as the focal point for nightly drinking bouts. The pirates leave two of their number on the *Torushiro* and the rest remain on shore when they are at the island.

The pirates use dinghies from the *Torushiro* to travel between the ship and shore. There are two such boats and each can hold 8 passengers at a time.

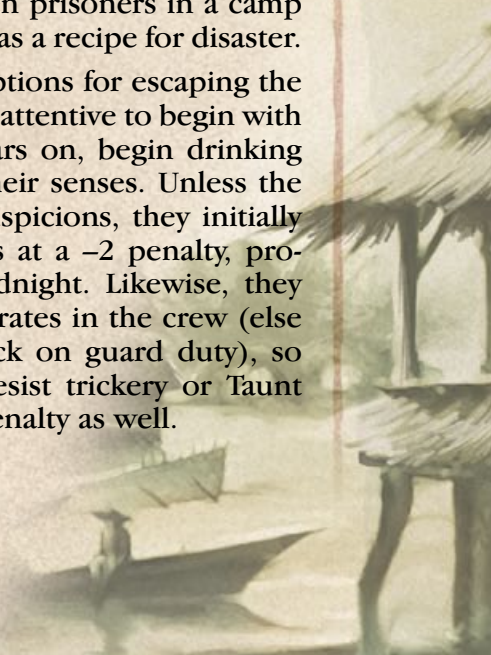
The pirates remove any valuables and any obvious weapons not already confiscated from the captives before transferring them to the holding pen. Smaller articles, such as lockpicks or spell components are overlooked and heroes may try to conceal other items—even small weapons like a knife or brass knuckles—as well. This requires winning a Stealth roll opposed by a pirate's Notice.

THE HOLDING PENS

Captured heroes are shackled and thrown together inside a pit dug at the edge of the beach on the western side of the island. The makeshift holding pen is covered by a bamboo lattice secured to the ground with a crude lock. Two pirates are detailed to guard the captives.

Male and female prisoners alike are locked in the pit. Masahita is not above "sampling the wares" himself, but he learned some time ago that having women prisoners in a camp full of drunk pirates was a recipe for disaster.

There are several options for escaping the pen. The guards are inattentive to begin with and, as the night wears on, begin drinking which further dulls their senses. Unless the party arouses their suspicions, they initially make any Notice rolls at a -2 penalty, progressing to -4 by midnight. Likewise, they aren't the brightest pirates in the crew (else they wouldn't be stuck on guard duty), so any Smarts rolls to resist trickery or Taunt attempts are at a -2 penalty as well.



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BUT THEY DIDN'T EVEN TRY...

If your wanderers don't escape the holding pen within two days, you're probably going to have to improvise a bit. At mid-morning, Masahita and a number of pirates (twice as many as there are captives) arrive to escort the party back to the Torushiro.

A two-week voyage finds them in a slave market on the island of Formosa (Taiwan). There, unless you're feeling particularly benevolent, they are likely sold off one at a time to the highest bidder.

The most likely opportunities to escape present themselves when Masahita is transferring them from the holding pen to the Torushiro and upon first arrival in Taiwan. The heroes may also be able to overwhelm the pirates during the voyage long enough to seize the Eye from Masahita and thus hold the entire ship hostage by controlling Gokuro.

made. Any Lockpicking rolls to defeat it are at +2; attempting to pick it without tools applies a -2 penalty which offsets the bonus.

The lattice grate is tied together with twine. It's relatively easy to saw through the bindings if the wanderers have any item with a sharp edge. Cutting through enough twine to escape takes an hour's effort. Doing so without attracting the guards' attention requires winning a Stealth roll opposed by the pirates' Notice (don't forget the above penalties).

Likewise, the adventurers can simply attempt to dig out of the pit around the edge of the bamboo grate. This takes three hours of work and an opposed Stealth roll, as above.

Finally, it's also possible to trick the guards into opening the gate for them. Depending on what tactics the heroes settle on, this is likely best represented by an opposed test of either the character's Smarts or Taunt versus the guards' Notice.

Once the party escapes the holding pen, they still have to overcome their guards. Fortunately, the pirate camp is far enough away that the other members of Masahita's crew are unlikely to hear the sounds of combat over their own drunken revelry.

🏴‍☠️ **Pirates (2):** See page 212. One is armed with a blunderbuss (Range 10/20/40, Damage 1-3d6), shot & powder (10).

ESCAPE!

Once they've escaped the holding pen, the wanderers are still faced with the daunting prospect of getting off the island. The *Torushiro* is moored on the opposite side of the island, but to seize the vessel, the party must sneak past a camp filled with bloodthirsty pirates to do so. And, assuming they succeed, Masahita clearly controls a terrible sea creature and it's highly unlikely he'll let them just sail away with his ship.

The heroes' best chance of success lies in seizing the item Masahita is using to control the serpent. By now, the characters have probably pieced together that his control is tied to the box he pointed at their ship during the attack. While captive aboard his ship, they had ample opportunity to observe that Masahita kept the box in a pouch tied to his waist.

If they've made their escape during the night, most of the pirates are drunk and asleep or passed out by midnight. Sneaking into the camp is a simple Stealth roll. Even if that roll is failed, the pirates don't immediately detect them. However, the pirates are now treated as "active," meaning the characters' Stealth rolls are now opposed by the pirates' Notice, with the pirates receiving a -2 penalty for their intoxicated state.

The adventurers can also attempt to dispatch the pirates one by one while they are asleep. The pirates are scattered around the camp, some in their tents and others hap-hazardly sprawled on the ground near the central firepit.

As long as the camp is not aware of their presence, the heroes automatically get "the drop" on any pirate (+4 to attack rolls and

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damage). Each time they do so, they must roll another Stealth roll to prevent alerting the other pirates in the camp.

Stealing the Eye from Masahita requires sneaking into the camp as above. Masahita keeps the pouch under his pillow while sleeping. A hero who makes a Notice roll sees an edge of it poking out from underneath the pillow. To remove the pouch without awakening him, the character must make another Stealth roll opposed by the captain's Notice (no penalty). If that roll fails or Masahita wins the contest, he awakens with a start, snatching the pouch back and shouting the alarm.

Once the pirates detect the wanderers, they gather their weapons for one round and begin attacking the next. On shore, the adventurers are safe from Gokura, so there's a small blessing at least.

🦋 **Pirates (16):** See page 212. Three are also armed with blunderbusses (Range 10/20/40, Damage 1-3d6), shot & powder (10).

🦋 **Masahita:** See page 212.

THE TORUSHIRO

As noted, two pirates stand guard on the ship. Like their crewmates, they have been imbibing, although not to the same degree. Sneaking aboard the vessel requires the heroes to win a Stealth roll opposed by the pirates' Notice, but the guards receive a -2 penalty due to the alcohol they've been drinking.

If the pirate camp is awakened by the heroes, the guards become alert (no penalty on Notice), but do not leave their post. If they are attacked and not dispatched within 3 rounds, they raise the alarm rousing the pirate camp. Likewise, if any firearms are discharged both the camp and the ship's guards immediately become active.

The pirates in the camp do come to the aid of the guards if alerted to any attack on the ship. If the heroes seem about to escape with the *Torushiro*, Masahita summons Gokura to stop them by any means necessary, assuming the party has not obtained the Eye from him by that time.

🦋 **Pirates (2):** See page 212. One is armed with a blunderbuss (Range 10/20/40, Damage 1-3d6), shot & powder (10).

AFTERMATH

The *Torushiro* can be sailed back to Edo in a single day with a bare minimum crew of 4 and at least one member with the Boating skill. Failing that, the dinghies are capable of being sailed by a single person with the Boating skill or rowed by two characters without it. This is a slow method of travel, however, and takes two days.

If the wanderers succeed in escaping with the *Torushiro*, they find pirated cargo worth £300 in the ship's hold. If they manage to dispatch the pirates in the camp, they can search it as well. There they discover a variety of coins and other small valuables worth another £150.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.



GOKURA

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 20 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 12.
- **Armor +2:** Scaly hide.
- **Bite/Batter:** Str+d10.
- **Fear -2:** Anyone seeing Gokura must make a Guts roll at -2.
- **Hardy:** Gokura does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Gargantuan:** Attackers add +4 to their Fighting or Shooting rolls when attacking Gokura due to its massive size. It has Heavy Armor, so it can only be hurt by Heavy Weapons; its own attacks count as Heavy Weapons. Add its Size to its Strength roll when crushing a target under its weight.
- **Quick:** Gokura possesses fast reflexes, able to turn in an instant and attack passing prey. It redraws action cards of 5

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or lower.

- **Size +10:** Gokura is over 80' from nose to tail.



MASAHITA

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Swimming d8

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Major, one eye), Big Mouth, , Wanted (Major), Ugly (one eye and no patch).

Edges: Brawny, First Strike, Florentine, Two-Fisted

Gear: Katana (Str+d8), kodachi (Str+d6, Parry +1), wheellock pistol (Range: 5/10/20; ROF 1; Damage: 2d6+1, AP1; 2 actions to reload).

PIRATE

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Illiterate, Mean

Edges: Dirty Fighter

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), kodachi (Str+d6, Parry +1).

BOOK DARK CROSSING

LEAD In: The wanderers encounter a drunken young lord and his entourage.

This Savage Tale works best if you split it up, running the encounter with Kazakuni and his samurai first and then allowing the heroes to learn of the haunted bridge. Their investigation then leads them back to Kazakuni and his thugs.

THE HAUNTED BRIDGE

Residents of Edo all know better than to go near the so-called "Dark Bridge" after dusk. As the tale goes, a trader caught his wife in a tryst on the bridge one evening. He confronted them and in the ensuing argument, the trader killed both the woman and her lover and dumped their bodies into the Sumida. He was caught and tried for his crimes, dying of madness in prison.

Deaths and disappearances, however, began piling up at the bridge. Occasionally, corpses of asphyxiated and drowned victims, some with other signs of physical attack, would be discovered floating under it. A few townsfolk even claimed to have been attacked by the ghastly specters of Umeka, the unfaithful wife, and Niroshi, her lover.

There is truth to the legends, but Umeka and Niroshi are not alone...

UNBRIDLED EXCESS

Kazakuni is the nephew of a provincial lord in Edo who overtly flaunts his status in his debauchery and bullying the locals. In his mid-20s, Kazakuni fancies himself a playboy and God's gift to women, holding no respect for anybody outside of his immediate family. The vast power of his protective uncle has him convinced he's untouchable by any man or law.

Hardly a day passes without Kazakuni refusing to pay for lavish meals or drinks at restaurants and taverns, making unwelcome advances at peasant girls, ordering his equally unruly samurai bodyguards to rough up any intervening person, and so on. The constables turn a blind eye to his actions, for they fear Kazakuni's uncle.

About three months ago, a drunk Kazakuni forced a young lady to revel the night with him. When her brother barged into Kazakuni's estate on an impetuous rescue attempt, the bodyguards swiftly cut him down. In the ensuing hysteria, Kazakuni accidentally killed the girl, knocking her down headfirst onto a boulder in the garden.

Once the shock wore off, one of his cronies suggested to Kazakuni that the bodies be dumped into the river under Harukage,

"The Dark Bridge." The guards wouldn't be seen, since nobody dared to wander near it at night, and everybody would just pass the corpses off as victims of the cursed ghosts, so no one's the wiser.

It was a perfect cover, which has made Kazakuni more brazen. He and his bodyguard accomplices have since secretly disposed of another half dozen or so bodies this way, mostly those of citizens foolish enough to not give in to his demands or, worse, stand up to him.

"PREPARE TO PAY FOR YOUR INSOLENCE, PIGS!"

Kazakuni and his entourage cross paths with the wanderers easily enough. The whole inebriated contingent staggers out of a tavern, flippantly laughing off yet another poor barkeep begging them to pay off their tabs. In the process, they stumble headlong into the heroes on the street.

While "exotic" heroines (i.e., those of a foreign nationality), pique Kazakuni's fascination instantly, all males are subject to immediate and total disrespect. His drunken guards slur curses loudly at the men and lunge lustily at any female characters. Any resistance is immediately met with fists or even drawn swords.

Kazakuni and his men are at a bit of a disadvantage in any fight. The amount of rice wine they consumed has sufficiently impaired them to the point they are -1 Parry. Furthermore, they receive a -2 penalty on all Fighting and Agility rolls for this encounter.

If, by chance, the samurais are winning, no one interferes. The scoundrels beat the heroes to within an inch of their lives and gloat voraciously before leaving the scene. In the more likely instance Kazakuni and his men are losing, a squad of 10 constables steps in before death or serious injuries can occur.

Fearful of Kazakuni's relatives, the constables arrest and detain all the heroes to pacify him. Kazakuni and his gang try to humiliate the heroes as they're hauled off to jail, sneaking in cheap shots after they've been restrained.

Should the wanderers flee the scene before capture, the constables do chase after the fleeing heroes, though half-heartedly. A simple Agility or Stealth roll is sufficient to lose them. (If you want to complicate the adventurers' lives, you can have this encounter make them temporarily Wanted, as per the minor version of the Hindrance.)

🗡️ **Kazakuni:** See page 215.

🗡️ **Samurai (1 per hero):** See page 216.

🗡️ **Constables (10):** See page 215.

JAILED

If the wanderers are arrested, the constables take them to the local jail for holding.

Unless the characters are unreasonably belligerent, Taeko Sakai, the captain of the district constabulary, is sympathetic toward them as they are escorted into the cells. He tells the heroes who their opposition was and relates some of Kazakuni's unsavory public incidents. He goes on to explain how his uncle's power all but immunizes him from the law.

The captain is clearly fed up with Kazakuni's antics, apologizing for locking the wanderers up when the instigator bears most—if not all—of the fault. He explains he's only trying to protect them to the extent of his power. Had the constables not stopped them, Kazakuni and his uncle would have made their time in Nippon dangerously difficult.

Despite the prison stay, however, the captain warns the party he is not entirely sure Kazakuni won't seek further retribution.

The explorers are kept in custody for minimum one night. They are kept no longer than a week, and then only if they inflicted serious wounds on Kazakuni's retinue or the arresting officers. Give the characters a chance to build a good relation with the captain, which can possibly help in a future encounter. They can also learn more witness accounts about the Dark Bridge from him or his men.

HARBORAGE, "THE DARK BRIDGE"

At some point after their initial encounter with Kazakuni, the characters hear tales of a haunted bridge on the outskirts of Edo.

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Supposedly, the bridge has been haunted for decades by a pair of specters that prey on travelers who are foolish enough to cross it after dark. If the legend itself isn't enough to draw their attention, a Jesuit missionary approaches the group and asks for their help in investigating the possible haunting.

Should the party visit Harukage, they find the stone bridge is perfectly normal during the day. Many people use it as it neighbors a main thoroughfare in Edo, so traffic can be quite heavy. After dark, on the other hand, it's completely deserted. No one has the temerity to set foot upon the long arch.

Watching the bridge during the daylight hours turns up nothing of interest. However, at night, it is a different story. On the third night after the fight, they spot two men approaching Harukage, hauling a lumpy object covered with a blanket. The men hurry onto the bridge, remove the blanket revealing a corpse, and heave the body into the water below. As soon as they toss the body over the bridge, they turn to hurry off.



With a Notice roll (at -2 due to darkness) the heroes recognize the men as two of Kazakuni's samurai! The samurai are there to get rid of Kazakuni's latest victim: the barkeep from the heroes' initial run-in. The man made the mistake of trying to collect in person and suffered for his audacity.

The samurai immediately attack if confronted. This time around, they aren't hampered by alcohol and are more competent.

If the heroes choose not to stop the samurai, they return to Kazakuni's estate and destroy all remaining evidence of the murder. Should the party attempt to bring charges against Kazakuni, they fail miserably in the face of his connections and influence.

The heroes get another opportunity one week later when two samurai are dispatched to dump the body of someone who had the gall to ban Kazakuni from a gambling den for cheating. If they fail to confront the samurai a second time, Kazakuni stops his rather indiscriminate killings and the heroes must find another way to see that justice is done.

🐉 **Samurai (2):** See page 216.

THE GHOSTLY ATTACK

Should the heroes confront the samurais, on the second round of the fight a thick fog rolls over the bridge. If the wanderers believed they solved the mystery of the unexplained deaths at the bridge, they're in for a shock as the spirits haunting the bridge appear, stirred from slumber by the arrival of the barkeep's corpse and ensuing battle.

The round after the fog rises, the heroes see a female figure meandering slowly across the bridge away from them before stopping at midpoint, or a male staring forlornly into the water by the riverbank.

Umeka appears as a woman in white kimono, part of her waist-length black hair completely veiling her face. When she gets close to the party, she flips her hair to reveal a sickly green face and an elongated tongue down to her mid-torso. Niroschi wears a powder-blue robe and appears by all means

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normal until touched, which dispels the façade instantly to show the wet, pale white, horrifically bloated visage underneath.

The pair also summons help in the form of undead minions leaping supernaturally from the foggy water onto the bridge (or shore) and joining the fray. These are the ghostly duo's past victims, water-bloated and some of whose long tongues hang eerily down to their chest. They are under Umeka and Niroshi's complete control, sharing their intense hatred for the living as well.

Anyone falling into the river must contend with dozens of submerged, grasping zombies eager to pull them under. A swimming victim must make a Strength or Swimming roll (-2) each round to escape their clutch until reaching solid ground. It takes three successful rolls (with a raise counting as an additional success); each failure causes one level of Fatigue as per the Drowning rule.

All undead, including the wraiths, flee into the river and disperse at the first break of dawn should the battle last that long.

The samurai must also make a Guts roll on the arrival of the undead. Regardless, the encounter frightens the samurai such that they offer to provide testimony against Kazakuni if the heroes agree to save them from the undead. If the wanderers agree, the two help fight to the best of their ability as well.

After the wraiths and their minions are defeated, the samurai now owe the heroes a debt of life. This is one of the greatest debts in Nipponese custom and they do not renege on the bargain. If the characters present the men's testimony to Taeko Sakai, he thanks them and immediately starts a formal investigation.

The ensuing prosecution and exposed scandals result in the exile of Kazakuni and his cohorts from Edo permanently.

🐉 **Umeka** : See page 216.

🐉 **Niroshi**: See page 216.

🐉 **Drowned Dead (1 per hero)**: See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

CONSTABLE

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Charisma: +0

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

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: Club (Str+d4).

DROWNED DEAD

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claw:** Str.
- **Fearless:** Drowned Dead are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Prodigious Leap:** Drowned Dead have a leaping Pace of 8 (from the river onto the bridge or shore, and vice versa), but only within 12 yards of the Dark Bridge.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called Shots do no extra damage; Immune to disease and poison.



KAZAKUNI

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: +1

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3)

Hindrances: Cocky, Habit: drinking (Minor), Overconfident

Edges: Connections (Uncle), Noble

Gear: Katana (Str+d8), wakasashi (Str+d6), plate corselet (+3).

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KAZAKUNI SAMURAI

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Taunt d4

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (3)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Quick

Gear: Katana (Str+d8), wakasashi (Str+d6), plate corselet (+3).

NIROSHI

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Taunt d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Drowning:** Any time Niroshi hits with a raise and is near reaching distance of the river, he holds the opponent's head under water in an attempt to drown her. The target may only attempt to break the hold on her action, which requires a successful opposed Strength roll. Failure means she suffers one level of Fatigue (unless holding her breath), plus Ghost Touch damage.
- **Ethereal:** Niroshi is immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks or truly courageous heroes. A hero can attack either ghost with her bare hand (not with weapons), by using her Guts skill in place of her Fighting skill. All modifiers associated with Fighting apply to Guts for this purpose.
- **Fear -2:** Anyone seeing this ghost must make a Guts roll at -2.
- **Fearless:** Niroshi is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Ghost Touch:** His touch is soul-chillingly cold, inflicting damage equal to his Spirit on a successful hit. The target gets no benefit from nonmagical armor.
- **Sire Minions:** Any human slain by Niroshi has a 50% chance of rising as a zombie in 1d6+1 rounds.
- **Weakness (River Submersion):** Immersing Niroshi completely in the river water causes the ghost to scream and vanish immediately for the night.
- **Wraith:** Destroying Niroshi's ghostly form

is just a temporary deterrent. The haunting resumes when their vengeful souls return in d4+1 weeks. Successful banishment or exorcism rituals are the sole permanent solution.

UMEKA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Taunt d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Umeka is immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks or truly courageous heroes. A hero can attack her with his bare hand (not with weapons), by using his Guts skill in place of his Fighting skill. All modifiers associated with Fighting apply to Guts for this purpose.
- **Fear -2:** Anyone seeing her must make a Guts roll at -2.
- **Fearless:** Umeka is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Ghost Touch:** Her touch is soul-chillingly cold, inflicting damage equal to her Spirit on a successful hit. The target gets no benefit from nonmagical armor.
- **Sire Minions:** Any human slain by Umeka has a 50% chance of rising as a zombie in 1d6+1 rounds.
- **Strangulation:** Any time Umeka hits with a raise, she strangles the target, who must make a -2 Vigor roll or suffer one level of Fatigue. The opponent may only attempt to escape on his action, which requires a successful opposed Strength roll.
- **Weakness (River Submersion):** Immersing Umeka completely in the river water causes the ghost to scream and vanish immediately for the night.
- **Wraith:** Destroying Umeka's ghostly form is just a temporary deterrent. The haunting resumes when their vengeful souls return in d4+1 weeks. Successful banishment or exorcism rituals are the sole permanent solution.

PERSIA

PERSIA lies astride the great deserts of Central Asia, between the Ottoman Empire to the west and Hindoostan to the

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east. It is one of the oldest countries in the world. Unlike many other imperial states which experienced meteoric rise then faded from history, Persia has repeatedly risen to preeminence.

Contrary to most travelers' preconceptions, the country is far from a featureless arid wasteland. Low-lying deserts in the west end at high mountain ranges which, in turn, ring the dry, interior basins where most of the population centers are located. The regions bordering on the Caspian Sea to the north are nearly Mediterranean in climate. Unfortunately, with the Ottoman Empire controlling the Tigris and Euphrates river valley, there are no major rivers located within the borders of the Persian Empire.

Although Persia is also a Musselman state, its people follow a different branch of that espoused by the Ottoman Empire. In a mirror of the factionalized Christian nations of the Old World, the two Musselman nations are currently involved in a prolonged war spurred by differences that, to an outside at least, seem minor. Presently, the Ottomans hold Isfahan, the ancient capital of Persia, but their control of the region is by no means assured.

The current ruler of Persia, Shah Abbas I, hired a pair of Englishmen soldiers to train and organize a standing army along Western lines. He has espoused the use of gunpowder and firearms as well, bringing his troops on a more even footing with those of the Ottomans. Currently, Persia is allied with Hindoostan, and with its eastern border secure, is free to pursue open hostilities with the Ottoman Musselmen.

The Portuguese have held power in the Persian Gulf for nearly 80 years, largely by virtue of the lack of any true Persian fleet to oppose them. At the beginning of the 17th century, the Persian army managed to expel them from the port of Bahrain and recapture that city's prosperous pearl trade. Persia is seeking English naval assistance against the Portuguese navy's stranglehold on several strategic islands in the Gulf.

Among foreign nations, Persians honor most their nearest neighbors. The reason is that many Persians see their nation as supe-

PERSIAN SUPERSTITIONS

When someone speaks ill of a friend or relative, you must bite the skin between your thumb and forefinger to avert misfortune for them.

Turquoise brings good luck, but turquoise that has changed color is an omen of sickness or even death.

If a traveler sees a baobab tree, he will experience good fortune on his journey.

Never greet a person in the morning before they have washed.

rior to the rest of mankind. Therefore, others approach excellence in proportion to their proximity to Persia's borders and the esteem for foreigners is lessened the farther away they originate.

The most disgraceful act one can commit in Persia is to tell a lie. Persians consider lying one of the worst sins, followed closely by owing a debt because, among other reasons, the debtor is obliged to tell lies. It is customary for Persians to deliberate weighty affairs when they're drunk. However, the master of the house makes the final approval of any conclusion the next day, when they are sober.



STING OF THE SCORPION MEN

LEAD In: While traveling through a desert region in Persia, the wanderers come across a small oasis town. On the edge of the settlement, a traveling circus has set up for the night.

BACKGROUND

Gazsi is a showman of all things unusual and exotic. He is heading to Isfahan, stopping at virtually every village along his route. While previous such journeys have been met with only minor success, Gazsi hopes his newest star attraction, a genuine scorpion-man, will win him the riches he so desires.

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The scorpion-“man” is in reality closer to being a scorpion-boy. Hunters in the desert found the strayed youngling, captured and sold it to Gazsi for a small fortune. What Gazsi does not know is that the hunters had no time to enjoy their gain before the boy’s adult relatives tracked them down for slaughter.

Now, the full grown scorpion-men are on Gazsi’s trail as well.

CIRCUS IS IN TOWN

The wanderers arrive in a small village on a trade route in late afternoon. The village is situated at one of the rare oases along the trail. The only accommodations in the small community are already full and the heroes are directed to the outskirts where trade caravans often set camp. Once there, their attention is drawn by the elaborate and colorful tents of Gazsi’s traveling show.

The crew and usual complement of performers—acrobats, snake charmers, beast tamers, and assorted human “oddities”—work hard into the evening to set up the animal cages, tents, and a big stage for next day’s performance. It is not yet open to the public, but a small crowd has massed about

THE SCORPION-BOY

The strange creature has a humanlike upper body—with the notable exception that its arms end in huge pincers—and a hard-shelled lower body resembling a giant scorpion.

The scorpion-boy is heavily chained around the neck, on both pincers, the stinger, and across its arachnid torso with padlocks, confined inside a large, completely covered cage until the show’s finale.

Meanwhile, it bangs against the iron enclosure and roars in rage occasionally. The noise has some fascinated passersby gathered around the tent in eager anticipation.

to watch the preparation. Word of Gazsi’s newest addition has preceded him and the villagers are hoping to catch a glimpse of the scorpion-man.

With a Persuasion roll or sufficient bribe (£5 or so), the heroes can convince someone on staff to give them a special preview tour—except for the tent housing the marquee star, the scorpion-man. The guide points at that tent and warns it’s strictly off-limits to all but Gazsi and the creature’s burly handlers. A guard is posted to further deter any unauthorized visitors from approaching.

GAZSI

Gazsi can be seen lecturing different crowds about his marvelous creature and its lethality with a performance worthy of any accomplished actor. The dark brown-skinned ringmaster is boisterous and talkative, a natural showman. He is beaming with pride and obviously cannot wait to show the acquisition off tomorrow on the big stage.

The wanderers can try to have a private conversation with him for information regarding the creature on a Persuasion roll (though they probably won’t get much beyond the small fortune he spent to pay for it). He refuses all requests to cancel or even postpone the show, of course, and scoffs at the notion of a possible encounter with the creature’s kin, but he can be persuaded to post additional guards for security, just in case.

CURTAIN TIME?

Shortly after dusk, the crowd departs for home and the evening meal. Once the camp has begun to settle down, the scorpion-men strike. The arachnids have tracked Gazsi’s caravan to the village and their keen hearing guided them to the captured youngling’s loud thrashing inside the cage.

Numerous holes suddenly burst in the ground and from each emerges a scorpion-man, with one more following every round thereafter until all have surfaced. The performers immediately panic and attempt to flee their attackers, screaming and shouting as they do so. As long as the adventurers

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are camped nearby—or even still at Gazsi's show—they immediately notice the commotion and can take action.

In Gazsi's camp, the frenzied arachnids scuttle toward the tent holding the scorpion-boy's cage, but don't hesitate to cause mayhem along the way if presented the opportunity. The creatures attack any hero or caravan member within 5" of them; otherwise, they move toward the tent housing the scorpion-boy's cage. Feel free to scatter as many performers and laborers about the battlefield as you'd like to complicate the wanderers' lives.

Any scorpion-man reaching the tent destroys the shackles and liberates the young captive in 1d6+1 rounds. Gazsi is also at that tent as well, but uses the time to escape if he makes his Guts check. Otherwise, he's frozen in terror until the creatures turn their focus on him.

Even after they free the youngling, the monsters continue the wanton destruction for another 10 rounds before they're satisfied enough to depart through the tunnels (or burrow new ones) for their nest in the desert mountains.

🐞 **Laborers:** See below.

🐞 **Gazsi:** See below.

🐞 **Scorpion-Men (2, plus 1 per hero):** See below.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for any additional friends or foes the heroes encounter during the course of this Savage Tale.

GAZSI

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Taunt d8

Charisma: +2

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

Hindrances: Greedy (minor)

Edges: Charismatic

Gear: Knife (Str +d4).

RUMOR

"The Chinese merchants who traded with me last month were not happy about their Emperor's deteriorating health. Worse, his sons are weak leaders and they fear this will leave the throne open to an opportunistic usurper."

This rumor leads to the **Savage Tale: Reign of the Green Snake**, on page 187.

LABORER

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (one skill), Notice d6

Charisma: 0

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

Hindrances & Edges:

Gear: Various hand tools (Str +d4).

SCORPION-MAN

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

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous hide.
- **Acute Hearing:** The scorpion-men's exceptional hearing enables them to locate even soft breathing some 150' away, adding +4 to their Notice roll with hearing.
- **Burrow (6"):** Scorpion-men can tunnel into and out of the ground. They may cover the hole behind them on soft ground (like mud or sand).
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing a scorpion-man must make a Guts roll.
- **Frenzy:** Scorpion-men can make two attacks each round at a -2 penalty.
- **Pincers/Sting:** Str+d8 damage.
- **Poison:** The toxin from the scorpion-man's sting can weaken the target if the sting causes at least a Shaken result. The victim must make a Vigor roll or lose one die type from her Strength and Vigor (to

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minimum d4). The victim regains one die type per week of rest.

- **Size +1:** Scorpion-men are over 7' in length.
- **Squeeze:** On a raise on an attack by its pincers, a scorpion-man can hold a target, squeezing for an automatic Str+d6 each round thereafter. The opponent may only attempt to escape on his action, by winning an opposed test of Strength.

ISFAHAN

Located almost exactly midway between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, Isfahan sits astride the intersection of the major north-south and east-west trade routes through Persia. It became the capital of Persia in 1598 after the shah decided the older capitals of Tabriz and Qazvin were too close to the borders of the Ottoman Empire.

Situated on the banks of the Zayandeh River, Isfahan is an oasis city. It is surrounded by a narrow fertile plain which follows the course of the river. Although it sits over a mile above sea level, its climate—while dry—is relatively mild. The Zayandeh sees little use as a commercial route, however, as it empties into a salt marsh about 40 miles southeast of the city.

Isfahan is already home to nearly 200,000 citizens and it grows in size nearly every day with an influx of merchants and other immigrants, drawn by the newfound importance of the city. There is a saying in Persia that “Isfahan is half the world,” and the Shah seems intent on living up to that boast. He has opened the city to both English and Dutch traders, making it an international commercial center.

The city is host to the Naqsh-e Jahan Square, what will be, when construction is complete, likely the largest square in the world. Bordered to the west by the Ali Qapu palace and the east and south by two vast mosques, which are still under construction, the square opens to the north onto the Isfahan bazaar, rivaling even Baghdad's famous marketplace.

BLOOD BIDS

LEAD In: The party is in Isfahan and wandering through the lively, packed bazaar during the day, when their attention is drawn by an outburst of curse words—in English!

BIZARRE BEHAVIOR

They turn just in time to see, just a few booths away, a middle-aged Englishman lunging lividly across at a Persian vendor behind a table stacked with jewelry. Both men tumble to the ground and a scuffle ensues.

Two Persian bystanders immediately rush over to help the vendor in the fight, ganging up on the Englishman and laying in some stiff shots, which may prompt the heroes to intervene. Regardless, city guards arrive six rounds later to stop the fighting and question all parties involved.

❧ **Fordham Smythe:** Use the Citizen stats on page 69.

❧ **Thugs (3):** See page 223.

❧ **City Guards (2 per hero):** See page 223.

MISSING PERSONS

The Englishman, who identifies himself as Fordham Smythe, accuses his foe of kidnapping his wife and daughter for bids in a secret slave auction. The ladies were traveling with the trader Smythe through the city when a group of masked men forced themselves into their rooms two nights ago. In the time since, Smythe did enough legwork to learn the fate awaiting the women.

He bribed a street urchin who pointed him to the bazaar for potential leads. He had wandered by a tapestry stand and, solely through chance, noticed the same scimitar tattoo as one of the kidnappers on the vendor, at the same spot on the neck, causing an incensed Fordham to attack the man.

The vendor, Saeed, naturally denies the deed. A Notice roll (–2) reveals to the listener that it is not likely the truth. Both bystanders, whom Fordham suspects are really Saeed's cohorts, claim to be the vendor's regular

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patrons and back up Saeed's story. Unfortunately, the guards do not speak English, so unless a translator is present, they get only the Persian side of the story. Saeed demands that Fordham be imprisoned and tried for his lies and assault.

The guards comply unless the characters make a Persuasion roll, or, failing that, offer a bribe of at least £25. Otherwise, Fordham is thrown into a prison for 7 days before he's executed for attacking a Persian citizen and committing the sin of lying.

If he is spared from prison, Fordham thanks the wanderers and implores them to help him locate and rescue the missing women, offering what little funds he has as reward (£100). On the other hand, if Fordham is incarcerated, the heroes have one week to produce the evidence necessary to save him from the executioner's axe.

FINDING THE LOCATION

Saeed is indeed guilty, as are the two "customers." They are all part of a secret auction popular among the filthy rich. As someone scouting for potential slaves and dispatched to abduct them later, Saeed and his men work for Feliz-Kazam, the man responsible for staging these auctions.

Once a month, some of the extremely affluent converge in Isfahan from as far away as Egypt, Russia, and Nippon for a chance to bid for slaves in this auction. The lot usually consists of natives, but the occasional European is considered rare and thus fetches a higher price.

The adventurers can discover that the coming auction is scheduled for the third night from now with a successful Streetwise roll (-2). A raise also provides the name of a Russian, Valentin Yokov, as a new invitee to the auction.

Note that if the wanderers try to intimidate or threaten a Persian openly or in the presence of any Persian bystanders, the locals immediately summon city watch.

TALKING TO SAEED

If the party wants to question Saeed, they must get him alone to do so safely. Attempting to interrogate him in public leads quickly to cries of assault—backed up by 'testimony' from Amir and Bashir, his cohorts from the earlier brawl.

The vendor typically works the jewelry stand from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon. He then returns to his home or makes a stop at a tavern for a few hours to have coffee. Amir and Bashir loiter about the bazaar for most of the day, and frequently make the round of nearby bars as well.

All three expect retributions if Fordham is not in prison, so Stealth rolls to follow them are made at -2. If the Englishman was arrested, however, there is no penalty. Failure means the heroes lose them for that day and cannot try again until the next day.

Should they succeed in isolating either Saeed or one of his assistants, the men talk only if the characters win an opposed roll of Intimidation opposed by the target's Spirit. Even then, only Saeed knows the next auction is being held that night at the southern estate of Feliz-Kazam, a wealthy Persian merchant. Amir and Bashir know only the date—and where to find Saeed.

🗡️ **Amir, Bashir, and Saeed:** Use the stats for Thugs, on page 223.

VALENTIN YOKOV

Another way the party can determine the location of the auction is to intercept Yokov, who also knows the location. A successful Streetwise roll uncovers the fact that the Russian should reach Isfahan later that same evening via the northern trade route.

Although Isfahan is a trade center, boisterous Russian boyars tend to be a little unusual in the city, thus a hero staking out the routes into Isfahan can spot him and his entourage quite easily. Yokov approaches the city along the main northern road with a small entourage of guards in tow shortly after dark. Not surprisingly, the Russian is not particularly forthcoming with details on the auction.

THE PATH OF KANE

A clever group may come up with a ruse to trick Yokov into revealing the location of the auction to them. Pretending to be other attendees who just happen to be traveling the same direction or a similar plan may be successful. The characters must win an opposed test of Smarts or Persuasion vs. Smarts, whichever is most appropriate. If they succeed, the heroes' ploy works and the Russian leads them to the auction; however, if they fail, Yokov sees through their scheme and orders his guards to attack.

The wanderers may also choose a more direct route and try to coerce the information from him. In that case, their best chance to intercept him is outside the city; accosting him within Isfahan is certain to draw the attention of the city guard.

If the encounter occurs outside the city, Yokov's thugs immediately act to defend him as soon as the party appears belligerent. Yokov himself does not enter the fray, but his men fight until more than two-thirds of their number are defeated and then flee into the surrounding wilderness, leaving Yokov to fend for himself. Once his guards flee, Yokov becomes quite cooperative, telling the heroes the auction is being held at the southern estate of Feliz-Kazam at midnight. He has a hand-written invitation that he was to present to gain entrance.

🐉 **Valentin Yokov:** See page 223.

🐉 **Thugs (one per hero):** See page 223. Yokov's guards are armed with long sword (Str+d8), matchlock musket (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d8), and shot & powder (10) instead of a club.

THE MANOR OF FELIZ-KAZAM

Ostensibly a wealthy merchant amassing a huge fortune through precious metals and jewelry, Feliz-Kazam has, for most purposes, retired from the life of a trader. The only thing he deals in now is flesh, and that mainly for the feeling of power selling another human gives him. He is a tall, thin man with olive-colored skin, who might have been considered handsome if not for the blatant arrogance and disdain that are so plainly evidenced in his features.

Feliz-Kazam is holding the auction at his southern estate, one of the four he owns in Isfahan. The manor has three stories. The first two floors contain the usual assortment of kitchen, dining chamber, and living quarters for servants, though much more opulent than a typical Persian abode. The top floor is Feliz-Kazam's bedroom and private study. The study is locked (Lockpicking roll at -2 to defeat).

All 20 captives for the night's auction are shackled and chained in a basement pen (10"x10"), watched over by four guards. The shackles are individually secured by padlocks which can be opened either by keys carried on the guards or by a Lockpicking roll.

Two guards man the front gates and allow only guests with written invitations inside. Anyone attempting to force his way past is immediately attacked, with the guards loudly summoning reinforcements from inside. Five rounds after combat begins, six more guards arrive to help defend the manor.

Climbing the surrounding wall is not particularly difficult. A simple Climbing roll is sufficient to defeat it. However, doing so without attracting attention requires winning a Stealth roll opposed by the guards' Notice. Failure on the Stealth roll results in the alarm being raised as above.

🐉 **Guards:** Use the City Guard stats, on page 223.

GOING ONCE... TWICE... SOLD!

The much-anticipated auction begins promptly at midnight. No visitor is permitted past the front gate and six armed guards without an invitation. Bidders arrive about one hour prior and are escorted individually by two guards each to the pen for a preview of the lot. Heroes gaining access to the auction immediately recognize Mrs. Smythe and her teenage daughter as they are the only European women in the lot.

A large stage is erected for the actual proceeding, with ample seating to accommodate all invited parties. Accompanied by four guards on stage, Feliz-Kazam himself arbitrates the bids. The slaves are led from the pen one or two at a time by a pair of guards.

CATHAY AND THE ORIENT

Saeed is here as well, if he has not been previously dealt with, and exposes the heroes should he spot any of them.

The easiest way to rescue the women is to simply win the bids for them in the auction. Feel free to adlib the event, but the high bid for Mrs. Smythe reaches £75 and her daughter £125. Once the bill of sale is paid, the heroes are free to leave the auction without any interference. Any attempt to skirt the payment results in Feliz-Kazam's guards intervening and even attacking if the wanderers attempt to liberate the captives before settling their debt.

Less subtle methods, such as confronting Feliz-Kazam or outright violence, cause his guards to intervene. There are six guards present at the auction and another six that arrive three rounds into the fight from elsewhere on the grounds. Feliz-Kazam and his men fight to the death.

As soon as a fight breaks out, the other bidders and their respective contingents immediately begin fleeing the manor grounds and do not become involved with the battle. Should the heroes assault the bidders, personal bodyguards (2 per bidder) intervene.

🐉 **Feliz-Kazam:** See below.

🐉 **Guards (12):** See below.

🐉 **Bodyguards:** See below.

AFTERMATH

If a battle breaks out on the grounds of Feliz-Kazam's manor, a sizeable contingent of city guards arrives to quell the disturbance after 5 minutes. If the party is still on the scene at that time, they are taken into custody. Initially, they are charged with any number of crimes, but after a day of investigation, the heroes are released. Any surviving members of Feliz-Kazam's organization are arrested. Although slavery is an accepted practice in Persia, gathering captives from inside the borders is punishable by death.

Assuming the wanderers succeeded in rescuing his family, Smythe is true to his word and offers them £100. Of course, if they resorted to simply buying the women's freedom, Greedy or mercenary characters are sure to note this results in a net loss of £100.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Following are the statistics for the NPCs the heroes encounter during this Savage Tale.

CITY GUARDS

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

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

Charisma: +0

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Edges & Hindrances: —

Gear: Scimitar (Str+d6), chain hauberk (+2).



FELIZ-KAZAM

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Command, Filthy Rich, Hold the Line

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), wheellock pistol (5/10/20, 3d6+1 damage, AP 1, RoF 1, Shots 1—overcharged), shot & powder (10)

VALENTIN VOROV

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6

Charisma: +2/+0

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

Hindrances: Jingoistic (Minor), Yellow

Edges: Charismatic, Filthy Rich

Gear: Pistol (5/10/20, 2d6+1 damage, Shots 1, RoF 1, AP1), shot & powder (6)

THE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: -2

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

Hindrances: Illiterate, Mean

Edges: —

Gear: Club (Str+d4).

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