

Carved in Stone

Adventure Module



Carved in Stone

Written by
Matthias Janssen

Playtesters
Julia Fasting
Andrea Guerntke
Hendrik W. Lang
Matthias Fuchs
Neil Thompson
Andy Wouldham
Robert L. Sanders
Tracey Sanders

Maps and Plans
Neil Thompson
Matthias Janssen

Illustrations by
Richard Luschek

Contributors/Advisors
Thorvald Neumann
Neil Thompson
Julia Fasting
Hendrik W. Lang
Jeremy Baker

Special thanks to N. Robin Crossby for his advice concerning the history of Sirion.

© 2003 Matthias Janssen, N. Robin Crossby & Columbia Games Inc.

"Hårn", "HårnMaster", and "HårnWorld" are trademarks of Columbia Games Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Some weeks ago, the crew of a small fisher boat was surprised by an upcoming storm. The vessel was driven off course and wrecked on a bank a few yards off the northwestern shore of Lake Benath. When leaving their vessel, they discovered that the bank they had stranded on was not a natural one. It formed a semi-circle of about 200 feet in diameter, being about two feet under water.

Fortunately, they had some basic tools with them. So they went to a nearby plateau where they had seen some large pines. On this plateau, they discovered lots of bones and clumps of rust vaguely resembling swords and axes. This really intrigued them and they examined the area a little closer, which resulted in the discovery of a small glade on a nearby hill, overlooking the bay. There, they found a strange depression in the ground and an old, rusty hatchet with almost completely rotten shaft sticking in the largest of the ancient oaks growing there. The axe was engraved with strange patterns and a word written in a strange runic script. There were the rotten remains of a rope attached to one of the trees' branches. Since their supplies were growing short, they didn't examine the depression further, but rather concentrated on fixing their ship and getting home. Thus, they left the peninsula.

When they returned home, they told the legar about the discoveries they had made and handed him over the axe. The legar immediately sent a messenger to the Temple of Halea in Shiran. Unfortunately this messenger arrived at Shiran late at night, having to search for accommodation first. He planned to visit the temple early the next morning. The barmaids in this tavern were quite beautiful (and quite greedy as well), and later that night he was to be seen drinking and philandering with them. Since he didn't have much money with him, he tried to impress the girls by telling them the story and even showing the axe around in the tavern, claiming that this was part of his quest for an ancient treasure. This is of course a tale made up by the messenger; neither the legar nor the fishermen have any proof that there is a treasure to be found. Unfortunately, some mercenaries of the secret mine at Iracu just being in Shiran for gathering supplies overheard his story.

The next day, he visited the temple, reporting this strange discovery and handing over the hatchet. The priestesses consulted an expert who examined the hatchet and certified this item was of Khuzan origin, namely made by one Zarakhar (this is what the runic inscription reads). Highly pleased, the priestesses told the messenger that the temple would handle the matter. So, after spending another nice afternoon at the tavern, he returned home. On his way, he was captured and interrogated by the mercenaries who slew him afterwards. The village where the fishermen hail from is Dumonea, in the Dumon district, owned by Gheryff of Pesed. Gheryff is a younger brother of Duraena of Pesed, who commands the Dumon Cohort.



BRINGING IN THE PLAYERS

The family connection

One or several of the players are relatives of the fishermen. Rumours have been going round that there could be a treasure awaiting those who are bold enough to search for it. The fishermen would even agree to sail with them to that location.

The mission

The Shiran temple of Halea is hiring the players. Their task is to visit the place and bring everything of value back to the temple. According to the fishermen's description, the place lies close to Sirion, and the temple hopes to discover scrolls related to the infamous (and invaluable) Sirion scrolls. The priestesses are well aware that there might be items of value, which the party may keep away from them, but they hope to find further parts of the lost Sirion scrolls. These would definitely be most valuable items that can be found and hence, the temple accepts the of the party keeping anything else. They emphasise that the party has to bring anything they find there, in order to prevent any written works from being left behind. The priestesses suppose that no one of the party will be able to read any of the scrolls (which are believed to be written in Khuzan language and runic script), and hence won't be able to estimate their real worth. The party will be given a letter of introduction for the settlement's legar. They will be offered 180d each.

Chance encounter

The players are either just staying in Shiran and overheard the messenger's story, or they are travelling through the small village and overhear the rumours going round among the peasants. The fishermen will gladly talk about their discovery, since it gives them some special status in the village.

They may even be talked into bringing the party there. If the party overheard the the story as told by the messenger in a Shiran tavern, they will only be able to get a very rough description of where this strange place is to be found. They will have to pay the village a visit to gather further information - trying their luck attempting to find the location by themselves will hardly be possible. The description of the peninsula is rather rough so it should be of great difficulty to locate it when travelling along the northwestern shore of Lake Benath.

THE TRUTH

The depression is the remnant of an ancient well shaft. It leads down to a small natural cave. This cave is the tomb of Irazûd of Khazir, one of the Khuzan captains who fought against Lothrim the Foulspawner at the Battle of Sirion. If hired by the temple, the priestesses are honest concerning the objective of this mission - they do not, however, reveal what they really hope to find there, nor its value.

HISTORY

The Sirion region was first settled around 550 BT by Jarin farmers and fishermen, who also gave it its name, Sirion, derived from the Sindarin word for “Great River”. These Jarin refugees had fled the Lythian invaders’ dominion and had eventually reached the mouth of the Deret. Finding a blooming country with fertile soil and plentiful fishing grounds, they decided to make this their new home.

Soon, they made first contact with the Khuzdul of Kiraz, an event that set the cornerstone of a long, friendly co-existence. Both races respected and complemented each other. The Jarin supplied the dwarves with lumber and aliments, receiving metalwork and even precious metals and gems in return. Contact with Kiraz greatly influenced their culture and they were able to learn much from the elder folk.

During the following centuries, trade grew and Sirion became an important reloading point. Ships with goods from the Thard valley brought products like wool, cloth, leather goods and earthenware and returned home with Khuzan jewellery, tools and art-work. Around 100 TR, the reaches of Lothrim’s Empire included Kom, which caused growing fear among the Sirechil (the “river people”, how they called themselves) of falling under foreign rule. A wooden fortification was erected and the tolls were increased, which put a severe strain on the relationship between the Sirechil and the empire. Trade decreased during the next two decades, a symptomatic outcome of growing tensions between them.

What followed then would become one of the darker chapters of Sirion, only surpassed by the future battle between Lothrim and the Khuzdul of Kiraz. It had come to Lothrim that an important earthmaster work was in possession of Bazanthar, the dwarven king of Kiraz. Before, Lothrim had sent Chesme, one of his most trusted apprentices, to Kiraz to negotiate the purchase of this so important piece, but regardless of Lothrim’s offers, the Khuzdul were absolutely unwilling to trade. On her way, Chesme had passed through the Sirion region and had sojourned in the settlement of Sirion. Hence, she knew the weaknesses of its defences quite well.

On a cool and misty morning in the year 120 TR, a fleet arrived at the shores of Sirion, landing an army of several hundred Gargun, along with Lothrim’s honour guard. The great emperor himself had come to command his forces.

The battle was a short one; resulting in the total annihilation of almost all Sirechil. Only few were able to escape. Those who were, fled to the northeast and were slain by the Kabloqui, except for a handful of attractive females. They were adopted into the tribe and became the source of legends concerning a place of great beauty and wealth to the southwest, and the coming of evil.

The Gargun, infuriated by the onslaught, destroyed everything that came in their way, sparing not a single one of the wooden buildings. What happened after they left and met with the rest of Lothrim’s army, has become one of the blackest passages in Hârníc history.

The Battle of Sirion

After the Carnage of Kiraz, Lothrim decided not to winter in Kiraz and marched to Sirion, where he sent for boats to take him home. The small garrison he left in Kiraz was easily defeated by the returning Khuzan males, which immediately began pursuing him. At Sirion, between the Deret River and Lake Benath the Khuzan army found him.

Although the Khuzdul were outnumbered four to one, their skill was augmented by a burning passion for revenge. The outcome was never in doubt. As the battle neared its end, a dozen members of Lothrim’s personal guard seized him and surrendered in a bid for clemency, but there was to be no mercy that day. Lothrim and his “honour guard” would be sealed alive within a deep cave, along with his precious tome.

A tragic loss

Despite their triumph, the battle bore yet another tragic loss for the Khuzdul. During their attack, one of their captains, called Irazûd of Khazir, a very competent and much beloved leader, was mortally wounded. His subjects refused to leave him behind, although he ordered them to. The exhausted Khuzdul hadn’t got far on their way back to Kiraz until Irazûd’s wounds became infected and he died of gangrene. Lothrim’s Gargun forces had been defeated but not completely annihilated. There were still numerous bands of Gargun around, hiding from the massive army of Kiraz. The dwarves didn’t want their captain’s grave to be desecrated by the despised Foulspawn, and one of them remembered a cave they had discovered while digging a well for the Sirechil – a location suited perfectly for the purpose. A small company of his loyal subjects returned him to the ruins of the Jarin settlement of Sirion, constructing a vault that would never be desecrated by any Gargun. When they had finished work a few days later, they hurried after their kin, back to fair Kiraz.

Sometimes though, fate is twisted, and so a company of Gargun, who had reformed and were eager to feast upon Khuzan flesh ambushed the fellowship. The dwarves were slain man by man, pierced by Gargun arrows shooting forth out of the underbrush.

Thus, the story of Irazûd and his brave men died...

THE SIRION LOCAL MAP

The party has landed on the western shore of the Sirion spit. About half a league further up the Deret lies the support camp for the secret mines of Iracu, housing anywhere from 60 to 120 mercenaries.

To the southeast, at the end of this spit lies the field where the Battle of Sirion took place. This is a very scary place, being the source of strange howling sounds and lights at night. The spit rises to a level of about 45 feet and then drops to the sea, forming a sharp cliff. The Khuzdul drove Lothrim's army away from the former settlement of Sirion and on to this plateau where they were encircled. The place where the party landed was the former harbour of Sirion. The once fortified hill lies a few hundred yards north. That is the place where the fishermen discovered the hatchet and the circular depression.

Flora

The Sirion region is a densely wooded area lying between the foothills of the Sorkin Mountains and the shore of Lake Benath. It is dominated by the mighty Deret River, which forms its southwestern border. Oaks are the most common trees in the region, there are only very few needle leaf trees, most of which grow on the site of the former battlefield.

The forest is very ancient and dark, with dense underbrush mostly consisting of large ferns. The oaks are grown with twines and mistletoes are common. The beach is rocky with sharp stones covering it.

Fauna

The Sirion region is home to a variety of animals, among them large numbers of deer, hares, wild boar, bears and wolves. Their howls sound widely through the night – a frightening noise. This is an almost uninhabited wilderness region and the relative proximity to Mysin increases the chances to encounter some form of Ivashu immensely. Also, it has been uninhabited for centuries, a fact that further increases the chances to encounter Ivashu and rare animals.

Most of the rather common known Ivashu dwell to the northwest, either in the foothills or directly in the Rayesha Mountains. It may happen, though, that wandering Ivashu leave their home territory and come through the Sirion region.

Ethereals

There is a comparatively high chance of encountering ethereals, ghosts, spirits and shades. These will mostly be Khuzdul who fell at the Battle of Sirion or slain Sirechil. It may, however, even happen that the lost soul of a Gargun is encountered, an event that should be both unlikely and frightening.

ENCOUNTERS

The following text and table may serve the GM to spice up the adventure by adding whatever encounters he deems fitting. The encounter tables have been slightly modified to represent the unique surrounding. The numbers in the square brackets after each entry indicate subtables in the Campaign Section of Hårn-Master Core or HårnMaster 3.

Sirion Encounter Table		
Day	Night	Encounter
01-20	01-15	Tracks/Spoor/Sound (Reroll)
21-24	16-21	Wolves
25-27	22-24	Bear
28-31	25-28	Stag/Deer/Hind...
32-35	29-32	Wild Boar
36-37	33	Eagle/Hawk/Falcon...
38	34-36	Reptile
39-42	37-47	Ivashu
43-46	48-58	Ethereal
.	59-62	Dryad
47-63	63-66	Human Adventurer
64-73	67-81	Gargun (Wandering Band)
74-83	82-86	Khuzdul Adventurer
84-85	87-90	Sindarin Adventurer
86-87	91	Landslide/Bog...
88-89	92	One/more of party gets lost
90-91	93	Spoilage/Loss of food...
92-93	94	Equipment Loss/Failure
94-95	95-96	Sickness/Food Poisoning...
96-97	97	Mutiny/Dissent/Argument...
98-99	98-99	Plant Hazard (poison ivy...)
100	100	Slime/Mold/Fungus

PSIONIC RESIDUE

All the killing and death have left a strong „psionic residue“ that may befall anyone with the according psionic talent. It is so strong that people with an Aura of 12 or higher will suffer nightmares of the events at Sirion. The psionic residue appears in some sort of invisible „clouds“, engaging mental conflict with people fulfilling the above mentioned prerequisites. These visions will be rather confuse at first, but they could keep the players busy and may eventually (when finally sorted properly) be quite helpful. The GM may either choose one of the following visions or simply roll 1d6 to determine which one „befalls“ his players.



Suggested visions

The following are some samples of suitable visions one or more of the characters (PCs & NPCs) might have. They should be modified/enhanced at GM discretion.

1. You suddenly find yourself on the lower deck of a ship amidst dozens of Gargun. You smell a mixture of sweat and salt water, combined with rotten food and weapon oil. The orks around you are impatiently sharpening their mangs and crude jokes are made – they're pushing themselves up for the onstanding battle. With a sudden crash, your ship runs on the shore and the hatch is opened. Everyone around you presses forward, out into the open. You are driven with the masses and when you jump off deck, you realize that there are dozens of warships just landing on the beach, Gargun rushing out of each of them. You rush forward, almost stumbling over your comrades and as you take a look around you discover a settlement surrounded by a palisade. There is a hill in the centre and a small wooden fortification lies on top of it.

2. From one moment to the next, you find yourself in the middle of a great battle. All around, orks and humans are fighting - screaming, shouting and crying. The wooden structures are burning and the dead lie all around. The biting smell of burning wood and flesh enter your nose. You sense a movement from the corner of your eye and turn around. It is only now that you realize that the man standing in front of you is nearly twice as large as you are. He is wearing a chequered tunic and hoses. His hair is chalked and rises straight to the sky, the golden torc around his neck is gleaming in the sun. In the last instance you notice the broad axe he is clutching and you try to block it with your mang. He lashes out at you like a madman and you have troubles defending yourself. You turn around one another fighting and unfortunately you're looking directly to the sun now.

Then, something throws a shadow on your face. Glad about the end of the blinding, you're trying to fix your opponent, when you realize that the shadow comes from the other's axe...

3. A cold wind blows into your face as you charge towards a large group of Gargun, standing close and desperately looking for a way out. You loosen your battleaxe from your back and swing it widely while charging. You are not alone, there are dozens of your comrades around you, all pressing forward on the enemy. You clash and the foulspawn drops like flies. Their morale collapses and chaos breaks out among their ranks. Some stand and do battle while others are trying to flee and some even jump over the cliffs behind them, certain that they will rather survive that jump than a confrontation with you. As you slaughter the last ones, cheers of victory sound from the far end of the battlefield. You quickly finish the last enemies and rush to where the cheers come from. Many dwarves have already gathered and so you cannot see too much. As you ask around what happened, you are informed that the enemy has been defeated, that Lothrim was handed over by his own honour guard...

4. Now you suddenly are in the centre of the burning fortification, you and your fellow foulspawn form a circle around and elderly but still strong looking man, on his knees, his hands tied to his back. There's mumbling all around and dead men, women and children are scattered throughout the place. The man is looking to the floor, his long sweat-wet hair falling in front of his eyes.

Suddenly, the mumbling stops and the circle opens. A tall man in a wide robe enters the circle, accompanied by a dozen of Khanu. His hood makes it impossible to see his face, but even so you know who this is. His long thin fingers and his whispering, almost soft voice are distinctive. The man on the ground stubbornly looks up to the cloaked figure standing in front of him and they exchange a few words that you cannot understand.

The man in the robe laughs quietly and helps the other up. He lays his left arm around him and embraces him. Suddenly, the eyes of the prisoner open wide and he opens his mouth. Then he sinks to the ground, a bloodstain on his chest. When you look back to the cloaked one, you notice that he is holding a decorated dagger in his hand. The mass bawls!

5. It is already late at day and the sun is setting, as you move through the woods. A deep sadness fills your heart. You and a handful of comrades are carrying the body of Irazûd, your captain, back to the city of Sirion where you are going to bury him. The remains of the city approach and the cries of ravens can be heard along with the sounds of waves clashing against the shore.

You are moving to the top of a hill where the burned ruins of a wooden fortification lie. A scout returns reporting that the area is gargun-free and that you may commence the work on Irazûd's grave. While you are busy digging into the ground, you hear others closing the dam to dry up the bay. You heard the masons talk about some sort of trap, but you haven't quite understood how it is supposed to work. You have the duty of digging your commander's grave and you are bound to do that well. That is all you need to know.

6. After the last ones of your fellow Khuzans have returned from the bay, your journey home to Kiraz can begin. Your belongings have been packed and the others, still soaking wet and exhausted, take a short break before leaving.

Several hours later, the path narrows down so that you can hardly pass one after the other. When you finally make it through, you can see a small clearing with a brook flowing near it and decide to take a short rest. Just as you have put down your baggage and arrived at the brook, you hear a hissing sound and then another one. Ever more of these sounds are to be heard within seconds until the first one of you finally is pierced by a Gargun arrow. In panic, you and the others try to make it back to the clearing but it is too late. One after the other of your comrades falls dead to the ground - pierced by those evil looking arrows you have seen in hundreds in Kiraz. You make it to the clearing, but just as you grab your axe, you feel a burning pain in your back and then you faint...



LOCAL MAP**1 The bay & the dam**

The small bay is surrounded by a dam which once was the base for the harbour walls. Nowadays, it lies about four feet under water, being only visible when the seas are rough. The Khuzdul left the square stone here when they had removed it from the flooding channel.

2 The glade on the hill

Half way up the hill lie the remains of Sirion's ancient fortifications. An earthen rampart surrounded by a trench goes all around the upper part of the hill. It is totally overgrown and large parts have been washed away. Once there were wooden palisades and watch-towers, none of which have survived to the present day. The glade itself is rather small (only about 30 feet in diameter) and overgrown with ferns and other shrubbery.

3 The cave entrance

This is the cave's natural egress, only about one and a half feet in diameter. Humans do not fit into it. It is home to a small group of Vlasta, which makes it dangerous to be in the vicinity at night. When it gets dark, the clacking sound of the creatures' claws are to be heard all over the beach.

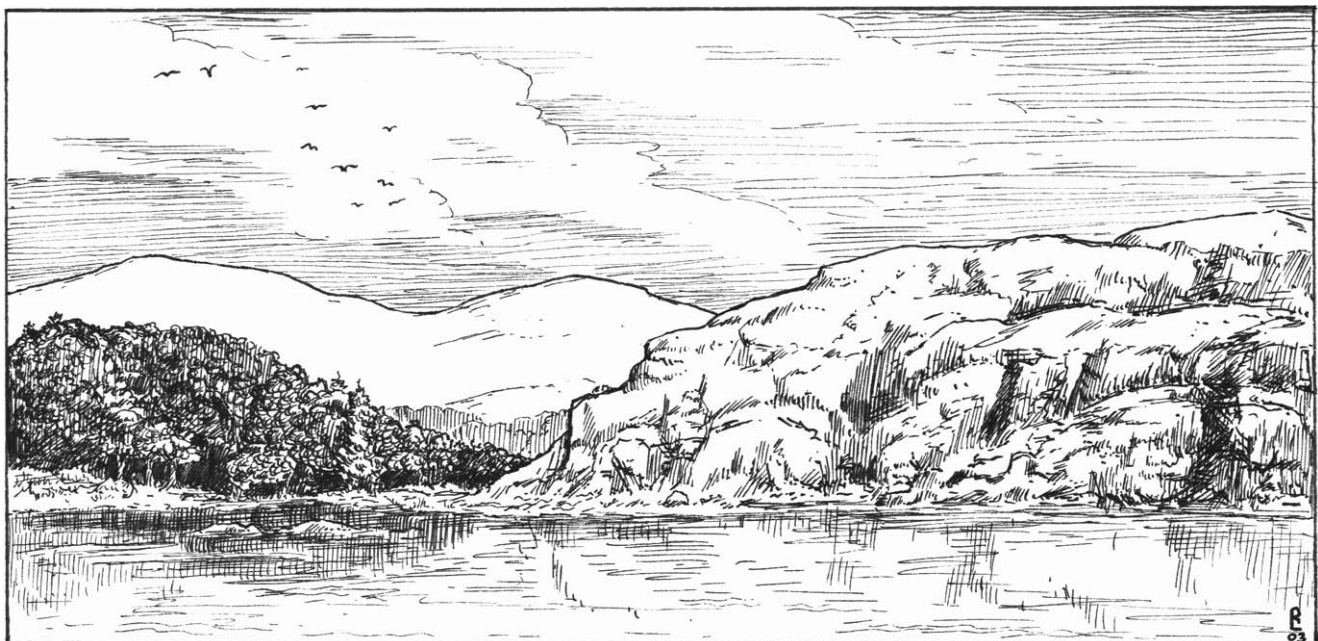
4 The cliff

The cliff is about 45 feet high with sharp edges. Climbing it is impossible, for its feather-edged rocks cut deep into the flesh (an experience several dozen Gargun had when jumping over the cliff trying to escape the furious Khuzdul). Only a few birds have their nests high in the cliff.

5 The battlefield

This is the site where the battle of Sirion took place. Here, the dwarves took bloody vengeance for the Carnage of Kiraz. It is a rocky plain lying somewhat elevated above the rest of the Sirion valley, rising up to a cliff about 45 feet above the waters of Lake Benath. It is only grown with patches of brown grass, a few shrubs, and some mutilated conifers. The wind hissing from Lake Benath is caught between the rocks, causing a creepy howling.

Hundreds of Gargun met a brutal death here, being either slain by the advancing Khuzdul or being pressed over the cliffs. Rotten and rusty pieces of armour and weaponry can be found all over the plain and at the foot of the cliff. The pieces that can be found are about 600 years old; hence they will be absolutely unusable. Most of the pieces are little more than chunks of rust crumbling at touch.

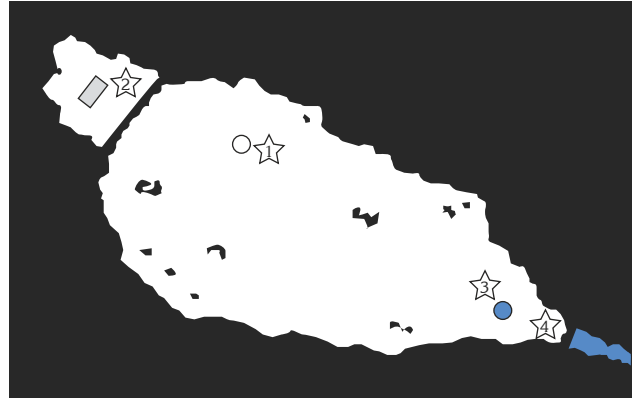


THE CAVE

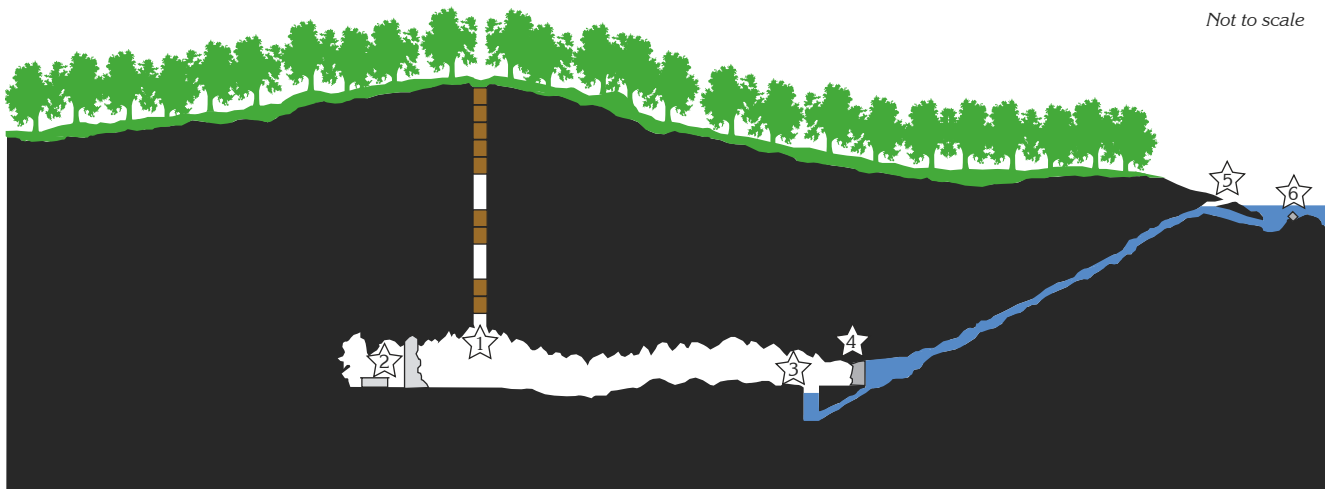
The cave is of natural origin. It has a connection to the surface via a small opening which is located at the bay's northwestern shore. The opening is way too small for anybody of human size to pass.

Behind the northwestern wall lies the actual burial chamber. The wall was erected by the Khuzdul and seems to be the natural cave wall from the outside. Behind it lies the sarcophagus of Irazûd of Khazir.

The southeastern wall, being located behind the pool of water, appears to be the natural cave wall, too. It seals the natural tunnel leading to the surface. In front of it is the pool, which will flood the cave when the shaft is opened without the masonry being put back in place.



Not to scale



- 1 The shaft**
This is the shaft described below. It leads down to the main section of the cave.
- 2 The burial chamber**
This is Irazûd's burial chamber. It is protected by a stone wall that appears to be the natural cave wall from the other side. It houses the dwarven captain's sarcophagus. A few burned out torches are affixed to the wall.
- 3 The pool**
Appearing to be a simple water pool when viewed from the cave, this is actually the tricky part of the grave construction. If the shaft [1] is opened without the sealing stone [6] blocking the flooding channel, the whole cave will be flooded, thus making any attempt to enter the burial chamber impossible.

- 4 The southeastern wall**
This wall also appears to be the natural cave wall. Should it be torn down, the cave will be flooded.
- 5 The natural exit**
This is the natural surface connection of the cave, emerging on the northwestern shore of the former harbour (nowadays the bay). Its upper parts are home to a group of Vlasta
- 6 The dam and the square hewn stone**
This dam originally was the base for the harbour walls. There is a small rectangular opening on the ground of the bay, where the masonry blocked the flooding channel. It was removed when the dwarves were finished with the grave's construction. Both the opening and the sealing stone are about 2 feet square and the stone is about 1 foot high, weighing about 500 pounds.

THE SHAFT

This shaft had originally been built as a well. When the Khuzdul dug the well for the Sirechil, they discovered a subterranean cave with natural tunnels leading to the shore, just above sea level. The shaft's walls are natural stone, which has been worked to form an even surface. The rusted remains of iron steps can be discovered, which are placed in rather short distances (for a human sized creature). The Sirechil already had noticed the entry to the tunnel, but it was way too small for a human (or a dwarf) to pass. Since it was located above water level, the well only had water when the seas had been rough and the tunnel had been flooded. So the dwarves dug a flooding channel that lead diagonally from the natural one to the bottom of the bay to ensure water supply.

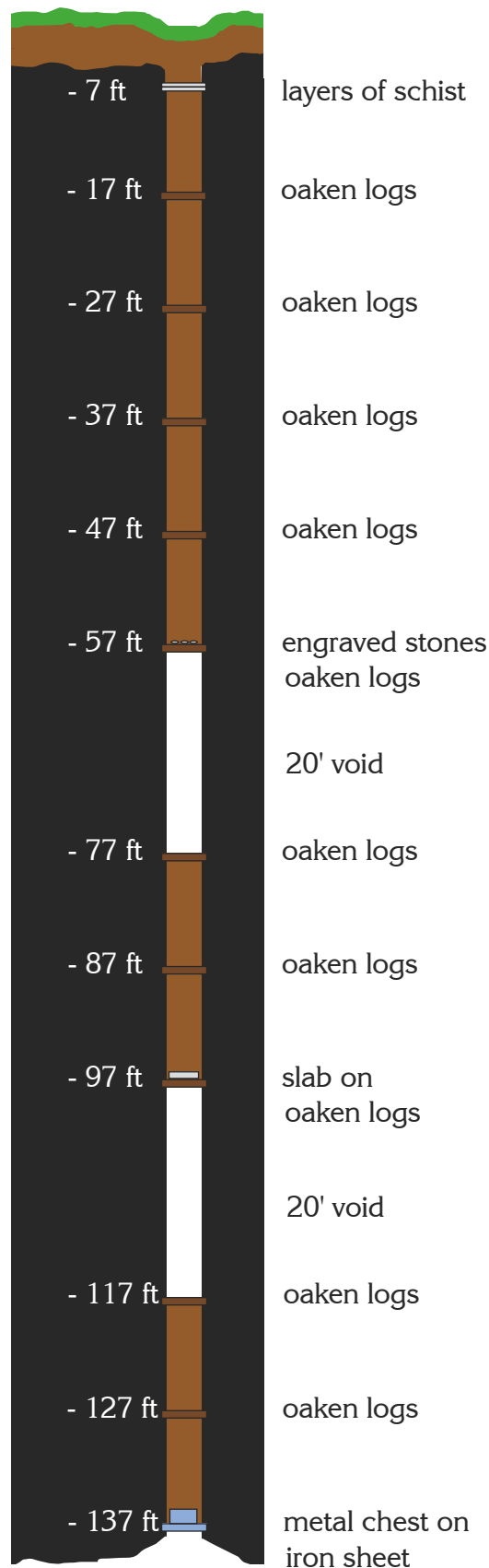
Soon the Sirechil had forgotten the natural egress altogether. But the dwarves hadn't. When Irazûd died, one of his men remembered the tunnels and came up with a plan for a grave that no one would ever be able to open. They made a square stone to seal the flooding channel at the bottom of the bay and removed the water within the cave. Then they entered the cave through the shaft and erected a wall that would keep the water out. Next they dug a hole in the ground from which they dug diagonally upwards to the channel. When they were finished, they created a sarcophagus for Irazûd by using the stone of the cave walls. Then, Irazûd was placed into his crypt.

When everything had been prepared, the Khuzdul sealed the shaft with earth and wooden logs every ten feet. They left some of their leader's personal belongings in the shaft to distract eventual grave robbers. Once they had sealed the shaft, they started removing the dam and let the water flood into the newly dug artificial tunnels.

This technique is extremely clever. The dwarves calculated very well and so the air prevents the water from flooding into the cave. The water pressure of Lake Benath compresses the air in the cave and the flooding tunnel to 50% of its original volume. The dwarves chose the location of both walls so that the cave has exactly the same volume as the flooding channel. Hence, the air pressure keeps the water out. Should the seal in the shaft be removed, water will flood the cave and rise up to thirty feet below ground level.

This makes it impossible for anyone to actually dig the whole 130 feet to the burial chamber unless the masonry is put back in place.

The shaft and all it contains is displayed in the graphic to the right.



ITEMS IN THE SHAFT

The shaft is 3ft 8inches in diameter, bored vertically down by the Khuzan for the Sirechil. When they sealed the base of the shaft and placed the chest on it, they buried the chest in 20ft of soil then left a 20 foot void above. There they set oaken logs into the walls and placed the stone slab on top.

They buried the slab in another 20 ft of soil and then left a second 20 foot void above. Again they set oaken logs into the walls and placed the engraved stones above before backfilling the shaft up to the surface. The well head was removed down to the level of the bedrock and the top of the shaft covered with dressed stone paving slabs.

The stones

These foundlings are engraved with runic symbols, bearing one sign each. They're all of different size, ranging from one inch to three inches. When sorted from smallest to largest, they'll read the following:

*"Those who enter
Those who dare
Shall know terror
And despair"*

Test against awareness when uncovering these stones to check whether there are any overlooked.

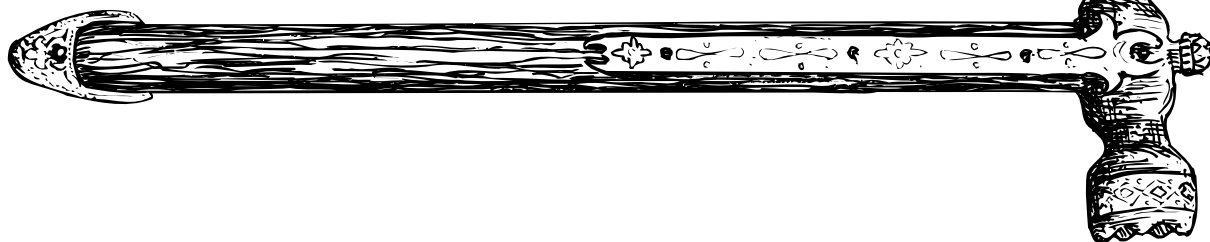
Success Level	Stones overlooked
CS	None
MS	1d10
MF	2d10
CF	3d10

In case there are any stones overlooked, the GM should determine which ones are missing. It is rather easy to determine this randomly – the dictum consists of exactly 50 letters. A result of 1-2 on a d100 means the first letter is missing, 3-4 indicates that the second letter is missing and so on. Just roll as many times as there are stones missing.

The slab

The slab is roughly three feet long, two feet wide and about ten inches high. It weighs about 280 pounds and is engraved with Khuzan patterns and runes. Of course, the language used for the inscription is Khuzan. When translated into Hârníc language, they read:

"Here lays Irazûd of Khazir. Doom shall come to those who disturb his peace!"

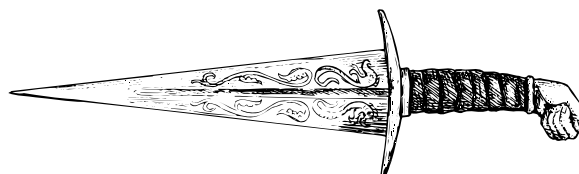


The Metal Chest

This metal chest is about three feet long and two feet wide and high. It contains some rather valuable items. Those were put here in order to distract from the grave itself. The box was sealed with beeswax to prevent humidity from destroying its contents. Within it, Irazûd's personal belongings are to be found, some of them wrapped in oil paper. They are as follows:

Dagger

A dagger, its blade adorned with Khuzan engravings and a knob in form of a fist. It is of superior quality (WQ 13) and is worth ca. 150 d.



Purse

It contains 55 ancient Khuzan silver pennies as well as 5 Khuzan gold crowns. All these coins come from Kiraz, depicting King Bazanthar on one side.

Tome

A leather-bound ink and vellum book. It is a „Tome of Valor“, increasing the reader's battleaxe skill. The box also contains miscellaneous, mostly rotten garments. They reveal, however, that the person they belonged to must have been rather small and heavy framed.

War hammer

This superior heavy war hammer is really exquisite in quality as well as design. It is elaborately decorated with delicate silver inlays and is a masterpiece of Khuzan weaponcraft. It has a WQ of 14 and is worth about a thousand pennies.



CHARACTERS

The Kabloqui

Three young Kabloqui are around, performing the „Dancing with skulls“ ritual, which requires them to bring three heads back to their tribe in order to be adopted into manhood. These skulls must be of a Gargun, a bear and a human (for further information see HM Barbarians). These are young warriors not yet bearing the „Aka hajar“ facial branding of their tribe. Nevertheless, they are skilled and ruthless warriors and accomplished woodsmen.

Although the Kabloqui have little oral tradition, there is one commonly known story that was created by the surviving women of Sirion who were adopted into the tribes. Over the centuries, this song evolved to what is given below:

The city of gold

*In the happy days of old,
There existed, so is told,
A warming place in winter's cold,
The Stirechil's city of gold.
There, life was good,
And deer was plenty
Strong the wood,
And people canny
Craftsmen skilled
And traders wealthy
Their stomachs filled,
By hunters stealthy
Until one dark and fateful day
Doom and terror came their way
When of all the bargain weary
Foulspawn came all wild and scary
From beyond the sacred lake
What he desired by force to take,
Oh Sirion, city of gold
Thyne story shall in forth be told.*

In order to boost their fame, the tribesmen are also planning to seek out this mythical place called “the city of gold” and to bring prove that they have actually discovered it. They do not shy away from ambushing the fishermen, but a well armed party will not be attacked immediately. They are rather using their woodsmen skills to sneak around and try to find out any weaknesses of the group.

Str	11	Eye	14	Int	09	Ini	78
Sta	12	Hrg	15	Aur	08	End	12
Dex	13	Sml	14	Wil	13	Mov	13
Agl	13	Voi	10	Ddg	65		
Club 12/80 (4b); Javelin 12/58 (6p); Leather shield 12/58 (2b)							
Leather leggings, fur calf boots, leather shirt, fur vest, leather vambraces							

The Mercenaries

A small group of mercenaries overheard the tale told by the messenger in Shiran. They listened very close to his description and recognized the location he was talking about.

They also know that this is the supposed origin of the Sirion Scrolls and have already met (and killed or abducted) several treasure hunters while patrolling the surroundings of their base in Sirion.

A party that is not extremely cautious and stealthy is likely to be discovered by the mercenaries. If this happens, the mercenaries will first watch the party's actions from cover and then decide what to do. Should the party indeed discover something, they will try to let the party do the hard work of digging and then try to scare them away, leaving everything of value behind in panic escape. Only if this doesn't work, the mercenaries will try to assassinate the party, to kill or ambush them.

The party will have little chance of persuading the mercenaries to let them go. They are very well paid by the miner's guild and hence, money will be no argument when bargaining for the characters' lives. Besides, they could kill the party and take all they have anytime.

The mercenaries are rather imaginative when it comes to scaring others and the creepy surroundings aid them in doing so. A few examples of what they might come up with are given below:

- Laying false tracks (for example a track with one horse and one human footprint)
- Emptying a bucket or two full of pig's blood from the last slaughter at their base in Sirion into the shaft
- Wind chimes in all variants (preferably those who create eerie sounds)
- Pouring oil onto the battlefield and igniting it at night which will result in a fiery glow and smoke visible from the party's camp

Further methods of scaring the PCs away are up to GM discretion.

Str	13	Eye	10	Int	10	Ini	84
Sta	13	Hrg	10	Aur	08	End	13
Dex	13	Sml	08	Wil	12	Mov	11
Agl	12	Voi	08	Ddg	65		
Short Sword 13/75 (4e); Round shield 13/62 (2b); Spear 13/52 (7p); Dagger 12/46 (5p); Shortbow 12/46							
Ring vest, leather shirt, leather leggings, leather boots, kurbul halfhelmet, ring gauntlets, kurbul vambraces							

The fishermen

There are only three of the Venar's crew accompanying the party. The others of the crew are busy repairing another vessel that has been damaged by the storm, too. This means that the party will have to assist in sailing the vessel (which could eventually be worth some skill development rolls). The fishermen accompanying the players are:

Sharan of Eremrun

Sharan is the captain of the ship. He and his crew stranded here some time ago and discovered the hatchet and the strange depression in the ground. He is 50 years of age and of good health. He has black hair with first white sprinkles and a white three-day beard. His eyes are as blue as the waters of Lake Benath and his voice is deep and warm.

He knows the lake like the back of his hand – and he knows lots of stories about the terrible beasts that are supposed to inhabit it.

Ilan of Itrel

Ilan originally hails from Orbaal, or as he would say, Jara. He was the son of the local trehaen. Because of his rather rebellious character, his Ivinian lord sold him to a Thardic slave trader. After he had been sold over and over again (no one wanted to keep such a rebel) he finally came to Shiran where he was to be sold to the Pamesani Arena. He escaped, though, and fled to the fishermen's village.

He was kindly welcomed in Sharan's house and has been a great help for the aging fisherman for years now. All three men know each other very well and trust each other deeply.

Ilan is a really tough man, not believing in any of the legends about the monsters of the lake. His descent has given him some basic knowledge of runes and even Khuzan language, which might be of invaluable aid to the players.

Morn of Eremrun

Morn is Sharan's eldest son. He is a nice and hard-working guy and will inherit his father's ship and trade. He is very superstitious and easy to frighten. This trait evolved from the fact that Morn has the "Medium" psionic talent. He is not aware that he is a medium, but from time to time he suffers visions and hears strange voices, which mostly come along with a terrible headache and cramps as well as exhaustion. When this happens, Morn is not able to talk for a while. His father believes he suffers epilepsy but so far, no physician was able to help him.

When he comes to Sirion he will suffer immensely from the battlefield's strong psionic residue.

Note: If none of the players has an Aura of 12 or higher, Morn can serve the purpose of guiding the players in the right direction. After some time, he has grown used to the strong psionic forces at Sirion and might even be able to perceive the ghosts of Irázûd's fellowship, still digging the tunnel or sealing the channel at the bottom of the bay. Some visions of this kind ought to do the trick. But don't let him have these visions too early. The players are meant to despair digging...



Ilan

Sharan

Morn

Dumonea is a fishing village on the southern shores of Lake Benath. It lies in the Dumon district of the Kom province in Tharda. With a mere 16 households, it is one of the smaller settlements in that region.

HISTORY

Dumonea was founded 379 TR by retired soldiers of King Arosta's army when they had finished his conquest of the Thard valley. The Komii tribes had been defeated but not pacified and so, Arosta decided to give land in the new founded Kom province to veteran soldiers who would be able to keep the Komii under control. Under the reign of Emperor Kobar, the region prospered and trade evolved.

When the Red Death broke out in 559 TR, Dumonea was spared because of its remote location. The village grew wealthy, because it lay in a region that had not suffered the plague as much as other regions and it could still provide good food, goods that became highly valuable during that time.

The wealth was lost during the Interregnum, when the whole Thardic league was in an uproar. The lord was deep in debt with Clan Pesed, who eventually took over the village by forcing the lord to adopt one of their clan as his son and successor. During the following decades, Clan Pesed expanded its influence in the region, which led to its current position as one of the leading clans in the republic. Senator Xeldon Pesed, the clanhead, is the current Marshal of the Kom province.

GOVERNMENT

Dumonea governed by Gheryff of Pesed, a young, ambitious man in his late twenties. He is a distant cousin to Duraena of Pesed, the commander of the Dumon Cohort. He is a pious adherent to the church of Halea, regularly sending gifts to the temple in Shiran. He governs lightly, but always has an eye on his subordinates and he uses a small network of trusted informers to keep him updated on the events in the region.

RELIGION

The legar and his family are adherents of Halea, as are some of the villagers. Most others adhere Peoni. Although worship of the evil gods is permitted, it is not encouraged.

ECONOMICS

Whatever wealth the village has comes from Lake Benath. Many of the residents are fishermen and almost everybody earns a little extra from the lake, either by fishing or by gathering amber at the shore. This amber is of special interest to scholars and especially to the Fyvria Shék-P'vâr, since it often contains ancient and long forgotten animals - a favourite object of studies to these people.

THARDIC VILLAGES

Since there are no "unfree" in Tharda (except for slaves, of course), the serf titles used below rather serve to identify their status in the local community than having a legal background. Most citizens still use the following titles.

Farmer	Freeholder
Villein	Coloni
Half-Villein	Half-Coloni
Cottar	Slave
Reeve	Firstman
Beadle	Secondman

The key is that Freeholders have essentially the same legal status as the Villa-owning clan – but will almost certainly be relatively high status clients of the larger land-owning Clan. Others don't own anything – they rent their land from their Patron; their rental obligations will include service as well as monetary payment.

LOCAL MAP

1 Villa Dumonea

This is the seat of Gheryff of Pesed. He lives here with his family of six persons. The ground floor is made of stone, but the first storey has only wooden walls. The smithy is currently used by Ormel [2] for a small fee.

2 Metalsmith (Ormel of Yeman)

Acres: 30 Size: 3 Quality: 85 Price: average
Ormel is a skilled Metalsmith who learned his trade in the legion. He is very skilled at making horseshoes and pieces for carts and wagons, but lacks practice with making plows and naval items. On occasion, he even repairs Gheffryn's arms and armour. He arrived in Dumonea 5 months ago with his wife and his three year old daughter.

3 Freeholder (Denzal of Panshasin)

Acres: 30 Size: 6
Denzal is a man of few talents and farming is certainly not one of them. He grows hardly enough to feed his wife and his four children. His wife, Terah, earns a bit by weaving cloth for Gheffryn and his family. But nevertheless, the family gets ever deeper in debt with their patron, Gheffryn. It is unlikely that Denzal will ever be able to repay the favours he owes, and so his eldest children will most likely inherit them, hence becoming clients just like their parents.

4 Secondman (Claes of Ertier)

Acres: 39 Size: 8
Claes is a likeable man who finds it hard to fulfill his duties as Secondman (beadle). He is very lenient when it comes to failings, and has accumulated quite some wealth through the favours earned as a result, although he has never insisted in repayment of these favours. A less generous man would surely have developed a number of clientships this way, but Claes is confident with his current situation. Sometimes, his third son, Faerd, accompanies him on his patrols. He is thinking about joining the legion when he is old enough, a plan his father happily supports.

5 Freeholder (Sharan of Eremrun)

Acres: 25 Size: 4

Sharan has, in addition to his lands, his own small fishing vessel. His wife's second child died the night after his birth, the night of Shadows. Morn, their eldest son, claims to have seen a shade stealing the child's soul that night, an event which made him rather superstitious. When Ilan arrived in Dumonea, he was welcomed to Sharan's house and has proven to be a valuable help to Sharan. He has been adopted into the clan a few months after he arrived.

6 Half-Coloni (Faerene of Yemakaz)

Acres: 17 Size: 6

Faerene inherited the debts of his father and has been very busy trying to pay them back since. If things go well, he'll be free of debts within the next two years. He then plans to join the legion and earn his own land. He will probably take Faerd of Ertier [4] with him.

7 Freeholder (Uth of Cheked)

Acres: 110 Size: 3

Uth is the richest man after Gheffryn. He owns over hundred acres, some of which he has rented to his clients. He has only one son, Herdo, aged sixteen. While most families hope that they might marry one of their daughters with Herdo, the village's girls are reluctant to marry him because of his bad manners and upbringing. Uth owns a large part of the village's fishing vessels, which increases his wealth even further.

8 Coloni (Liris of Krusosen)

Acres: 33 Size: 5

Liris is Gheffryn's client. His son, Zurten, recently broke into the villa and stole some scrolls containing records of the debts of several of Gheffryn's clients. This caused quite some ruckus in the village and his father, who knows about his son's deed, is afraid to return the papers. His son didn't realise that this could have a negative effect on his family as well, since in a legal dispute it could well happen that the family ends up with greater debts than they actually had.

9 Coloni (Mindar of Revelos)

Acres: 32 Size: 4

Mindar rents land from Gheffryn and Uth of Cheked [7], both of whom are his patrons. In return, he has to work on their fishing vessels and their land.

10 Coloni (Marala of Hesamrin)

Acres: 35 Size: 5

Like most of the populace, Marala rents his land from Gheffryn. Marala has a deaf son, Welpat, who is being bullied by the rest of the village children because of his inability to articulate properly.

11 Half-Coloni (Aindis of Orild)

Acres: 11 Size: 3

Aindis was granted the opportunity to rent the land he works as a favour from Uth of Cheked [7]. The scrolls Liris' son [8] stole also covered the debts owed by Aindis.

12 Half-Coloni (Ankern of Shaelen)

Acres: 15 Size: 2

Ankern lives with his brother Umau. The brothers have been living here alone since their Father died four years ago. The old Shaelen, as their father was called throughout the village, has been the village drunkard and his sons have followed in his footsteps. The house is in bad repair, a fact for which they have been fined on several occasions. They would probably have lost their home years ago, if it wasn't for the fine brandy they brew after a recipe they got from their deceased father. The Shaelens could actually make a good living with their brew, but since they are overly fond of it themselves, they barely manage to survive.

13 Coloni (Lorenin of Thyld)

Acres: 36 Size: 3

Lorenin was a former slave. He won his freedom when his owner's (a mercantylor from Shiran) caravan was ambushed by a party of Gozyda one day. Lorenin was the only survivor of this attack. He was badly wounded and left for dead. Two days later, he was found by another merchant who mistook him for the mercantylor's apprentice. He took him along to Shiran, where Lorenin went his own ways. He ended up at Dumonea a few years ago, being offered a bit land from Gheryff.

14 Slave (Omen of Queloth)

Acres: - Size: 6

Omen and his family all work at the villa as servants. His wife, Eldhif, is the cook while Omen and his son work at the stables. His daughters all act as domestics. His eldest daughter Maldhif is the Gheffryn's secret lover. Omen was granted his own small cottage when his wife bore the first child.

15 Freeholder (Gerine of Dasriam)

Acres: 35 Size: 7

Gerine received his own spot of land when he retired from the legion. He still is a reservist and is called to duty from time to time. Like most simple folk, he is illiterate and he has great fear that somebody could claim his land while he is away.

16 Coloni (Raerosta of Tisyms)

Acres: 21 Size: 7

Raerosta, having far too less land to support his family, heavily relies on fishing. He and his sons work for Uth [7] as often as they can manage. He is a skilled fisherman often making a good catch but this is unknown to Uth, because Raerosta secretly keeps fish for himself to feed his family.

17 Firstman (Turveld of Noimun)

Acres: 55 Size: 8

Turveld acts as the village Firstman (Reeve). He holds this post because of his good relationship with Gheffryn. He is a skilled manager, but he is known to be a picky person and, most of all, for his short and precise answers. There is almost nothing he doesn't know about his job. He works until late at night everyday, accompanied by his son Yan, who is apt at drawing maps and plans and funny sketches of the village population. Recently the lord has given Yan the task of creating a mural in the great hall. It has not been finished yet, but Yan is working on it every spare minute.

VILLA DUMONEA

1 Courtyard

The courtyard is completely enclosed in stone walls. A lavatory and a well are located here. Most rooms on the ground floor have doors to the courtyard and during the day, this is a rather crowded and busy place. From time to time, Gheffryn trains here with his mercenaries.

2 Stables

There are currently three horses in the stable, Gheffryn's warhorse named Epeon, and two riding palfreys. The horses are taken care of by Omen [13] and his son. Once Omen's son is old enough, Gheffryn is likely to demand that he be accommodated at the villa, just like the other servants. Father and son use the stables as accommodation when the horses are sick and need care the whole day and night.

3 Dormatory

This is the sleeping room for Gheffryn's four mercenaries. They are all former legionnaires who didn't serve long enough to earn their own land. ...

4 Great hall

This is the place where the meals are taken and the few banquets are held. The two places next to the fireplace are reserved for Gheffryn and his wife, since they are the warmest places. For the night, the tables and benches are moved aside to make place for the domestics (and visitors' servants) to sleep.

The small adjacent room to the west is used for private and confidential meetings and talks.

5 Kitchen

Tharkrun is a slave Gheffryn purchased on one of his travels on the Lythian mainland. He is as black as night, but he knows many spices and spicy recipes. A fact that has brought him Gheffryn's respect. He doesn't speak much and hence hasn't made friends with anybody except for his 13 year old assistant Kairena. The cook and his assistant are the only domestics which are allowed to sleep in the kitchen.

6 Guest Chamber

This chamber is used by not so important visitors. Duranea, when in the village, always resides in the litigant's chamber [7].

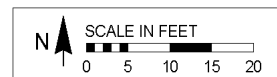
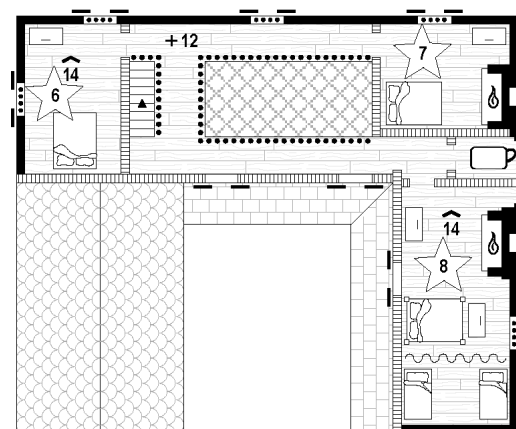
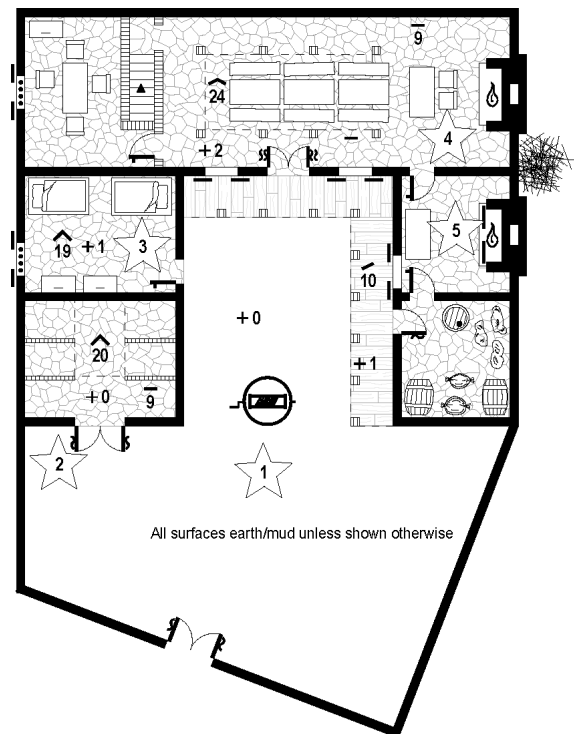
7 Litigant's chamber

Here lives Gheffryn's most trusted employee, Eufen of Parek. He is litigant, book-keeper and teacher in one person. And he is paid accordingly... His status with Gheffryn is easy to be recognised by the fact that he lives in a heated room.

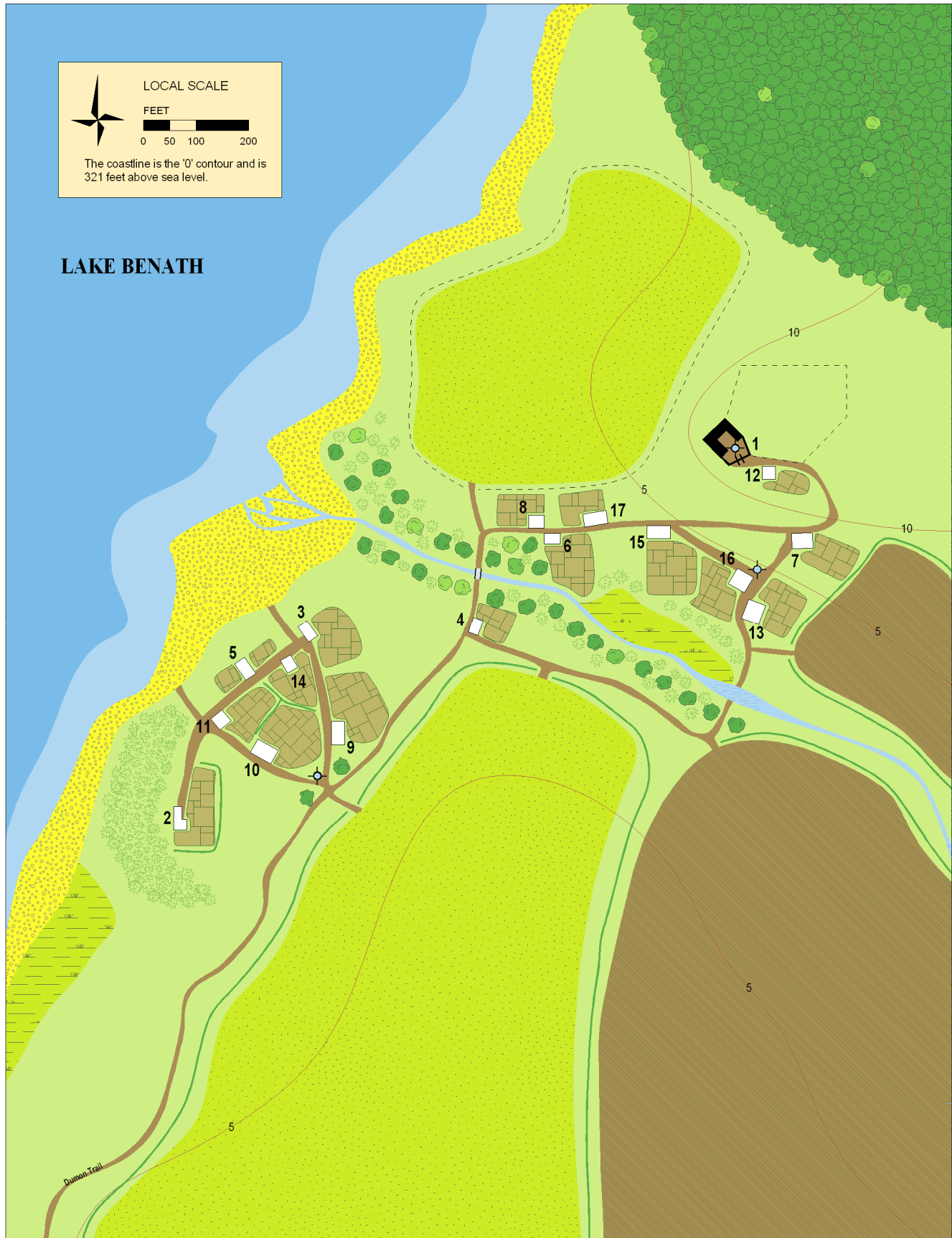
When Duranea of Pesed (or other important visitors) reside in Dumonea, Eufen moves to the Guest chamber.

8 Gheffryn's bedroom

This is the private bedroom of Gheffryn and his family. Behind the curtain to the south are the beds for Gheffryn's children.







ACT I: TO DISTANT SHORES

Scene 1: The village

After a short journey, the party arrives at the village. If there are any nobles among the party, chances are good that the party will be accommodated at the villa, otherwise they may either sleep in the stables or try to find accommodation elsewhere. The people will be quite upset by the fact that the messenger hasn't returned yet and ask the players whether they have seen someone on their way here.

Sideplot: The GM may decide whether the party came across a small river where they discovered the mutilated naked body of a man fitting the fishermen's description of the messenger. Or whether they are charged with the task of finding the messenger. The messenger is the legar's squire and he might get into trouble with the squire's family if he is dead or missing.

Interrogation of the legar and the fishermen will reveal the following informations:

- The location lies in the proximity of Sirion.
- A strange artificial dam surrounds it, which is located about three feet under water. It has a radius of about 200 feet. Its function is unclear.
- The whole region is covered by a dense old oak-forest with dense undergrowth.
- On the centre of the location lies a hill with a small and much overgrown glade, where the oldest trees grow. There is a circular depression at the centre of this glade.
- The depression is almost indistinguishable from the surrounding surface. It is circular and has a radius of about 10'.
- There is a river coming down from the Sorkin Mountains and flowing into Lake Benath.

To the east lies a creepy plateau where nothing grows proper. It is only grown with mutilated conifers and patches of brown grass. It forms a cliff that falls about 45 feet to Lake Benath.

Assuming the party is either hired by the Shiran temple of Halea or one of them is a noble, the legar will generously provide them with the necessary equipment, such as ropes, shovels and so on. They will be given food for about a tenday. Water will for obvious reasons not be necessary. The stranded fisherman and his crew will be ordered to bring them to their destination on their small Venar. If the party isn't hired by the temple or doesn't include any noblemen, the party will have to pay for equipment and must try to bribe the fishermen to bring them there.

Scene 2: The arrival

After a short sea-journey, the group will arrive roughly an hour before sunset. The beach is rocky which will make landing a bit more difficult. The location lies at the mouth of the Deret, the current making it impossible to sail further westwards. To the east, the shore is rising to a cliff where landing is impossible, too. There is a small bay which seems suitable for landing. This is the location where the fishermen stranded before.

The ship runs upon a large square hewn stone and springs a leak. The vessel rapidly fills with water and both crew and party must hurry if they want to prevent all their equipment and rations from getting wet. The water is about shoulder height, so the party will become soaking wet and items transported from the ship has to be hauled over the head. When everything is finally on land, the sun is already setting. The ship has run aground on the artificial dam and hence will not sink completely but it's still leaking. The party will probably set up camp right on the shore, for there is much underbrush and it is getting dark.



ACT II: ON FOREIGN GROUND

Digging

A character of average physique can dig approximately 8 cubic feet per hour. The hole that is to be dug here has an area of 7 square feet, hence it can be assumed that a character can dig about 1 foot deep per hour. It depends on the party how fast they proceed. They have the choice of digging up to 50% faster, but then each character will only be able to dig for two hours and then needs a rest of a watch.

Scene 1: A dirty job

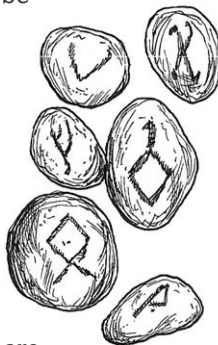
After some searching, Sharan will lead the party to the site of the strange depression. It is a small glade, surrounded by large ancient oaks and overgrown with dense shrubbery, a few hundred yards away from their camp. After clearing the glade of the underbrush, it soon becomes apparent that this depression is not of natural origin. The earth in the whole area is full of fragments of ancient pottery, bearing strange patterns. The whole place is full of those, mixed with parts of old rusted and hardly recognisable tools, remains of domestic animals and so on. They can be found anywhere, some of them lying direct on the ground, some are discovered when the party is removing the underbrush or foraging, some lie in holes which have been dug by animals. These pieces should indicate that this place was once inhabited. If any character should dig elsewhere and reach a depth of 4 to 5 feet, he will likely even discover remains of ancient pavement and stone foundations of houses. These are the remains of the city of the Sirechil, Sirion.

Digging into the spot will still take days of hard work. The fishermen will not partake in any digging since they are more than busy trying to repair their vessel. Seven feet below ground level, the party will discover a layer of 3" thick schist slabs. Further excavating will not reveal anything until a depth of about 17 feet is reached. Here the characters will suddenly pounce on a wooden surface. It turns out that this layer consists of oaken logs. Unfortunately, digging further will not reveal anything until a total depth of about 27 feet is reached.

Here, another layer like the first one will be found. Patience is advisable: Underneath this layer, there are again 10 feet of soil, leading to nothing else than another plank layer. This pattern will repeat until a depth of ca. 57 feet is reached. On the first day, the party will not be able to dig much deeper than to the first layer of wood. The problem is that there can only be one person digging in the whole at a time.

Scene 2: Mysterious signs

At a depth of 57 feet, the party will discover a number of small foundlings, which are engraved with strange signs. Trying to decipher these signs should be a presumable task for this night.

**Scene 3: Sails in the night**

It is a clouded, dark night and a cold hissing wind is coming from Lake Benath. The characters will be rather exhausted from their hard work. During this night, a ship will sail towards the Mouth of the Deret River, where several men get off and start pulling the vessel upstream. The ship is sailing in a distance, but waves clashing against something and a thrashing sound will be heard. The fishermen will become very scared and whisper to each other that this will surely be one of the fearsome monsters of lake Benath!

The truth is that this is a ship transporting a load of blindfolded miners for the Iracu mines. The mercenaries aboard this ship are the ones who killed the messenger with the hatchet. They are very cautious and watchful. They have already noticed the party's campfire and will detect any follower unless stealth rolls are CS. If they detect someone following them, they will waste no time and try to capture him – dead or alive, although alive would surely suit them better. The ship is loaded with about two dozens of blindfolded miners. The six mercenaries have, as a matter of fact, absolutely no interest in anyone witnessing their arrival. If possible, they will try to capture any witnesses, so that they can work in the mines. If that proves too difficult, they'll be satisfied with killing them off.

Scene 4: Losing ground

There is another unpleasant surprise awaiting the careless digger: Below the oaken platform the engraved foundling lie on, is a 20 feet deep void, which may result in a dangerous fall, should someone carelessly or even brutally break the oaken logs. Falling damage would be 3d6, due to the narrowness of the shaft, the hit location will be „low“. The walls are, as mentioned above even, so a grappling test will have a penalty of 10 to 30.

Note: This „trap“ appears again in a depth of 97 feet, when the oaken logs beneath the slab are broken through.

Scene 5: Into the hole

The digging goes on, seeming to be an endless task. It should be pointed out clearly what a depressing task this is, digging ever deeper into the ground, only to find another layer of logs. If the characters should be fed up of digging, the GM (maybe through the fishermen) should point out that if someone has made all this effort, there must be something very important lying at the bottom of the pit.

Later, when the characters have reached a depth of about 97 feet, they will discover a large stone slab. Clearing the stone of earth and mud will reveal that it is engraved with strange signs. If one of the players knows runic script, he will notice that these signs are runes. But unless anyone is fluent in the Khuzan language, nobody will be able to actually read the inscriptions (again, Ilan the fishermen can help out). The slab is blocking the way, so it has to be removed from the shaft. This should prove to be a rather difficult task that cannot be completed without hoisting. Beneath the slab lies, to the disappointment of all involved, yet another layer of planks.

ACT III: TROUBLES BEGIN

Note: It may happen that a cautious party is so horrified by the following events that they decide to leave (read: flee).

The GM may either let the party simply leave without any treasures, or he may make something up. Simply letting the boat crash again or letting the fixed leak break (due to bad repairs), when the ship is in deeper waters should suffice to hold them in the region for a while longer. Should the party decide to leave afoot (either southwards or eastwards), the GM could make extensive use of the encounter table to display the dangers lurking there...

Scene 1: A horrible discovery

At any time, the party will be watched by at least one of the mercenaries. When the slab is discovered, he will report to his companions and they decide that they will now intervene. As soon as the party returned to their camp, they will go to the slab and have a look at it. Since it is written in Khuzan and runes, none of them is able to understand it. So they decide to capture somebody and interrogate him.

Late the next day, Sharan the fisherman will go into the forest to gather firewood, to forage or some such. He will be kidnapped by the mercenaries. When the party returns from the shaft, the other fishermen will wonder where Sharan may be – they'll inform the party that he left some hours ago to get some supplies but hasn't returned yet. When the party goes searching for him, they'll find him lying dead in the shaft, his neck being broken. When the mercenaries captured him, they questioned him about the slab and what else had been found in the shaft. They demanded he show them the location. As soon as the players left the shaft, the mercenaries appeared out of their cover and further interrogated the poor fisherman. When the party returned to look for him, they panicked, hit him in the neck with a club and threw him into the shaft.

This should create quite some confusion among the party. Was it accident or murder? Is it a curse because they desecrated the tomb? Are they not alone? Heavy rain and the rocky surface will make it very difficult to find any tracks of the attackers.

Scene 2: More to come

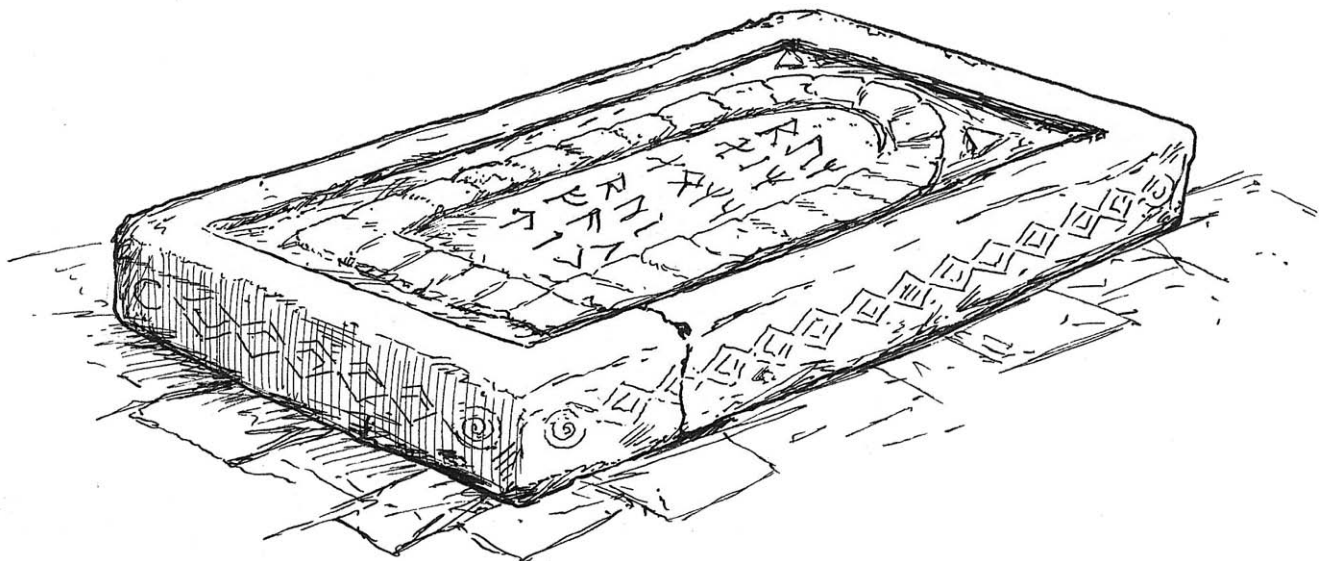
Soon after, the Kabloqui arrive at the region, making up their camp northeast of the battlefield. One of them is just going fishing when he discovers the leaking ship and sees the two fishermen who are busy trying to fix their vessel. He also notes the camps and the number of tents, suggesting that there must be more than just two people.

The tribesmen go to the cliff from where they dive to the dam and grab Ilian the fisherman, only surfacing for an instance. They grab him, drag him under water and slit his throat with a knife. The water immediately turns blood red.

While Morn flees in panic, they drag the body to the cliff, where they hide between the rocks. There, they decapitate him and return to their camp. While fleeing, Morn discovers a small rectangular hole on the bottom of the bay. This is where the square stone was used as seal to prevent water from entering the cave. He will swear that he and his comrade have been attacked and killed by one of the fell beasts of Lake Benath while repairing the vessel– the tribesmen wearing very rough hides and leather surely made a horrible sight when surfacing. He has no clue that they were actually attacked by men.

Poor Ilian's body will be found lying on a small rock, his arms and legs waving in the water, his head missing and his clothes soaked with blood.

If the party doesn't search for him, the stench of rotting flesh and the cries of birds feasting upon his body should create some curiosity.



ACT IV: SOLVING MYSTERIES

Scene 1: The Wild Ones

The tribesmen have their hidden camp northeast of the battlefield, roughly a quarter league away from the party's camp. They learned to be very careful, hence there will always be one of them on guard, hidden somewhere in the underbrush and armed with a shortbow.

Once discovered, the Kabloqui are rather easy to bargain with. They want some proof that they found the City of Gold. If the party is willing to give them the engraved foundings, they will be more than pleased and leave the party in peace. They are pretty sure that they will get the missing heads elsewhere, too.

Should the party try to attack the Kabloqui for killing Ilian and Sharan, they are in for a surprisingly tough fight. True, these are young warriors, but they are skilled beyond age.

Also keep in mind that there is always one of them hidden in the underbrush, armed with a shortbow. They show absolutely no fear of death. But since they are on a quest to prove their legend and hope that the party will have useful informations, they are surprisingly merciful for Kabloqui tribesmen.

The party will discover several severed heads at their camp, among them Ilian's. When questioned about this terrifying discovery and asked whether they threw poor Sharan into the shaft, they will deny that.

If the party hasn't found out (or suggested) yet that the strange happenings like the fire on the battlefield, the blood in the shaft, the strange tracks and so on (see "The Mercenaries" above) are the work of men, the barbarians may have noticed someone running around the place, always taking care not to be detected. This could lead the party to the mercenaries.

Scene 2: Getting close

When the party reaches a depth of 137 feet, they will discover a metal chest standing on a strong sheet of iron sealing the whole shaft. Within this chest are some very valuable items and they have been put there to distract any grave robbers from actually entering the cave.

The iron sheet will increasingly bend to the upper side, indicating that there must be an immense pressure beneath it. This should make the party careful.

Scene 3: The greedy ones

Once the players have brought the chest or its contents to the surface, the mercenaries will attack. The outcome of this fight depends on the players.

Should they be intimidated by the obvious power of the mercenaries, they will be disarmed and lavishly bound. Only one person is freed at a time to continue digging. It could be possible that one or several of the party are able to free themselves and the mercenaries will not necessarily pursue them – there are treasures waiting!

Convincing the mercenaries that penetrating the iron sheet could destroy whatever treasure lies beneath it and that it is likely to be fatal for the person in the shaft will be hard.

They know quite well about the worth of the items already discovered and are now extremely greedy. Also, they will think that this is a trick to prevent them from getting their treasure.

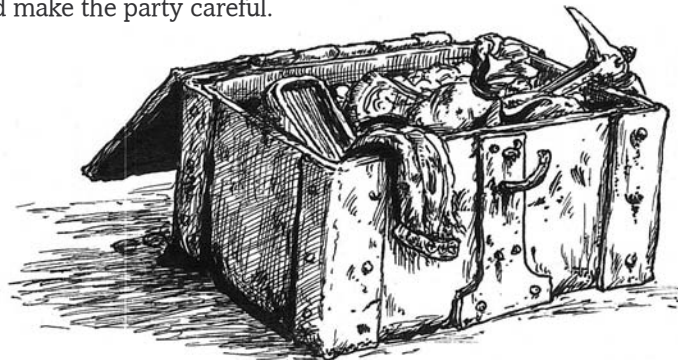
Should the party defeat the mercenaries, they can continue digging.

Scene 4: The last barrier

Removing the sheet is impossible due to the pressure from below. If the party simply continues hacking or drilling through the iron sheet (or is forced to do so by the mercenaries), it will be torn apart from the pressure and the sharp edges will severely injure the person currently in the shaft. The damage it does is at GM discretion (1d6 injuries with an edge impact of 2d6 each would do fine). If this happens, the digger will fall into the flooding cave.

When the party has reached and uncovered the iron sheet but do not penetrate it by force, they only have limited time to seal the flooding channel with the masonry that damaged the ship. If they do not seal it within the next six hours, the iron sheet will bend to a degree where it simply pops out of the shaft with a loud and widely-heard bang.

If the party manages to seal the flooding channel in time, penetrating the iron sheet will have no bad effects. It is the last barrier between the party and the cave and the party has to be careful not to fall into the cave.



ACT V: THE GRAND FINALE

Scene 1: The cave

Should the cave be flooded, the party only has about ten to fifteen minutes to explore the cave until it is completely flooded. When the party enters the flooding cave, they will notice the fountain of water in the southeastern corner. It will hardly be possible to tear down the wall to the burial chamber in time (GM discretion). Should the flooding channel be sealed, the party will only discover that the cave is flooded to a height of about three to four feet. There is nothing to be found in the cave, except for a few burned out torches, and some mason's tools, old and corroded.

If the party tears down the southeastern wall, they will only discover the natural tunnel behind it. Behind the northwestern wall lies the burial chamber of Irazûd of Khazir. His elaborately carved sarcophagus is located at the centre and on the walls, there are several burned down torches.

Scene 2: Irazûd's Curse

Anyone inside the burial chamber at that time the sarcophagus is opened will suffer the curse of Irazûd. This is actually a very aggressive fungus that has befallen the dwarven leader's body. It will attack the lungs of those who inhale the dust. It takes a few days for the curse to take effect.

People suffering the curse of Irazûd will have difficulties breathing. They will have fever after a few days and some days later, they start coughing blood. This will increase until they die after about two tendays unless they are successfully treated. The fungus is treated as a disease with a Contagion Index of 2 and a healing rate of 2.

In the sarcophagus lies the body of Irazûd, fully armoured in an old and corroded chain mail, a 3/4 helm on his head. His round shield is lying on his chest, his hands lying on it. They are clutching an ancient tome (his journal) and his beloved battleaxe.

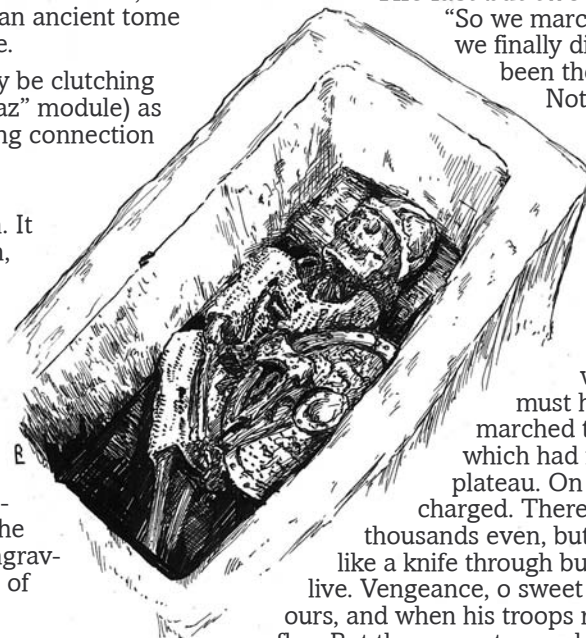
Note: At GM discretion, Irazûd may be clutching one of the keys to Kiraz (see the "Kiraz" module) as well. This could become an interesting connection to the "In Search of Panaga" Trilogy.

The battleaxe

This was Irazûd's favourite weapon. It served him well in the battle of Sirion, splitting the skull of many an orc. It looks rather plain except for a few adornments, but is of excellent quality (WQ 15) plus it is enchanted to prevent any mundane damage.

The shield

This is a wooden roundshield with painted kurbul covering. Its side is covered with a metal band preventing weapons from entering into the wood. It bears a metal buckle with engravings. The painting is the achievement of Clan Khazir. Its emblazoning is:



"Quarterly, argent and ermines. On the first and fourth a molet of six points gules and on the second and third, a ram rampant proper sinister."

Irazûd's journal

This is probably the most valuable item that can be found in Sirion. It contains detailed informations about Kiraz and both the Carnage of Kiraz and the Battle of Sirion. Unfortunately, the upper rim of the book have been befallen by a fungus and hence, the dates are illegible.

The last entries from Irazûd's journal:

The last but three page:

"Oh, the terror that strikes my heart! The sight that struck me poor eye, leaving me wishing to turn blind! Doomed we are as a people! When his Highness returned with us from Uthel, where we had been hunting supplies for the onstanding winter, the most terrible sight imaginable appeared to us. Foulspawn! Foulspawn on the walls of Kiraz! They were everywhere – walking around in front of the main gate! When we approached, we recognized they were just busy burning the mortal remains of our kin! The elders, the women - even the children! Our king wasted no time and attacked immediately. The slaughter was great and the victory was ours, but for what price! We smashed and slaughtered the surprisingly few foulspawn, but what we saw when we had defeated them left us with a bleeding heart and a dark spot on our souls. From a captured foulspawn, we got the information that it was of course the work of Lothrim Foulspawner, who had come to take a tome the Gargun referred to as the "penultimate tome". Under torture, he also told us that his master himself had left for Sirion, where his fleet lies.

There was no time to loose. Almost running, we made our way to Sirion where we would have our vengeance for the carnage of Kiraz."

The last but two page:

"So we marched without rest until we finally discovered what had once been the Sirechil city of Sirion.

Not surprised were we that the Foulspawner had also destroyed this settlement and burned everything to the ground with his manfeasting, raping, and plundering hordes of Gargun.

The city had burned to the ground and the ashes were long cold – Lothrim must have come here before he marched to Kiraz. We found his army, which had made camp on a nearby plateau. On a terrible rage of fury, we charged. There were hundreds of Gargun, thousands even, but we went through them like a knife through butter, letting none of them live. Vengeance, o sweet vengeance! The day was ours, and when his troops realised that, they tried to flee. But they were trapped and we drove them over

the cliff and watched how the fallen ones smashed to death on the feather-edged rocks below. Oh what a relieving sight! Late in the battle, I was struck by an ork arrow in the back of my chest. The arrow pierced my armour and I felt a cold chilling pain. Finally, Lothrim was overwhelmed by his honour guard and delivered to us. I cannot say much about this, for I commanded the troops on the other side of the battlefield, but it seems they delivered him in a pledge for mercy. Pah! Merciful we were in slaughtering them quickly!

Foulspawner and his «honour guard» were taken prisoners and a few select soldiers, masons and smiths were chosen to bury them – alive. When I spoke to the king later on, he just told me that he had made sure that they were imprisoned forever, in a tome sealed with “good stone and mortar”, that were his words.

Much to our shame, large parts of the foulspawn army were able to escape with us being too exhausted to follow them. We left their remains on the battlefield to be devoured by the crows that were already gathering. Cursed be this place forevermore, with hundreds and thousands of foulspawn dying here.”

The last but one page:

„We will return to our dear Kiraz to bury the dead, our King decided. The path we chose will lead us back to our deep halls. A long and dangerous journey this is going to be. Bleeding is the heart of each of us, and the mourning is great. Now that our task to destroy him who shall not be named anymore is completed, there is nothing left to occupy us, nothing that distracts us from the pain. We will bury our dead and after that, only grief will remain in our hearts forever.“

The last page:

„Early this morning, I awoke from a feverish sleep. My chest hurts badly with every breath I take. One of our physicians ailed my wounds, but this brought me little relief. I heard him whisper with one of my captains, they were talking about my wound and that the arrow seems to have been poisoned. I passed out again and awoke late this evening, unable to move my legs. I fear that this will be my last evening on Kethira before Siem calls me to him. I ordered my men with fainting voice to bury me where no one will ever be able to desecrate my grave. I know there are still many orks in the area and I don't want them to feast upon my flesh and bones...”

With this last sentences scribbled in illegible runes, Irazûd's journal ends. That very night, he passed away and was buried according to his wishes deep beneath Sirion, in a tomb that could never be opened again.

CONCLUSION

The good

Should the characters actually overcome all obstacles and retrieve the items from Irazûd's tomb, and be so honest to deliver them to the temple, they will be rewarded accordingly. The high-priestess offers each player a sum of 400d, but may be talked up to 500d. It doesn't matter much whether the party has kept a few items - the temple is mainly interested in the written works anyway. Handing over only the written works without any additional items might make her suspicious, though.

How much the party gets if they try to sell the other items they found, depends on whom they offer to sell it. It would be wise, though, not to sell it in Shiran and surroundings, since the temple would surely not be pleased.

The bad

In the course of the adventure, the players might have drawn “Irazûd's curse” upon them. This fungus, as explained above, attacks the lungs and may even cause the death of the PCs, who will have to find a capable physician soon. This could (should?) cost a large part of what the players just received as reward. How much the treatment will finally cost and of what it consists, depends on the GM's imagination/cruelty.

The ugly

The players, who have hopefully been wise enough not to attack the mercenary camp in Sirion, now know about this very secret operation. The miner's guild and the mercenaries they hired don't know exactly how much the characters found out, but they basically don't care. The players know too much and have to be made silent. This might be a possible introduction to further complications and adventures in beautiful Tharda, with all its Thardic Red, busy traders and “intriguing” politics...

GM NOTES

Carved in Stone

Adventure
Module

Carved in stone is an adventure specifically designed for use with HârnWorld. It is set in the Sirion region on the northwestern shore of Lake Benath, a region inhabited by fierce barbarian tribes and bloodthirsty gargun.

The crew of a stranded fisherboat discovered an ancient Khuzdul hatchet and brought it home to their lord. A messenger was immediately sent to the Shiran Temple of Halea. The priestesses are fascinated by the discovery, sending the players to Sirion, in hope of discovering written works related to the infamous Sirion Scrolls.

Unfortunately, the messenger spent an evening in a Shiran tavern, boasting that this hatchet was the key to an immense ancient treasure. A band of mercenaries from the secret mines of Iracu overheard his tale and murdered him.

The party is sent to Sirion to recover any items of value.

The fishermen will lead the party to the location where they discovered the hatchet. It lies in the proximity of the secret mine supporting station at Sirion and the battlefield of the Battle of Sirion.

In addition to the troubles the mercenaries will cause, there is also a band of young Kabloqui tribesmen in the region, performing the “dancing with skulls” ritual and looking for a mythical place they call the “City of Gold”.

Will the players discover the truth about the place? Will they be able to defeat their opponents? Will they live to find the treasure buried deep within the bosom of Kethira?

