

Issue Four | Spring 1995

Friends in Foreign Parts

Strange goings-on in Mu'ugalavyá

The emphasis in this adventure is on detective work rather than violence. It will be helpful if the party includes some people of high status so that they are not totally at the mercy of the authorities. One of the characters should belong to the Red Star clan, which is one of those clans that occur in both Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavýá.

Setting the scene

It is the year 2372 AS. The player-characters are staying at the Red Star clanhouse in Kheiris. (The reason for their visit to Mu'ugalavýáni is not important—whatever fits in with the campaign.) The Red Star clan patriarch is **Hekkunish Matir**, whose Tsolyáni is quite good. Many of the other clan members have a smattering of Tsolyáni also, so communication is not a problem.

Kheiris has two off-shore lighthouses. Most of the coast is dangerously rocky with high cliffs, but there is at least one good sheltered cove (see below).

At this time of year the weather is blustery, with high humidity and warm rains blown in off the sea. Occasionally hurricanes bring cooler rain, but this is naturally not very welcome since it puts a halt to all shipping and often costs lives owing to flooding, storm damage, and so forth.

The ex-pats

There is a very substantial Tsolyáni population in the foreigners' quarter of Kheiris, accounting for close to 5% of the overall population of the whole city. That is about 20,000 people. Many fled here from southern Tsolyánu when Dchich'üne came to power four years ago. Karakan-worshipping clans are strongly represented, including many Vrayani, with some clans aligned to Hnalla and Dlamelish also. There is even a Black Y clanhouse here, licenced to operate only within the foreign community.

When they first arrived, the most important refugees were seized by the Mu'ugalavýáni, either as bargaining chips with the Tsolyáni or as a source of military intelligence. The rest were left to settle. Although so many of the Tsolyáni here are disaffected exiles, the large Tsolyáni population in the "Blue District" has had a positive effect on trade with Tsolyánu.

Getting involved

The player-characters have been in Kheiris for about a week when Hekkunish asks them to go up to the home of **Ssiriei hiFushmangar**. Ssiriei is a Red Star clan-member of Tsolyáni extraction who lives alone in a villa on the cliff-tops. Hekkunish explains that she has apparently arrived home unexpectedly after a trip abroad and he just wants to see if there's anything she needs. Since the protagonists are Tsolyáni themselves (and presumably include at least one Red Star member), it seems appropriate that they go to look in on her.

A damsel in distress

The characters arrive at the villa in the middle of the morning to find Ssiriei and her maid, Hishtlai, quite distraught. When she has calmed down, Ssiriei manages to tell them the whole story. She arrived home last night, several weeks earlier than expected, and was greeted at the door of her own house by a stranger—a rather rough looking Mu'ugalavýáni who she thinks might have been a sailor. Along with two other men (one of them possibly a local Tsolyáni) he seized Ssiriei and Hishtlai and bundled them up in the cellar. Ssiriei managed to break a bottle and cut her bonds, but by that time the house was deserted. Four servants were looking after the house in Ssiriei's absence: Korchek hiYalida the major-domo, Ransr , hiEshmazun the cook, and two house-slaves called Basura and Chaktesh. They are all missing. Nothing has apparently been stolen except the contents of a display box of antique coins—only five coins, worth no more than 50 kaitars or maybe 100 kaitars to a dedicated collector.

Looking around

Ssiriei is happy for the characters to stay and investigate the mystery if they want to. A thorough search of the house confirms that only the antique coins are missing. It seems that someone has made an inventory of the cellar, which contains many fine bottles from the collection of Ssiriei's late father. Ssiriei herself rarely drinks wine.

There is a well in back of the villa. If the characters take a look they will discover the dead body of old Korchek the major-domo, one of the four missing servants. He has been dead for a couple of weeks.

The characters might also reconnoitre along the cliffs. If so, they will soon come across a sheltered cove with a stretch of sandy beach at the rear of it.

When the characters return from taking a look around they will find that several militiamen have arrived on the scene, having been fetched from the city by Hishtlai the maid. These men are commanded by **Lieutenant Atvallish Gishko** of the Scarlet Eye. Atvallish will not appreciate anyone withholding evidence. If they get too obstructive he will hand them over to **Captain Hautmekkish Hri'ar** of the Company of Mourners in Sable, the Mu'ugalavýáni equivalent of the Omnipotent Azure Legion.

The ship's company

The next day a Tsolyáni ship arrives in Kheiris out of Jakállá. Many of the crew are of the Red Star clan, and they therefore come to stay at the clanhouse. This group includes the ship's owner, **Dengetl hiRishyai** and his Aridani captain **Terukai hiShadika**. Others take chumetl here and then are obviously bound for other lodgings. There is much news from home:

The Marotlan championship was won by the team of the Clan of the Artificers of Iron. It was quite an upset, as the heavy betting was on the Legion of the Searing Flame team. Varchu hiCharken apparently leaped high over a body-block, rolled over the attacker's back, passed to his brother Ga'intor, who scored with a flying leap in the closing moments of the game.

The rice harvest was rather poor around the south west this year.

Two officials of the Omnipotent Azure Legion are rumoured to have been arrested after an Omnipotent Azure Legion internal affairs investigation at the Palace of the Realm in Pala Jakállá. Some people are saying they were secretly in collusion with pro-Mirusiya insurgents.

Talk around Jakállá is that the political agitator Chanaq hiVriddi has somehow escaped from Torunal Island, where he's been held prisoner for thirty-two years. "Some people claim that Chanaq is a wizard who induced a demon to spirit him away." This is the opinion of one of the lower-clan sailors. Dengetl is of more practical cast: "It doesn't seem the authorities agree—they had Imperial troops on the streets looking for him within three hours, and the Omnipotent Azure Legion informer network didn't get any peace for the day or so before we shipped out."

The famous Bý Sü gladiator, Chamor hiDogeng of the Red Flower Clan, recently arrived in Jakállá. At the age of 29 he is undefeated in thirty-one duels. (He has also won virtually all of his innumerable unnamed "friendly" bouts.) The talk is that he will compete in two duels in Jakállá during next year's season and then retire. He has been advised by his sponsor's astrologer that thirty-three wins will be well aspected, that being the number of Chegarra's aspects.

Eavesdropping on secrets

As Dengetl is seeing off his comrades, most of whom are going to clanhouses or hostels in the Blue District, he pauses to talk to one fellow. This is Jankoi hiSengireth of the Open Hand Clan, the ship's quartermaster. One of the player-characters happens to be returning from the lavatory at this point and may overhear a snatch of conversation:

Dengetl: "I'm going to need more storage space, Jankoi."

Quartermaster: "I could clear a little space in the hold if—"

Dengetl: "Ships, man! I need more ships."

Quartermaster: "I could talk to Fenul hiNakome..."

Dengetl nods.

Quartermaster: "...He'd want more than a payoff."

Dengetl: "No. I don't need any partners."

Quartermaster: "You can't deal with a man like Fenul that way sir."

Dengetl: "Set up a meeting. Tell me when it's arranged. And, Jankoi—keep quiet about all this. Stay off the drink."

The root of the matter

Fenul hiNakome, with the co-operation of **Tsumikel Tarket** of the Hanging Rug Clan, was planning to smuggle **Chanaq hiVriddi** ashore. The plan was to land him by night in the cove near Ssiriei's villa and to take advantage of her willingness to let him lie low in the villa until he could be conveyed inland to a safer location such as Ch'ochi.

Three of Ssiriei's servants (the cook and the two slaves) accepted a bribe. Korchek the major-domo would not, so Tsumikel's henchmen murdered him and threw his body in the well.

Fenul and Tsumikel had left men at Ssiriei's villa to await Chanaq's arrival. Now that Ssiriei has returned the plan has had to be changed. Fenul and Tsumikel cannot alert Chanaq's ship, which is due in about ten days' time. Their new plan relies on Tsumikel's son Senyatokoi managing to lure Ssiriei away from the villa on as many nights as possible. In that way she hopefully won't be in when the group escorting Chenaq arrive. The following morning they will take the risk of moving Chanaq to Fenul's townhouse hidden in a wine-barrel.

Asking questions

There are three principal clues the characters might follow up: the missing servants, the stolen coins, or the rough-looking Mu'ugalaváni sailor. It should not be long before they think to take a look around the Blue District. Make sure that you are fully conversant with the plot so that you can respond to whatever the players decide to do.

The following time-line is a rough guide, showing the likely sequence of events at each major location.

The Villa

Day 1: The player-characters find Ssiriei and her maid just after they've got free of their bonds.

Day 2: When the characters arrive, Ssiriei is about to go into town with Senyatokoi.

Days 3-9: Often there's no-one at home as Ssiriei is by now being kept busy by Senyatokoi.

Day 10: The ship carrying Chanaq hiVriddi arrives in the cove under cover of darkness.

Fenul's townhouse

(On any visit here, there is a small chance of seeing the missing cook sneaking in or out.)

Day 2-3: The characters see a man with tattoos leaving the place. This is Chuvunish.

Day 4-9: If they visit in the early morning, the characters see large wine barrels being delivered to the house.

Days 4-9: On the third visit to this location, perceptive characters might spot two dodgy characters lurking nearby whom they also noticed on a previous visit. It should be apparent that these two are keeping the townhouse under observation.

Margulan hiFarom's Numismatic Stall in the Blue District

Day 2 onwards: The stolen coins give a possible lead to the Hostel of the Two Towers, the dive where the missing house slaves are lying low.

The Hostel of the Two Towers

Day 2 onwards: If the house-slaves don't manage to give the player-characters the slip, they'll reveal that the cook is at Fenul's place. They don't know much more than that.

Tsumiyel's clanhouse

Day 2-5: The protagonists could spot Senyatokoi. (Check to see if they remember having seen him previously at Ssiriei's villa).

Day 6-9: Some very shady-looking types emerge from the clanhouse courtyard after a brief exchange with Tsumiyel. If followed, they lead the protagonists to Chuvunish.

General locations within the Foreigner's Quarter

Anytime: Fenul's men are spotted looking for the missing house slaves.

Anytime: The protagonists discover that Fenul owns no ships, but is the middleman for deals with Tsumiyel.

Senyatokoi's townhouse

Day 3 onwards: Ssiriei will often be found here as she becomes increasingly infatuated with Senyatokoi.

Dramatis personae

Fenul hiNakome left Tsolyáni thirty-one years ago, following the Vriddi rebellion. Now quite old but still alert, he keeps pretty much to himself in his heavily guarded townhouse. Formerly he was a sort of godfather to the older-established Tsolyáni community, but his influence was eroded by the large influx of political refugees four years ago. There is some circumstantial evidence that Fenul helped the Mu'ugalavýáni authorities in rounding up some of the anti Dchich'üne ring-leaders.

Fenul has recently been receiving daily shipments of large wine-barrels, which arrive in a cart just after the gates of the Foreigners' Quarter are opened at sunrise.

The spies. Fenul's townhouse is being watched by two scruffy types who look like labourers. These are actually Kazhurin hiTalu and Yodekkan hiMaksoi, who work as informers for the Omnipotent Azure Legion. They have heard of Chanaq's escape back in Tsolyánu and are keeping an eye on Fenul because of his Vriddi connections.

Tsumiyel Tarket is a Tsolyáni ex-patriate who bought himself full Mu'ugalavýáni citizenship in a lower middle class trading clan (Hanging Rug) and now lives at its clanhouse. Most of his employees are native Mu'ugalavýáni of very low clans.

Tsumiyel deals in various commodities, which he ships mostly to Tsolyánu and Livyánu. He has made a lot of money, some of it by slaving. He escapes full opprobrium from his clan for this by doing his business entirely through intermediaries in the Foreigners' Quarter. It is rumoured that he's not above press-ganging low-class foreign labourers for his slave vessels.

Tsumiyel's only son is the handsome Senyatokoi. His chief henchman is Chuvunish of Chi'i Mu'ugha.

Senyatokoi Tarket's Tsumiyel's only son, 24 years old and very handsome. He usually has nothing to do with his father's business—apart from spending the profits on wine, feasting and dog fights. Just after Ssiriei's return, however, he strikes up a friendship with her and soon the two are constant companions.

Senyatokoi has even gone to the trouble of having a private townhouse decorated in Tsolyáni style for Ssiriei's comfort. (This place was in fact rented by Tsumiyel and furnished at considerable expense the very day after Ssiriei's sudden return to Mu'ugalavýá.) His aim is to keep her in town with him so that she will be absent from her villa when Chanaq hiVriddi arrives.

Chuvunish of Chi'i Mu'ugha's Tsumikel's chief henchman, a former sailor who has a Livyáni-style tattoo on his arm. Chuvunish belongs to a very low clan, and even they pretend otherwise. He is not a nice fellow. This is the "rough-looking Mu'ugalavýáni" that Ssiriei was greeted by on her unexpected return home.

Ssiriei hiFushmangar. A wealthy young Aridani of the Red Star clan who lives in seclusion at her villa overlooking the sea, some way along the coastal cliffs outside the city. In her mid twenties, she is not outstandingly attractive. Ssiriei is the only daughter of the late Tekkunel hiFushmangar, a former administrator in Jakállá, who fled to exile here after being implicated in the artificial grain shortage of 2349 AS. She was born on the ship after her father's departure from Tsolyánu.

Ssiriei is a scholar specialising in ancient Tsaqw texts. Having become interested in certain documents reputed to be stored at the Monastery of the Tempered Blade, in the city of Lnoris on the island of Vra, she took ship for there eight weeks ago. Anticipating a stay of at least a month at the monastery, she told her servants she would be back in about three months. However, when she got to Vra, she quickly found that the documents were not what she'd hoped for. Immediately taking ship back to Kheiris, she therefore returned home seven weeks early and seemingly surprised some robbers in the act of burgling her home.

Once news has spread concerning Ssiriei's ordeal, she is visited by Senyatokoi Tarket, ostensibly to discuss finding a new major-domo. (This is odd because Senyatokoi is a spoiled playboy and normally doesn't have anything to do with anything resembling work.) A romance soon develops.

Ransr, hiEshmazun was Ssiriei's cook. A fat jaundiced looking man, full of self-interest—though at least he has the dignity to be slightly ashamed of himself for it. He is lying low at Fenul's townhouse.

Basura and **Chaktesh**, Ssiriei's missing house-slaves, are sleeping rough in the Blue District. They are worried because they think Fenul or Tsumiyel might decide to silence them. Basura helped herself to a handful of antique coins when Chuvunish of Chi'i Mu'ugha wasn't watching. Now she's hoping to get some money for these, as she and Chaktash don't dare try to collect the rest of their promised payoff. (When she sells them to a collector in the Blue District it might give the player-characters the chance of a lead.)

Chanaq hiVriddi is a one-time hothead whose ardour has been somewhat cooled by thirty years in an Imperial prison. Chanaq remains dedicated to the Vriddi cause, but is mellow and more introspective than he was in his youth. Also he is still a little bewildered by the sudden turn in events following his escape, and is consequently more inclined than he might otherwise be to go along with the plans of others.

Contrary to widespread belief, Chanaq is not a wizard. That rumour only arose because he has managed to slip so miraculously through the Imperial security net on several occasions in the past.

Dengetl hiRishyai's a Jakállan member of the Red Star clan, owner of the *Spear of the Sea*. Dengetl has nothing to do with the scheme to bring Chanaq hiVriddi into the country. He just wants to take advantage of rice shortages in southern Tsolyánu, and is therefore keen to hire ships for carrying the extra cargo. He's trying to do a deal with Fenul, who in fact owns no ships but acts as middleman for Tsumiyel. (This fact can be established by enquiry at the harbour office.)

Terukai hiShadika. A member of the Blazoned Sail clan, but staying at the Red Star clanhouse rather than in a hostelry by reason of her high status as ship's captain. She's not really interested in anything that happens on dry land; her job is to see to the ship.

Following Terukai will at least give the characters a taste of Mu'ugalavýáni thoroughness. They see soldiers of the Second Palace insist on searching the ship's cargo and then place it under sealed guard until unloading, which is supervised by dock militia. This is standard procedure for any incoming vessel.

Author's notes

This scenario was inspired a Dashedel Hammett short story. Like *Just off the Boat* it was originally set in my own campaign, where Dchich'üne was soon replaced as Emperor, but can as easily fit into the official Tékumel timeline.

These "common knowledge" biographies can be photocopied and given to the players for reference after they've met each character.

Fenul hiNakome A bigwig in the Blue District, the Tsolyáni area of the Foreigners' Quarter. Of an older generation than the recent influx of political refugees and their families. He lives in a red-doored townhouse on the northern fringe of the Foreigners' Quarter. He is not now very active in business, but his name is still spoken with awe by the older residents of Blue District. It seems he is still a force to be reckoned with.

Tsumiyel Tarket Originally of the Black Hood Clan. A Tsolyáni who came here 25 years ago and bought himself full Mu'ugalavýáni citizenship in a medium-low trading clan (Hanging Rug). He now lives at the clanhouse and carries on a kind of double life: respectability within Mu'ugalavýáni society, extortion and slaving among the foreigners here. He escapes opprobrium from his clan for this by doing his business entirely through intermediaries in the Foreigners' Quarter. (One rumour is that he's not above pressganging low-class foreign labourers for his slave vessels.) Tsumiyel deals in various commodities, which he ships primarily to Tsolyánu and Livyánu. He has a number of cut-throat types working for him—mostly Mu'ugalavýáni of very low clans. Tsumiyel's only son is the handsome Senyatokoi. His chief henchman is Chuvunish of Chi'i Mu'ugha.

Chuvunish of Chi'i Mu'ugha Tsumikel's right-hand-man, a former sailor who has a Livyáni-style tattoo on his arm. Chuvunish belongs to a very low clan, and even they pretend otherwise. Not a nice chap.

Senyatokoi Tarket Tsumiyel's only son. 24 years old and very good-looking. His mother was half-Livyáni and half-Mu'ugalavýáni, so he has rather mixed parentage. Although he speaks his father's native tongue, it is with a strong Kheiris accent; and both father and son are thoroughly Mu'ugalavýáni in their dress. Senyatokoi seems to tend towards the Tsolyáni side in his disposition, however—indeed, he represents the very Tsolyáni stereotype of the dissolute young roustabout. He usually has nothing to do with his father's business.

Ssiriei hiFushmangar A Tsolyáni member of the Red Star clan. In her mid-20s, an absent-minded scholar. Not terribly beautiful, though pretty enough in a sea of Mu'ugalavýáni faces. She speaks perfect unaccented Tsolyáni and dresses in Jakállan style, unaware that the revealing style is unflattering to her rather out-of-condition figure. She was born on the ship after her father's departure from Tsolyánu. Rich and of high lineage, she keeps pretty much to herself in her villa atop the cliffs outside town.

Ransrú hiEshmazun, Basura and **Chaktesh** Respectively, Ssiriei's missing cook and house-slaves. Ransrú was already in employment at the villa when Ssiriei's father died five years ago, but both the slaves were acquired since then.

Dengetl hiRishyai A Jakállan member of the Red Star clan. Owner of the *Spear of the Sea*. About 43 years old and an example of another common Tsolyáni type: the serious-minded merchant adventurer.

Terukai hiShadika An Aridani in her 30s, a handsome rather than openly beautiful woman. She does not belong to the Red Star clan, but is staying at the clanhouse (rather than at a hostel like most of the ship's company) by reason of her status as captain. Seemingly not much interested in anything that happens anywhere other than on board her ship.

Lt. Atvallish Gishko An investigating officer in the Scarlet Eye, the police overseeing arm of the Second Palace. In his late 20s, gruff but reasonably affable for a Mu'ugalavýáni official. Having lived most of his life in Kheiris, he has acquired a good grasp of Tsolyáni.

Capt. Hautmekkish Hri'ar The representative in Kheiris of the Company of Mourners in Sable, Counter-intelligence & State Security wing. A thin-lipped, hooded-eyed man whose manner brooks no impertinence. He is quick to remind any foreigner that in this country murder is a criminal, not a civil, offence. Violence is often treated as a crime against the state, and Hautmekkish has a reputation for pushing the full weight of the law against offenders—particularly Tsolyáni, for whom he seems to have a special distaste.

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