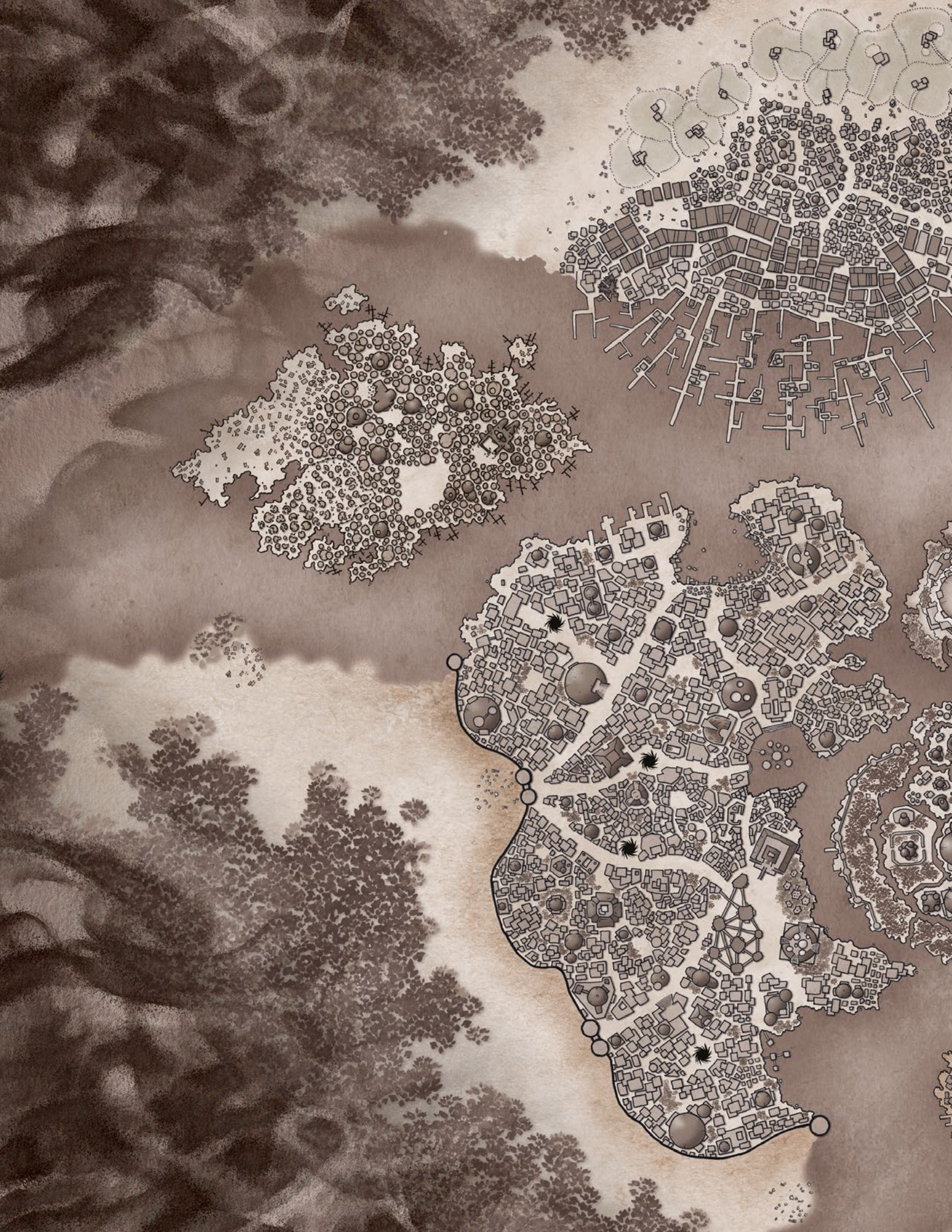


BLACK VOID™



THOSE WHO WOULD BE GODS

A BLACK VOID RPG CAMPAIGN BY
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SURVIVAL IS ONLY THE BEGINNING...

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SPECIAL THANKS TO
Therese Schultz Sevaldsen, Gulf Role-playing Community, the Sevaldsen family
and all the amazing Kickstarter backers who believed in the project!

PUBLISHED BY
BLACK VOID GAMES
Amaliegade 13B, 3.mf.
1256 Copenhagen K
Denmark
www.blackvoidgames.com

ISBN 978-87-93781-02-3
Product code: BVG003D / MUH051839
1st edition

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It is merely a game, meant to entertain and excite... Nothing more, nothing less!

THOSE WHO WOULD BE GODS



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SCENARIO SETUP

If you are unfamiliar with running Black Void scenarios this section clarifies the various elements and explain what is what and how it all works.

A scenario is a story much like the plot in a book, but with the distinct difference that the story is not fixed, and the players actions decide how the story progress. For convenience the scenario is divided into scenes, making it easier for Arbiters to control and narrate the story.

Each scene introduction contains a brief synopsis of what is intended to happen, the location of the scene and the primary non-player characters (NPC).

Scenes are written in the most common order of occurrence, but that is a guideline and not a given. Character actions may circumvent possible encounters or consequences. The Arbiter can always switch scenes around in order or change things in accordance with character decisions.

In addition to the continuing storyline, scenes also contain events that occur progressively, triggered events that depend on how the players decide to progress and timed events that occur at specific times regardless of what the characters are doing.

Some scenes have arbitrary events occurring either randomly or at the Arbiter's discretion to add further elements and drama to the story.

The scenario often provides several ways to get from one scene to the next allowing for players to follow multiple paths in the story rather than leading them on a specific path.

Whenever there is an opportunity for characters to obtain pertinent information about a particular plot-relevant subject matter an enquiry table is provided. If the characters succeed in an enquiry the Arbiter can either choose which information they managed to gather or make a roll to randomise the result from the table.

The same applies to examinations where a table is provided with various observations that can be made by the characters.

Throughout the scenario supplementary information is noted in boxes to assist the Arbiter with NPC interactions or providing knowledge about places, occurrences and people. While most obstacles and tasks in the scenario follow the regular rules regarding action difficulties, some have specified predetermined difficulty ratings that are marked in square brackets [].

These three scenarios are part of a campaign designed for new characters in the Black Void setting. The scenarios have fairly linear plots and are tailored to introduce players to a number of central themes, notable people, species and locations of the Black Void setting.

This campaign involves a number of people, places and groups important to the progresion of the plot.

To give Arbiters an easy overview each of the three parts of the story is preceded by a synopsis as well as an overview of the notable people, main locations and prominent factions in the given scenario.

Complete details including game characteristics, skills, combat abilities and personality information on antagonists, allies and other Non-player characters as well as various tables and hand-outs can be found at the back of the book.

Additional background stories and information on the various creatures, peoples and species found in the Eternal City can be found in the Black Void core rule book.

THE STORY

PART I - WHEN DARKNESS FALLS

The initial plot revolves around the abduction of an enclave elder by a secret cult, with a series of ominous sub-plots intertwined into the main story.

The scenario is designed with a difficulty and suitable range of challenges for 2-5 starting characters, each of 48 points.

However, the encounters and trials can be adapted to accommodate a more challenging experience for the players if needed.

The story is one of betrayal, power struggles, intrigue and otherworldly terror, wrapped in action and revealed layer by layer as the players get deeper into the mire of the plot.

The scenario is made up of eight scenes as shown below.

SCENE 1: THE EVE OF FOUNDING (intro)
SCENE 2: THE ABDUCTION
SCENE 3: AFTERMATH
SCENE 4: THE PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT
SCENE 5: BEHIND THESE WALLS
SCENE 6: MANSION IN DARKNESS
SCENE 7: WHAT LIES BENEATH
SCENE 8: THE RITUAL

It is recommended that the Arbiter takes time to familiarise him or herself well with the scenario, getting a sense of the plot, the relevant locations as well as the NPC's by reading the scenario and relevant chapters at least a few times before running the scenario.

Recommended setting chapters in the Black Void core rule book include the Dhaarese and Pai'Karaan location chapters.

Throughout the first scenario characters experience memory flashbacks as specific events occur or places are explored.

These memories are linked to the past giving suspicions of past events and why the characters are entangled in the current events.

Through exploration and investigation, the characters begin to discover the harsh reality for mankind in the Eternal City as well as catching a glimpse of some dark secrets underneath the glittering surfaces and perhaps hints of their own unknown past.

PART II - THE VEILED INSCRIPTIONS

The scenario is designed for 2-5 characters who have advanced enough to attain 60 to 75 character points, and likely one ranking in enlightenment (note that only characters with an Awareness score of 3 or higher can become enlightened).

Some protagonists should have Void sensitivity by the time these events unfold. Note that while unenlightened people can experience the Void and travel through it, they simply cannot comprehend it in any meaningful way.

The plot of part II continues the storyline from part I and introduces a group of greedy and powerful beings exploiting a poor boy to communicate with a abominable Void entity to obtain knowledge and learn secrets.

This module involves goals needed to attain information and the resources required to prevent the innocent boy from being wholly contorted and consumed by the Void, with subplots revealing information about the occurrences of part I and leading deeper into the events of the third module.

The scenario is made up of six scenes as shown below.

SCENE 1: TAHMTAN SEEKS AID
SCENE 2: MURKY WATERS
SCENE 3: ON UNKNOWN PATHS
SCENE 4: INTO THE DARK
SCENE 5: THE KIMIAYIY MARKAZ
SCENE 6: THE BOY

Recommended setting chapters in the Black Void core rule book include the Daer Bitaan location chapter.

PART III - DUST TO DUST

Following the events of part I and II, the siblings now have the enmity of the Qamsa and other city factions. Part III will follow the protagonists' attempt to thwart the Qamsa permanently.

The plot of this volume involves the siblings seeking to destroy the Qamsa themselves, learning along the way that their enemy was a potent force behind the original self-serving Darkened Sun faction.

They will seek out one learned enough in the ways of the

Void to advise them on what changes to the Ruyah recipe are needed.

With that knowledge, they leave the city and set out to find a warlord named Z'truk while battling through Qamsa assassins, wild beasts, difficult terrain, and weather hazards.

Either by negotiation and offers of service or by subterfuge or force, the protagonists learn from Z'truk that the Ruyah needs an increased measure of a dust called Black Samita from an inhospitable world nearly cut off from the Void.

Once this is obtained, the siblings will need to figure out how to make a batch of Ruyah with a sufficient quantity of Black Samita, which is exorbitantly expensive.

Creating this concoction and using it themselves allows them to visit the Qamsa's world (known by Scholars as the borderworld of Ghabar) and attempt to destroy them.

Meanwhile, The Qamsa are attempting to close the entrance to their world via the Node and Vortex Gateway; at the same time, they are trying to manipulate Void currents so that direct and swift transit can be achieved at their new outpost in the jungle.

In a final battle, the siblings' heritage (rituals started but not completed by their parents' sect) allow them greater strength here than ordinary mortals commonly possess. If they have acted with intelligence and guile, the protagonists can achieve victory and return to the Eternal City. The scenario is designed for 2-5 characters who have advanced enough to attain 75 to 95 character points, likely several rankings in enlightenment and Wastah with a few affluent personages.

The scenario is made up of six scenes as shown below.

SCENE 1: RUMOURS AND LEADS
SCENE 2: THE JUNGLES OF NIGHT
SCENE 3: Z'TRUK 'S DILEMMAS
SCENE 4: S'BALYA'S GAMBIT
SCENE 5: A RETURN
SCENE 6: DIVIDE AND FALL

Recommended setting chapters in the Black Void core rule book include the Pai'Karaan location chapter as well as the Llyhn environs section.



PART 卐

WHEN DARKNESS FALLS

PLOT SYNOPSIS

All the characters are fostered or tutored by Telal - an elderly human man - in a small hovel in the lowly Dhaarese district of Llyhn. The characters were brought up believing that Telal found them in the streets abandoned or otherwise lost from their family when they were young. The truth of the matter however is far more profound and sinister than that. Telal murdered their parents, as they were members of a sect worshipping the mindless abominations of the Void. Telal is convinced that the siblings are key in his struggle to fight against this sect but has kept this a secret and not involved them yet. When he took them in, he gave each a concoction made from herbs that muddle the memory and make recollections vanish as he wants to preserve the siblings' ignorance of the past. Somewhere on their body however, each character has a tattoo of a twelve-pointed sun associated with this sect, and during the scenario they begin having flashbacks to their real past spurring a suspicion of the true meaning and connotations of their tattoo symbol and a realisation that not everything is as it seems.

As the scenario begins the characters gather in the Feeradani enclave in the ShallowWater area of the Dhaarese district to meet their foster father who has been away. Telal however, does not come and quickly the situation deteriorates as a group of raiders set fire to outlying enclave buildings as a distraction to enable the abduction of an enclave councillor named Tehmeena. The siblings discover that the abducted councillor is the confidante of their missing foster father - and the connection between the two disappearances soon becomes evident as the characters are drawn into a precarious res-cue attempt.

Behind the scenes a young and ambitious enclave councillor named Behzad has covertly collaborated with an alien entity known as Na'Aqh in order to devise the abduction and removal of Tehmeena. He seeks to eliminate his influential rival without implicating himself but gets ensnared in the clandestine schemes of Na'Aqh.

The chase leads the characters to the mansion of an eccentric alien aristocrat known as the Mirza. The Mirza has a deranged fascination with mankind and keeps a collection of human slaves in her mansion. The slaves live in constant fear due to mental and physical abuse visited upon them by the Mirza in her delusional eccentricity. Recent mysterious disappearances among the household slaves also add an aspect of trepidation to the situation. The disappearances however seem to be balanced by an inflow of new slaves procured by the Mirza's leading advisor Na'Aqh.

Na'Aqh is an Aml'Nāgru, multi-bodied being with a single conscience. It has discovered a slight Void-rift located in a cavern beneath the Aristocrat's mansion and is secretly re-establishing a secret society known as the Darkened Sun, gathering zealous followers to help it attract the attention of the mindless ghostly abominations in an absurd scheme to ascend and become Bel Ade U Mamit: the (mad) prophet servants of the Void entities.

Na'Aqh and Telal have an enduring enmity as their paths have crossed in the past resulting in the collapse of a previous attempt at ascension, connected to the siblings' parents' death. Now the Aml'Nāgru is determined to eliminate Telal believing that he may hold the key to ascension. To this end it deceptively serves the Mirza, while covertly utilising her re-sources and fascination with humanity to further its own schemes.

Surrounded by sycophants and manipulated by Na'Aqh's deceptions the alien Aristocrat has little notion about what is actually going on - and is only too eager to expand her collection of humans - playing directly into the Aml'Nāgru stratagem. In order to attract the attention of the mindless abominations to the Void rift Na'Aqh is ritualistically sacrificing human slaves; offering them as bait in the rift causing odd phenomena to occur as the Void emanates into the cavern and obscure denizens of the Void draw near. In its eagerness to achieve ascension Na'Aqh gradually becomes careless and its true nature as a triplet entity as well as its involvement in the disappearances and replacement of slaves may become apparent.

Na'Aqh is eventually completely caught up in its rituals and no longer care about its pretence towards the Aristocrat or others. Each day it escalates the rituals until an abomination is approaching and Na'Aqh is ready to sacrifice Telal and Tehmeena to bring its plan to completion.

The ritual is commenced, and an entity does indeed emerge - to the regret of the gathered zealots as it begins to devour and devastate the congregation. In the ensuing chaos one of the Na'Aqh triplet is caught and dragged to its death while the identity and involvement of Behzad is revealed to the siblings. As the cavern begins to collapse and all seek to make their escape the remaining Na'Aqh split up with a captive each; complicating any rescue attempt. A final confrontation in the mansion grounds - now dominated by a large crater - sees the Na'Aqh swearing vengeance and making its escape as the siblings are left to face the fury of the shocked Mirza and her household guards.

NOTABLE PEOPLE

BEHZAD: A young and overly ambitious enclave councillor - caught in his own schemes.

FEERADA: The despotic founder and leader of the Feeradani human enclave in Shallowwater.

KÛN AZHAR: A former mercenary turned enclave protector and leader of its militia.

MAIARA: A female Je'ehl Pariah - proprietor of House of Maiara.

NA'AQH: A triplet Aml'Nāqru serving as advisor to the Mirza - the scheming abductor.

SAYU MAH: Talath overseer who is blind on one eye - conspirator and abductor.

TAHMTAN: An Im'Zu chatter broker - habitually keeping court in Maiara's den.

TEHMEENA: An elder female enclave councillor and ally of Telal - abducted by raiders.

TELAL: An old human male - foster-father and patron of the characters.

THE MIRZA: An ostracized Harith aristocrat engrossed by a deranged fascination with humans.

MAIN LOCATIONS

DHAARESE DISTRICT: A poor district on the southern banks of the river Margidda in the Eternal City.

THE FEERADANI ENCLAVE: Human commune in the ShallowWater area.

HOUSE OF MAIARA: A leisure and pleasure establishment in Pai'Karaan.

THE MIRZA MANSION: An extravagant mansion located in the Pai'Karaan district.

PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT: A wealthy district on the eastern shore of the river.

TELAL'S DWELLING: An abandoned and trashed hovel in the Dhaarese district.



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GROUPS & FACTIONS

THE CULT OF THE DARKENED SUN: A gathering of fanatical zealots and abductors following Na'Aqh.

HIRELINGS: Six bullies hired by Behzad for personal protection and muscle.

MANSION GUARDS: The mansion guards, consisting primarily of Ba'Waikh guardsmen with several Talath overseers.

RASHA GALAM: The constabularies, militia and agents of the Feeradani enclave - led by Kûn Azhar.

SCENE OVERVIEW

SCENE 1: THE EVE OF FOUNDING (intro)

SCENE 2: THE ABDUCTION

SCENE 3: AFTERMATH

SCENE 4: THE PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT

SCENE 5: BEHIND THESE WALLS

SCENE 6: MANSION IN DARKNESS

SCENE 7: WHAT LIES BENEATH

SCENE 8: THE RITUAL



CHARACTER CREATION

Players are free to use a pre-generated character or create their own.

Refer to the Character Creation chapter in the Black Void core rule book for details on how to build your character.

Characters are created with 48 points as per normal without any further restrictions except that their patron is Telal; the elderly human who fostered or tutored them. They all have a secret tattoo of a twelve-rayed sun somewhere on their body.

Equipment: The characters have been separated from their foster father long enough to have standard equipment, wealth and income.



CHARACTER BACK-STORY

Let each player read the following text as basis for his or her character.

Remembering little about your early life, your memories are mostly of fright; hunger and sedition, until you found yourself in a gutter in the slums of an outlandish and alien city. Surrounded by thugs, beggars and lepers of strange and bizarre species you fought for survival, begging scraps and scrounging on the refuse of high castes spitting on you from lofty palanquins... until an elderly and kind man came across you, extended his hand and simply said: "Come with me".

You gathered what little possessions you had and followed the elder to his home. He called himself Telal and in his home you were fed and clothed. The hovel you lived in was small and shabby, but that hardly mattered - there was food, shelter and companionship; everything a young human in Llyhn could dare dream of.

You were not the only lost human Telal took into his hovel and under his wings. Nine "siblings" were brought in and grew up under Telal's patronage. You and your siblings became inseparable: It was you against the world and Telal was the centre of your existence.

Over the years you were trained, educated and rigorously taught skills preparing you for a rough life of conflict in the harsh underworld of the Eternal City.

Occasionally Telal brought you to the Feeradani enclave in the ShallowWater area of the Dhaarese district on the western banks of the river Margidda to familiarise yourself with one of the human communities in the Eternal City.

It was during one of these trips that Telal explained the meaning of your archaic ward tattoo - which you have had ever since you can remember. The tattoo depicts a stylised sun with twelve rays of varying lengths, each supposedly symbolising one of the Deities of your abandoned Earth. Telal warned you never to tell anybody about it - including your siblings - lest it lose its protective power.

As time passed and you grew older Telal often put your acquired skills to use, asking you to perform various tasks and assignments for him: Some simple and practical while others were obscure and without apparent purpose.

Your siblings left the old man's care to find their own path in life, and eventually so did you several monsoon cycles ago.

Recently Telal left on an undisclosed errand; asking you all to meet in the Feeradani enclave on the eve of the founding.

Today is the day of founding and as the yellowish skies of Llyhn begin to darken above you, you walk across the rickety suspension bridge onto the creaking platforms of the enclave, heading for the central plaza...





Feerada - Matron of the Feeraday enclave

SCENE 1: THE EVE OF FOUNDING

SCENE SYNOPSIS

This opening scene is intended for the players to introduce their characters to each other. The siblings arrive for their meeting with Telal at the enclave festivities.

A good portion of the enclave residents are attending and among these are four prominent enclave members seated at a high table: Feerada (enclave leader), Kûn Azhar (leader of the Keepers), Tehmeena (elder councillor) and Behzad (young councillor). Telal however is not there...

LOCATION

THE FEERADANI ENCLAVE: The human enclave is located in Dhaarese, a poor district on the banks of the river Margidda in the Eternal City.

Pile dwellings and stilt structures dominate the area bordering the waterfront and ramshackle clay and mud warehouses, workshops and dwellings confusedly built on top of each other dominate the district.

The enclave is built above the muddy waters of the river on several unstable platforms connected by suspension bridges. A central platform holding principal structures and a small plaza is crammed in between the raggedy buildings of the enclave.

Eight connected platforms support the regular resident dwellings, a few workshops and storerooms, a smithy, a drinking den and several fishing quays. One platform is close to shore and provides access to land.

Two mooring platforms with a few small fishing vessels and skiffs are connected to the main platform.

The smell of dead fish, tar and refuse permeate the air from the water lapping against the hulls of the small boats and barges tied to piles alongside the houses.



Torches and oil lamps cast flickering lights across the enclave, creating deep moving shadows among the buildings and dull reflections on the muddy river water; home to the notorious silt sharks.

NPC's

Feerada, Kûn Azhar, Tehmeena and Behzad.



SCENE 1

The scene begins as the characters arrive at the central plaza of the enclave. Read or paraphrase the following: "The yellowish skies of Llyhn are darkening as you enter the central enclave platform. A feeling of home emanates from the place, even though it is a shantytown peopled by a ragged and pitiable lot. As you observe the crowded plaza set with tables you sense merriment as platters of food and drink is brought out.

You notice a few keepers patrolling the surrounding platforms and at the far end of the plaza, at a slightly raised dais, the enclave leader sits with her council, encircled by guards. As you look around you catch sight of several of your siblings converging on a table towards the back of the plaza and you begin to make your way towards them."

The plaza is fairly crowded with approximately four hundred mainly human residents and a few - mostly indiscernible - half-breed and Void-marked residents speaking quietly among themselves. Families and regular residents are celebrating with their children feasting on bland bread, fish and vegetables gulped down with cheap riverweed-wine - but judging by the general condition of the enclave and the way the guests enjoy it, it is indeed considered a feast.

Twenty or more keepers are stationed as guards around the plaza. They are easily recognisable as they are armed and wearing tabards with a crudely stitched lamassu (winged bull with a human face); the icon of the Keepers.

As the characters arrive at the table the players can introduce and describe themselves, keeping in mind that although the characters know one another they may not have seen each other for a while. It is notable that Telal is not there and none of the characters have heard from him recently.

As the evening progress the characters can mingle and make enquiries using socialise, enquiry or a similar skill [7] to obtain information about the enclave and its prominent people. It is generally known that Feerada founded this enclave about thirty years ago and has continually been struggling with factions who see humanity only as a nuisance to be exploited or eradicated. She is the sole reason this ragtag of humanity is still held together.

The guests will generally act wary and only reluctantly divulge further information, preferring to keep to themselves and the people they know. If the characters try to inquire specifically about Telal, only a few know who the old man is - and those that do know of him do not have any current information about his whereabouts. Most keepers ignore them, telling them to mind their own business or - if pressed - admitting that there have been a few incidents recently, but unwilling to divulge more and claiming that there is nothing to warrant concern. Upon successful enquiries the Arbiter can reveal information from the inquiries table.

TABLE 1.1 : ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE ENCLAVE

- "There are several factions bend on the ruin of the enclave and the enslavement of its inhabitants. Some of them because of Feerada's aggressive politics towards others."
- "There seems to be dissention among Feerada's counsellors. Feerada propagates an aggressive approach followed by Behzad, generally contrasted by Tehmeena who advise a more restrained approach."
- Exceptional success: "Following a recent heated argument with Tehmeena Behzad has changed demeanour, seeming more withdrawn and nervous as if fearing reprisal."
- Exceptional success: "The enclave is on alert as several notable humans have vanished without a trace in the past months."

If the characters try to approach the dais and high table they are stopped by keepers and not allowed to go further. Counsellor Behzad however, approaches them to introduce himself: "One thinks you are the progenies of Telal? One is called Behzad and is councillor to Feerada. One would speak with you later and discuss important matters? But now one must be excused as one has other matters to attend to." Behzad leaves to speak with some of his men.

Allow the players to finish their internal introductions, speak further with the guests they wish and perform any menial tasks they desire. Characters surveying the behaviour trying to notice odd behaviour or other out-of-place occurrences can use the observation skill [7].

TABLE 1.2 : OBSERVATIONS DURING THE FESTIVITIES

- Behzad has a nervous look to him and sunken eyes as if from lack of sleep. He and his men seem agitated and keep close to the dais.
- Behzad often gets up and strolls around to have whispered conversations with six armed men (obviously in his employ).
- Some of the guards surrounding the dais are not keepers, but seemingly employed by Behzad.
- While you are largely ignored by the celebrating people, your coming seems to draw acute interest from several people (Behzad, Kûn Azhar and Tehmeena)

As the massive red suns finally set and the shadows deepen the wine has made the mood more cheerful among the gathered an odd stench fills the air...

SCENE II: THE ABDUCTION

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Three strategically lit fires are used as a distraction for abductors to capture Tehmeena. The abduction has been planned in collaboration with Behzad who is eager to get rid of the old councillor to further his own agenda. Behzad and his hire-lings will covertly help the abductors while obstructing any attempt to hinder the abduction. Once the capture is complete the abductors flee across the river to a mansion in the Pai'Karaan district. Behzad has planned the abduction for this moment to instil a crisis while making sure that he, himself, cannot be suspected of foul play as he "fought" the attackers.

LOCATION

THE FEERADANI ENCLAVE: The enclave is a chaotic maze of small alleyways and passages between shoddy dwellings built from whatever materials the residents could scrounge and scavenge.

NPC's

Feerada, Kûn Azhar, Tehmeena, Behzad and Sayu Mah (Talath conspirator).

SCENE II

Read or summarise the following: "You notice an acrid smell of smoke in the air and suddenly someone is shouting FIRE! People leap to their feet and point towards an outlying platform where flickering lights of flames growing rapidly can be seen as dark billowing smoke rise towards the nebulous heavens. More fires erupt explosively on two additional outer platforms and panic starts to spread among the gathered crowd."

Storehouses on three separate platforms on the periphery of the enclave are in full blaze and as the keepers and principal council members rush to oversee the operation. The remaining people - intoxicated and frightened - slowly realise that something is terribly wrong. A few sober people begin ushering people towards the bridges leading off the central plaza, but rapidly the situation worsens as anxiety seems to grip people and the shuffling devolves into a full panicked scramble; people trampling each other like a stampeding herd in their headless flight.

TABLE 2.1 : OBSERVATIONS DURING THE FIRE

- While the keepers, Feerada and Kûn rush towards the fires Tehmeena and Behzad remain at the dais: Tehmeena obviously too old, Behzad for unknown reasons.
- During the Panic Behzad's men can be spotted urging people to leave the square, perhaps contributing to the panic, while they themselves hang back.

EVENT 2:1 - FIGHTING THE FIRE

The characters decide to assist in fighting the fire and must decide which of the three fires to run to: Refer to the enclave map. Regardless of which location they decide to go to recite or paraphrase the following: "As you run across the rickety bridge towards the fire you realise the chaos surrounding you - People scrambling around in the darkness, smoke billowing between the ramshackle buildings reducing visibility and the light from the fires reflecting in the muddy waters below the platforms adding further to the confusion."

As the characters struggle through the panicked crowds towards the burning buildings they might get separated or even lost in the confusing warren of the enclave. As they cross the suspension bridges and connecting platforms characters surveying their surroundings can make observations from table 2.2 on a successful Awareness roll [9].

TABLE 2.2 : OBSERVATIONS FIGHTING THE FIRE

- The PC's will notice a boat with 3-4 shadowy figures moving towards the plaza between the platforms.
- The characters will catch a glimpse of the main platform and notice that a fight is happening.
- A sweet and permeating scent of oil indicates that the fire is not accidental.

In case the characters choose to double back they arrive in time to see Tehmeena being dragged - pleading and crying - into a boat and the abductors setting off.

If the characters decide to press on, they will arrive at the fire and assist bringing water and dousing the flames however they see fit. Once the fire has been more or less put out, they overhear Keepers being called back to the main plaza and that someone has been abducted during the blaze.

EVENT 2:2 - STAYING AT THE PLAZA

The plaza begins to clear of the panicked crowd as the characters stay to observe the chaos unfolding in the enclave as the blazes are fought.

Six of Behzad's men stay behind to protect him and Tehmeena who remain in the plaza. Behzad's men will keep the characters at bay under pretence of protecting the councillors.

The characters can seek to intimidate or convince them to back off [9] but will be held off while doing so. The hirelings have no personal interest however and will not risk injury if physically threatened.

EVENT 2:3 - THE ABDUCTION

A group of seventeen raiders, four boatmen and Sayu Mah - the Talath overseer loyal to Na'Aqh - are staging an abduction in the enclave. The raiders are clad in dark earthy colours with heads wrapped in shawls and all fanatical zealots acting on Na'Aqh's orders.

Eleven raiders, Sayu Mah and two boatmen land in two skiffs at the mooring dock on the outer side of the central platform while six others set ablaze the outlying buildings using two small rowing boats; causing a distraction for the guards and leaders of the enclave.

The massive Talath and two boatmen wait on the docks by the two skiffs as several raiders strip the docked boats of oars and sails - throwing them into the dark water - while the remaining raiders emerge abruptly onto the platform rushing towards their target, Behzad and his hirelings.

According to plan Behzad retreats while making a show of fighting the raiders and ordering his hirelings to protect Tehmeena. The hirelings close ranks around the councilwoman pretending to defend against the unknown raiders, while in reality they are blocking her escape.

The characters may notice that something is off with the way the hirelings are acting on a successful Awareness roll [9].

As the raiders close in, the hirelings soon fall back or collapse in mock displays of injury allowing the abductors to seize Tehmeena and hurriedly escort her pleading and crying towards the waiting skiffs.

TABLE 2.3 : OBSERVATIONS AT THE ABDUCTION

- The raiders are either incompetent or avoiding hurting the defending hirelings.
- The hirelings are either incompetent or deliberately fighting poorly and retreating.
- Exceptional success: The characters will realise that the hirelings are actively keeping Tehmeena close to the raiders and then falling back.

ENCOUNTER 2:4 - FACING THE RAIDERS

Antagonists: Raiders, boatmen and Sayu Mah

Conditions: Darkness and flickering torch light causes -1 to actions while unstable and rickety footing induce -1 to all balance rolls.

If any of the characters attempt to intervene, an equivalent number of raiders quickly intercede and confront them.

The raiders believe that this is another part of the ruse and feign their attacks. If the characters are struck it may become apparent to them that the raiders are either feigning their blows or extremely unlucky, since the attacks only cause minimal possible harm - 1 point of damage.

The raiders are startled by the characters' genuine counterattack, acting bewildered. As soon as they realise that these defenders are not part of the ruse they signal warnings to their waiting leader on the docks, who quickly orders a retreat of all non-engaged raiders to secure Tehmeena and sail away on the first skiff, leaving a few raiders on the dock to cover the escape.

As the characters get involved in the fighting Behzad's hirelings bewilderedly retreat and remain out of the fight. The raiders continue fighting until Tehmeena is safely away or if they become seriously threatened and then flee.

As the raiders disengage from combat, they will sprint off the platform, fleeing on gangways towards the docks and jump on the second skiff ready to sail them towards Pai'Karaan. The raiders are fanatical and avoid capture at all cost, but if somehow caught alive they have had their tongues cut out and lips removed, rendering them unable to divulge any information.





1. Feerada/council chambers
2. Central plaza
3. Docks
4. Drinking den
5. Fishing quay
6. Storehouses
7. Keeper barracks
8. Tehmeena's quarters
9. To Telal's hovel



RIVER PURSUIT

Rowing action roll: Strength + applicable skills vs. roll + 6 for the skiff

Upon three consecutive success rolls the characters catch the second skiff. A maximum of six attempts can be made, as the skiff reaches its destination by then. Two characters can row making the action a collaborative roll. For every three rolls make a Stamina roll [9] for the character(s) to keep up the effort for a longer period.

If the characters pursue the raiders to the docks, they find several rowboats available, but stripped of oars and sails - discarded and floating downstream in the river. While a fair wind carries the raider skiffs quickly away from the docks the Arbiter can allow for extended contested rolls to see if the characters can catch up to the raiders if they manage to find a means of transport.

If the characters catch the second skiff the raiders on board fight desperately to delay them long enough for the abduction skiff to get away. The characters see the skiff with Tehmeena on board slip into a small waterway with a portcullis in a mansion wall on the riverside in Pai'Karaan. The portcullis is immediately lowered - barring the characters from sailing after them.

The characters can stay and observe the mansion if they wish or row back towards the enclave. If they decide to stay, eventually a rowboat bearing Kûn Azhar from the enclave approaches and bids them return to a counsel with Feerada.

SCENE III: AFTERMATH

SCENE SYNOPSIS

A wealthy and powerful alien aristocrat known as The Mirza has abducted Tehmeena, and Feerada is determined to get her back. Feerada and Tehmeena have often been trying to obstruct the Mirza's acquisitions of human slaves in the past and have as a result riled her with their efforts.

Due to various reasons Feerada cannot use the Rasha Galam or hired help to get Tehmeena back - and time is of the essence.

LOCATION

THE FEERADANI ENCLAVE: The smoke is still heavy around the enclave and residents are scattered in small groups speaking in low voices, casting fearful gazes.

As the abductors are gone a large crowd is gathering near the dais at the central plaza.

NPC's

Feerada and Kûn Azhar.

SCENE III

As the characters return to the plaza, narrate or summarise the following: "An agitated crowd are gathered in the centre of the plaza, having a heated argument. You recognise the enclave leader and her remaining close advisors standing in the middle of the throng. As you walk closer Feerada spots you and beckons you closer."

Upon discovering what has transpired Feerada, her councillors, Kûn Azhar and Behzad have gathered the most influential people of the enclave and are raucously discussing how to go about retrieving Tehmeena.

As the characters get near to the clamour Feerada softly says "...enough!" and immediately all are silent, yielding to her irrefutable authority.

As the characters approach read aloud or recap: "Before you stand a striking woman of middle years with a stoic expression and a distinct air of control and command. Her frame is slight, her eyes are bright, and her gaze seems to dissect everything she looks at.

Her dark robes are practical but of good weave, and as she moves you notice that one sleeve is hanging limply down her side. Her authority is almost palpable, and you can only feel deference as she addresses you with an inquisitorial expression." She asks the characters to recount what they witnessed and convey whatever they can about the raiders.

If the characters did not see where the skiff sailed, a young enclave keeper explains that he saw the abductors taking Tehmeena to a mansion in Pai'Karaan.

Feerada is alarmed at this and says that she would expect many things from the Mirza, but that this seems beyond her. If questioned Feerada discloses the past dealings she and Tehmeena have had with the Aristocrat (see box).

Feerada suggests that the characters can search Tehmeena's hovel to look for further indications of why this happened.

THE MIRZA & FEERADA

The Mirza is obsessed with mankind and constantly seeks to acquire human slaves for her personal collection. She is deranged and treats her slaves as toys or pets; often punishing them when they displease her. Feerada and Tehmeena have often tried to outbid her at slave markets and otherwise hinder her acquisition of humans, which has drawn her ire. Although they have had less than pleasant dealings with the Aristocrat, there has never been any open hostilities or anything similar to this.

EVENT 3:1 - HELP US!

Feerada states that action needs to be taken, but that the Keepers and any other prominent and competent enclave members are likely to be known to the Aristocrat and her guards.

Furthermore, she cannot risk exposing the enclave's involvement in such a rescue as there are many enemies looking very hard for an opportunity to get rid of the humans; and them accosting a well-respected high caste could be just that.

It is well-known that the Jinassar will not lift a finger to help humans or any other low castes, the enclave cannot afford mercenaries and even if they could there is not enough time and the Mirza would likely hear about it in advance.

If the characters object, Feerada states the following: "I meant to inform you about this eventually, but now seems a suitable moment. It was brought to my attention recently that your foster father has gone missing and that his dwelling was vandalised. Although there is no evident connection between the occurrences I wonder if they are not linked somehow? You know as well as I that Telal and Tehmeena had undisclosed dealings, so if these dealings have resulted in one being hunted, then..." Feerada falls silent as she lets the weight of her words sink in.

If this still does not convince the characters to act, she offers 100 copper Dhin to each for performing this service. Feerada will insist that the characters leave immediately and that they extract Tehmeena without direct confrontations and violence if possible.

If prompted Feerada may offer the characters an assortment of basic equipment to help in their endeavour: Rope (2), grappling hook (1), torches (4), daggers (3), short sword (1), pauldrons (1), torso leather scale armour (1), padded leather armour (1), bracers (1), glaive (1), cloth bandages (5), balms (2) and healing salve (2).

Behzad and Kûn Azhar both seem hesitant about the decision but will voice no objections. An abra skiff will be ready to take the characters across the river to the mansion.

TABLE 3.1 : OBSERVATIONS AT THE MEETING

- As soon as the decision is made Behzad seems to scurry away.
- None of Behzad's hirelings remaining at the plaza seem to actually have been injured.

Shortly after the meeting Behzad leaves the enclave to warn his accomplice (Na'Aqh) about the development. If unnoticeably followed he can be seen going to the mansion, but if he discovers that he is being stalked he goes to a drinking den in a ShallowWater wharf. He has prepared a smokescreen and suggested to Feerada that he speak with his contacts to get further information, providing a valid and inconspicuous reason for leaving.



EVENT 3:2 - INVESTIGATIONS

If the characters decide to postpone their departure and examine the enclave and what little leads they have, Feerada resignedly accepts this.

The characters can find useful information by investigating the raiders, the fire-sites, Tehmeena's quarters and Telal's hovel.

RAIDER CORPSES OR PRISONERS

If any corpses or raider prisoners are obtained, they can be examined or questioned. Although they will not reveal anything willingly, their clothing, weaponry and tattoos might give clues to the characters.



TABLE 3.2 : INVESTIGATING THE RAIDER CORPSES

- If the shawls covering the raider faces are removed a gruesome sight is revealed. To prevent any kind of confession the lips and tongue - or equivalent thereof - have been cut off to inhibit speech of any kind. The cuts are relatively fresh and neat - indicating deliberateness - and have been covered with an ointment giving off an odd scent. This ointment is an herb mixture used to dampen the pain and intoxicate the victim.
- All the raiders have a tattoo of the darkened sun on their wrist. Most of the tattoos only feature one ray, while a few have two - indicating difference in status. These tattoos somewhat resemble the ones found on the characters. [This realisation triggers a memory]
- The raiders are of multiple species and armed with a variety of simple hand weapons. They do not appear to be mercenaries or proficient hirelings.

TEHMEENA'S QUARTERS

Located on the central platform - as an annex to the council structure - Tehmeena's quarters are a small two-storey wooden shack. The door is locked but can easily be forced open. The quarters are a simple living and working space where nothing seems to have been touched. Clay tablets and writing implements lie scattered on a table. A locked cabinet contains various medicinal concoctions as well as tablet correspondence between Tehmeena and another unnamed party (Telal).

TABLE 3.3 : OBSERVATIONS IN TEHMEENA'S QUARTERS

- Buried among the scattered clay tablets on the table is a single limestone cylinder seal. The cylinder seal is very old and contains an image of several worshippers praying to a sun with twelve rays, while a hole in the ground spouts rays towards the sun. [Viewing the cylinder seal triggers a memory for the character(s) viewing it]
- In the cabinet: Characters able to read can decipher these correspondences. The content is cryptic but clearly indicates an investigation and search for something or someone involving the sun icon. (Hand-out: clay-tablets)



TELAL'S HOVEL

Telal's hovel is about fifteen-minute walk from the enclave through Dhaarese; a dangerous district where thugs, harlots and thieves rule.

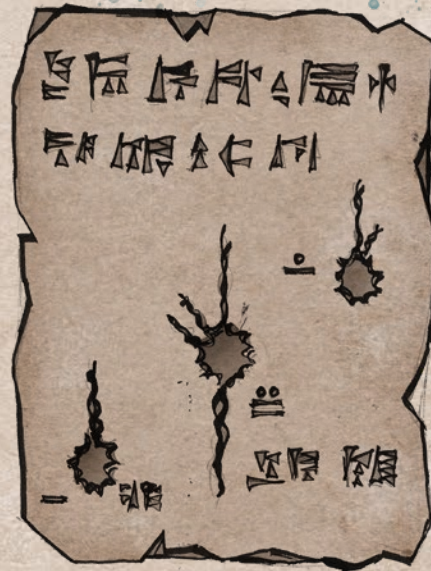
Connected by alleys, stairs and walkways there is little resemblance of order and it is easy to get lost. Here and there baldachins and other overhangs cover the street or small plazas where the locals congregate, smoke sheesha pipes and laze. The hovel is a small mud-brick structure squeezed into a cluster of other living spaces.

The characters know where Telal's hovel is and have no trouble finding it. As soon as they get near, they can see that the door has been smashed in and the remains lie scattered in the doorway.

The hovel consists of the main room where the siblings slept close to the fireplace, a small additional room is Telal's quarters with a bunk, some shelves and a few items. [Entering the hovel triggers a memory for the characters]

TABLE 3.4 : OBSERVATIONS IN TELAL'S HOVEL

- The hovel is empty and has clearly been ransacked; yet whether the two facts are connected cannot be deduced from the scene. The hovel has been abandoned for at least a fortnight.
- There is a secret compartment under the bunk that the siblings knew nothing about. It contains the broken remnants of a clay tablet with the imprint of the Cylinder seal that can be found in Tehmeena's quarters. [seal tablet remnant hand-out]
- In a corner lies several clay tablets that have cuneiform scribbling and sun icons with varying amounts of rays. If the characters can read the text it is about a hierarchy signified by the various rays.



THE FIRE SITES

If the characters decide to investigate the three fire sites, they will find burnt down dwellings and scorched platforms. The previous inhabitants are clearing up the ruined remains. It will be fairly evident that the structures were actively torched from the waterfront, but otherwise very little evidence is apparent.

TABLE 3.5 : OBSERVATIONS OF THE FIRE SITES

- Small scorched clay jars can be found by the outer walls where the fire evidently started.
- A vague scent of lamp oil can be detected around the sites.

SCENE IV: PAI'KARAAN

SCENE SYNOPSIS

The characters go to Pai'Karaan to investigate the Mansion and devise a plan to rescue Tehmeena. They discover that the Mirza is about to host a three-day long masquerade providing good cover for an incursion as well as several ways to enter the mansion.

LOCATION

THE PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT: Renowned for its countless religious sites, temples, shrines as well as the consecrated basins; Pai'Karaan is densely populated and brimming with worshippers and zealous celebrants. A main thoroughfare leading from the basins into the district is lined by extravagant temples and establishments while the remaining area consist mostly of narrow irregular streets cramped in between buildings with the occasional plaza open to the sky. Shrines and altars dedicated to obscure deities, ancestral or guiding spirits stand on every street-corner and unoccupied space. The myriad holy sites range from vast brightly painted and adorned temples to simple prayer rooms squeezed into alleys. Prayer candles, beads, censers or other religious paraphernalia is hawked across the area. Along the main boulevard, behind high polished walls, lies the Mirza's mansion resembling a temple rather than an abode.

NPC's

Tahmtan, Maiara, the fisherman and Uguyyrythi.

TIMED EVENTS

Once the characters enter Pai'Karaan they may feel the Void effects caused by the ritual sacrifices within the mansion. Every twelve hours characters are allowed an Awareness rolls [11] to see if they notice an odd phenomenon occurring around the mansion. Roll on the Void emanation table [1-6] in the core rule book page 196.



SCENE IV

The characters are quickly ferried across the river and arrive at some docks close to where the skiff(s) sailed into the mansion waterway. As the characters set foot on the dock narrate or summarise the following:

"As you step off the skiff you notice the absent stink, clamminess and grime you are so familiar with from the enclave. The street leading from the dock up to a grand boulevard is paved with turquoise and emerald hued faience tiles set in intricate patterns. The wide boulevard - lined with terracotta and sandstone buildings interspaced by colourful shrines - is bustling with strolling pilgrims and celebrants, extravagant palanquins and akopi-drawn leisure chariots. Peddlers with hoarse voices move in and out of the crowds hawking their wares of sacred paraphernalia and offerings. Across the street you can see the imposing mansion wall crowned with nasty looking spikes. The main entrance, although barred with a wrought iron gate, gives a partial view into a lush garden and the grand mansion cradled between dense vegetation."

The dock area is linked to the sacred basins of the river Margidda and connected to a wide boulevard leading further into the city, making it an often-congested thoroughfare for pilgrims, celebrants and other worshippers.

The imposing mansion is the dominating structure in an area consisting mostly of two-storey buildings with flat terrace rooftops or small domed roofs.

Small alleys intersect in uneven patterns between the blocks of buildings, making the area a veritable maze. Numerous shops and parlours sell spiritual articles to the pious frequenting the obscure temples, shrines and other places of worship.

Across the boulevard from the mansion is another notable building, namely the House of Maiara. A structure built from interconnecting terraces and pavilions overlooking the street, mansion and sacred basins. This is pleasure establishment is clearly frequented by a mainly aristocratic clientele.

A burgundy painted gate embossed with an intricate icon of the owner's native species leads into the establishment and a sickeningly spicy, yet sweet and intoxicating odour permeates from the ornate platforms making up the structure.

Adjacent to this the hallowed basins border the river and are constantly thronged with reverent zealots cleansing their spirits in the muddy waters. Occasionally a silt shark grabs a zealot who has gone too far down the basin steps, claiming another screaming and thrashing martyr as the surrounding crowds sing in praises of holy ecstasy at the spectacle.



If the characters observe the proceedings it will be obvious that preparations for a festivity of some sort are taking place as pavilion tents, foodstuff, wines and other wares are being delivered in massive amounts. Questioning any passers-by will not bring the characters much knowledge as people here are either visitors or hawkers too busy peddling their wares to bother with the questions of low-caste humans.

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1. Mansion of the Mirza
 2. House of Maiara
 3. Hallowed Basins
 4. Docks
 5. Temples & Shrines
 6. Marketplace stalls
 7. Canal Entrance
 8. Main Gate
 9. Servants entrance

TABLE 4.1 : OBSERVATIONS IN THE PAI'KARAAN BOULEVARD

- The majority of the crowds are alien worshippers here to visit one of the many holy places or bathe in the hallowed basins. There are a few other humans in the area, but they are all marked as slaves or servants.
- The House of Maiara is an old and venerated establishment run by Lady Maiara herself. In addition to the establishment itself she serves and supplies the areas palaces and mansions with opium and other exotic commodities of an intoxicating or hallucinogenic nature.
- The Mansion gates are closed with two Ba' Waikh stationed outside. A garrison building is visible just inside the gate, but the actual amount of guards is indeterminable.

If the characters take time to walk around the area, they find that - except for the grand boulevard - it is dominated by small alleys flanked by private dwellings and high walls as well as an overabundance of small obscure temples squeezed in between these. The air is thick with incense, scented candles and other more exotic fragrances from the various altars and shrines along the streets.

TABLE 4.2 : PAI'KARAAN RUMOURS AND GOSSIP

- The Mansion is the abode of an eccentric aristocrat known as the Mirza who has a bizarre infatuation with mankind and human slaves. It is known that she has no qualms about torturing them.
- The Mirza is a decadent and extravagant high caste fond of lavish celebrations. She relies on her advisor Na'Aqh to run the estate and business.
- The Mirza is about to launch a three-day long masquerade.

TEMPLES & SHRINES (map location 5)

Most temples and shrines in this area of Pai'Karaan are small, cramped and filthy dark rooms stinking with incense and immediately accessible from the street. The worshippers are all aliens seemingly oblivious to their surroundings as they sway and chant litanies to their obscure gods. None of the gods worshipped here are familiar to the characters unless they have occult or religious lore. If they enter any of the holy premises they will instantly be met by unwelcoming scowls and sneering looks from whichever prophet or soothsayer presides there. Several sacrificial temples can be found in the area, permitting the characters to perform or request blood rituals - at a substantial fee of course. The basins are the main attraction in this part of the district.

Large open shallow inlets from the river allow celebrants and others to bathe in the sacred waters. Steps have been carved in marble to allow easy access. The silt shark inhabiting the river frequently grabs an overenthusiastic pilgrim dragging him to his horrid demise in the muddy water. This is seen as a holy occurrence and does not cause commotion among the other pilgrims. Braying livestock, chanting celebrants and ecclesiastics delivering thunderous sermons for their flocks all contribute to a constant clamour of voices and noise around the basin area.



ARBITRARY EVENT: THE FISHERMAN AND "UIGUYRTHYI"

As the characters dock in Pai'Karaan they spot an old human male is sitting on a crumpled structure overlooking the river.

He has no teeth, a long raggedly filthy beard and a torn and worn turban on his head. He is very intently trying to fish something unseen out of the thin air with a makeshift fishing rod.

Just behind him rests a Quth. It is seemingly stuck with some of its legs crushed under the collapsed building, but seems to have found peace with its predicament as it encourages the fisherman in his futile attempts.

The Arbiter can use this pair to reveal information to the characters during their time in Pai'Karaan as they seem to have peculiar prophetic capabilities.

The fisherman will generally not respond to direct questions but will suddenly begin rambling - seemingly to Uiguyrthyi - mentioning pertinent tidbits and other useful information, after which he summarily falls silent and continues with his fishing.

HOUSE OF MAIARA (map location 2)

Built from numerous linked open-air terraces; patios and plateaus at various levels surrounding an inner courtyard, the House of Maiara somewhat resemble an amphitheatre. The loftiest terrace is four storeys above the street level and offers a panoramic view of the river; district and mansion. The structure is a skilfully built house with elegant wooden posts, beams, lintels and joists making up the framework. Coloured glaze roofs, decorative screens and shade sails conceal the patrons from prying eyes.

The owner, Maiara, is an elderly Je'ehl pariah matron, supported by her two sons and a host of staff and performers. She is a regular supplier of smoking herbs, opium and other hallucinogenic substances for the aristocrat, and her staff are currently preparing a shipment to be delivered for the festivities. During the festivities Maiara's staff has access to the mansion to deliver the goods and also act as aides for the evening, assisting the guests that want to partake.

Two strapping Je'ehl males - the sons of Maiara - always guard the front entrance of the establishment. Characters wishing to gain entrance must charm or cheat their way in as neither intimidation nor bribes will work with Maiara's sons. Any threat of violence is met with force and the support of guards from the surrounding area. A sickeningly sweet and spicy odour hangs around the establishment: Anyone entering must make a Stamina roll [7] or become light-headed as they pass by two strategically placed censers wafting fumes at the entrance. Light-headedness cause -1 to all actions for D6x10 minutes.

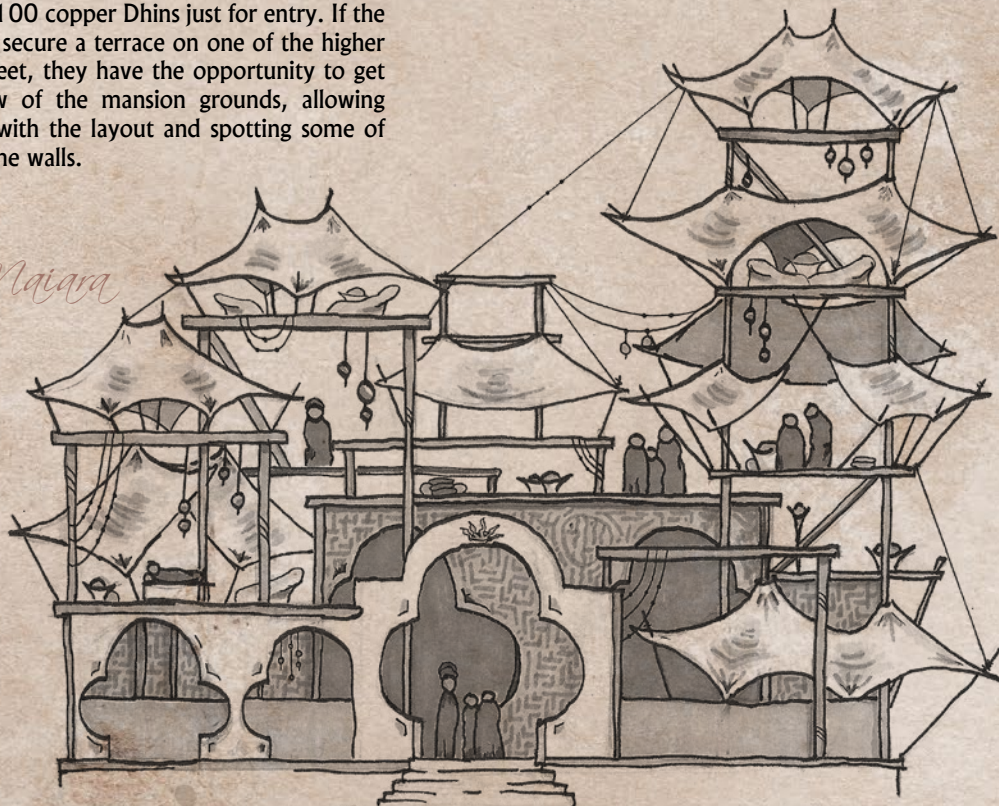
If the characters manage to get into the establishment the lower floors are accessible but do not provide a view of the mansion grounds, they have to pay for a higher tiered terrace at the cost of 100 copper Dhins just for entry. If the characters manage to secure a terrace on one of the higher levels towards the street, they have the opportunity to get an unobstructed view of the mansion grounds, allowing them to get familiar with the layout and spotting some of the goings-on inside the walls.



A central courtyard with a small stage on the ground floor is the centre of attention. It is here that exotic performances amuse patrons as they languish on divans picking and choosing from a vast assortment of intoxicating fumes and substances. Around the perimeter of the lower floors an assortment of small private cubicles and screened areas is available for patrons seeking privacy, or they can sit at lounge arrangements close to the balconies to have a full view of the entertainment.

As the Aristocrat is a regular customer to Maiara the matron will not assist the characters in any way and they may even risk exposure by approaching her, but inventive and resourceful characters might come up with a way to sneak into the festivities along with the establishment servants.

House of Maiara



EVENT 4:1 - THE CHATTER BROKER

Just inside the establishment in an open cubicle a prying Im'zu sits watching the characters blatantly while smoking a sheesha pipe. Tahmtan is the name of this roguish git and he is a hawker of information. He is also an annoying meddler and snoop with a knack for stirring up trouble, which is why he has a bullish Talath servant standing behind him to discourage any incivility.

Once the characters enter the establishment the Im'zu immediately waves them over to join him: "You seem to be requiring information currently out of reach, yes? Perhaps you will trade coins for words, yes?"

Tahmtan knows a great deal about many things including the local area, the Aristocrat and her odd fascination with mankind. Tahmtan will divulge any non-essential information readily, but hold back on knowledge, which could directly benefit the characters and their objective. For such he requires payment of either equally interesting information or 100 copper Dhins per disclosure. Intriguing gossip, valuable knowledge or outright lies can be used if the characters decide to exchange or they can attempt to barter favours, price or another valuable commodity (contested action). Any attempts at intimidation or failed attempts at deception will result in Tahmtan immediately doubling his price, while direct threats will be met by his Talath servant physically escorting the characters out. The servant only resorts to violence if attacked. Any brawling will immediately draw Maiara's sons and a horde of servants to break it up and throw out the offenders. If the characters anger Tahmtan it requires severe reparations to glean any more information from him.

TABLE 4.2 : TAHMTAN INFORMATION

- The guard shift schedules and which three guards might be susceptible to bribery.
- The amount of guards: 30 Ba'Waikh guards, four Talath Overseers and two Adarus.
- The general layout of the mansion grounds.
- The water entrance can be bypassed, as the porticulis does not reach the bottom of the canal.

THE MANSION WALLS

Eight cubits high (4m) polished faience tiled walls crowned with barbs surround the mansion. The main entrance is an exquisitely patterned wrought metal gate, which is guarded by heavily armed Ba'Waikh warriors.

A secondary and smaller servants and supply gate can be found in a narrow back alley behind the mansion. Proficient characters can climb the mansion wall, but it will take time and effort to do so unscathed while leaving characters exposed to observers for the duration of the climb.

Successfully traversing the wall requires climbing a polished vertical surface [9], circumventing the spikes on top [9] and successfully dropping to the ground [7] without being noticed and caught. Acrobatics or comparable skills are applicable.



TABLE 4.3 : MANSION GUARD SCHEDULE

- Main Gate guards: 3 Ba'Waikh guards (replacement every four hours) Occasionally a Talath overseer joins this post.
- Back gate guards: 1-2 Ba'Waikh guards (replacement every four hours)
- River entrance: 1 Ba'Waikh guard (replacement every four hours)
- Roaming garden guards: 2 Ba'Waikh every three hours or so. Occasionally accompanied by a Talath and an Adaru.
- Mansion guards: One Ba'Waikh guard by each main entrance and roaming guards along the columned galleries surrounding the mansion.



THE RIVER ENTRANCE (map location 7)

If the characters investigate or discover from Tahmtan that the water portcullis does not actually reach the bottom of the canal they may attempt to enter the mansion grounds via this waterway.

The current is gentle but to succeed characters have to avoid silt sharks, stay under water for an extended period and remain undetected as they surface to avoid the Ba'Waikh guard stationed by the portcullis.

Extended actions are required to successfully dive under the portcullis, holding the breath and emerge quietly on the other side: Swimming, Stamina and stealth rolls are required with applicable modifiers for light/darkness, heavy kit and so on. Once inside, characters can hide among the reeds and other foliage along the canal.

MAIN MANSION GATE (map location 8)

The massive wrought iron gate is locked and heavily guarded. The gates are sixty hands wide and thirty hands high at the apex, providing easy entry even for massive chariots, palanquins and vehicles.

Any attempt to pick the lock or squeeze through the bars is easily noticeable and will be challenged by hostile guards.

The guard quarters are nearby and - should any trouble arise - additional guards can be called at a moment's notice using a gong hanging inside the gate. These guards are steadfast, unimpressionable and unreceptive to bribery. This is partly due to the proximity to the guard quarters and the constant presence of one or several Talath overseers.

The amount of guards is constant during both night and day, although the presence of the overseers is reduced during night duty. Everyone who is not a guest of the Mirza is directed to use the servant's gate in order to enter the mansion grounds.

SERVANTS GATE (map location 9)

This is a reinforced wooden gate just big enough for a pulled cart to fit through. During the early hours of day when the bulk of supplies arrive two Ba'Waikh guards manage this gate while only one guard is usually present during the afternoon and nights.

A small hatch can open in the gate allowing the guard to view and question anyone wanting to enter. The gate leads into a small courtyard between the servant's quarters; the stables and the storehouse. Several types of approach may be employed to gain entry: Bribery, deception, threats or violence.

This gate is a suitable place to approach any guards susceptible to bribery. The characters need to find the right guard, persuade him to receive the bribe, convincing him that he will not be incriminated as well as having the money or goods for the bribe itself. Tricking the guard to gain entry require masquerading as suppliers, craftsmen or another likely caller, an authentic looking seal or other documentation as well as a likely reason for demanding entry.

Skills such as persuasion, forgery and subterfuge could come in handy. Threats are very unlikely to work unless the characters manage to get leverage on a guard. Killing the

ARBITRARY EVENT: GATE INCIDENT

The characters witness an old man banging his frail fists on the wrought iron mansion gate yelling "MY DAUGHTER! MY DAUGHTER!" The guards will emerge and laugh at the poor old man making it quite clear that if his daughter is indeed inside the mansion, he had best forget about her and move on. The old man continues thumping on the gate and eventually the guards grow tired of him and thrust the butt of a halberd through the gate, hitting the man in the midsection, making him crumble together as a withered leaf and laying still.

If the characters help him, he tells them that his daughter was bought as a slave by the advisor of the Mirza and brought into the mansion a few days ago. He pleads with them to help his little girl and will offer himself as a distraction to the guards making the characters able to slip inside during the commotion.

guard can work but will eventually lead to discovery.

Any failed entry attempt results in the guard using the gong by the gate, calling for assistance. If an entry is initially successful but afterward discovered a manhunt will immediately be launched utilising both Adarus and all available guards.



SCENE V: BEHIND THESE WALLS

SCENE SYNOPSIS

The characters enter the mansion grounds, bear witness to a slave punishment and investigate the grounds in an attempt to find and free Tehmeena as well as verify the suspicion that Telal might also have been captured.

LOCATION

THE MIRZA MANSION: An opulent palace situated in the middle of a lavish park comprising tea pavilions, groves and a menagerie holding Adaru predators.

NPC'S

The Mirza, Na'Aqh and Sayu Mah.

TIMED EVENTS

Na'Aqh continue to perform sacrificial rites in its attempts to draw the mindless abominations of the Void to the rift. Every twelve hours characters are allowed an Awareness rolls [11] to see if they notice an odd phenomenon (roll on the Void Effect table.) occurring around the mansion. Once inside the mansion grounds the characters have a chance of spotting Na'Aqh and its servants collecting a slave for this - although it is not evident what the purpose is - and escorting him or her into the mansion.

Inside the mansion guards are patrolling regularly. See Mansion grounds section.

TRIGGERED EVENTS

When the characters get close to any of the garden pavilions "the Punishment" event instantly ensues.



SCENE V

Irrespective of when and how the characters manage to get inside the outer walls the preparations for the masquerade finalise and the guests begin to arrive for the three-day celebration. The characters can move around the grounds to investigate the premises, hiding in plain sight among the throng of guests and servants. If observant, they quickly realise that they are the only humans not branded with a slave tattoo or wearing shackles.

Encounters - accidental or otherwise - with occupants of the mansion may result in discovery depending on how inconspicuous, well-disguised or persuasive the characters manage to be. If they do not act suspiciously most guests assume that the characters are slaves or hirelings, but servants and patrolling guards are not easily deceived. Encountered slaves may help them or expose them depending on the characters' behaviour.

The characters may notice that all the human slaves are young and beautiful. They are scantily dressed displaying as much of their skin as possible falling just short of being obscene. They all wear a thick silver collar around their neck and tattoos branding them as the property of the Mirza. Characters attempting to approach slaves to gain knowledge about the mansion are met with intense distrust, angst or cold silence: The Arbiter use the below table to determine the initial reaction - Presence modifiers apply.

TABLE 5.1 : SLAVE REACTIONS (D12 ROLL)

- 1: The slave panics and flees from the character.
- 2: The slave moves to elude the character as soon as he or she realise the approach. If caught the slave refuses to answer any questions unless threatened or forced.
- 3-4: The slave continues with his or her task while noticeably ignoring the character. If confronted the slave replies to questions unwillingly and only with yes or no.
- 5-7: The slave acknowledges the character and answer questions in short and vague terms.
- 8-10: The slave answers simple questions but will hesitate to give details.
- 11-12: The slave will speak freely with the characters about what is occurring.

A successful persuasion, intimidation or other prompting roll allow the character to glean information from a slave and reveal details about what is going on inside the mansion and why the slaves are anxious to avoid any contact and catching the attention of the mistress.

TABLE 5.2 : SLAVE REVELATIONS

- The Mirza is treating her slaves as toys, throwing away those that she has tired playing with and punishing the slightest misstep displeasing her, oftentimes as spectacle for guests. For this reason, the slaves desperately strain to avoid her attention, although they cannot do so overtly as this also prompts repercussion if noticed.
- What is creating anxiety among the slave population is that several slaves have disappeared recently with no appearance of chastisement or indication about what happened to them. Habitually the Mirza has at least one or two other slaves bear witness to any punishment in order to establish a lesson to all.
- The slaves have not heard about or seen Tehmeena or Telal, but they have heard some of the guards talking about “the taking” and some unexpected problems. They have no clue where any abductee might have been taken as no elderly humans have come to the slave quarters.

MANSION GROUNDS

The grounds surrounding the mansion are abundant with flowering bushes, bamboo and exotic trees. A wide gravel path is winding its way through the greenery leading from the main gate to the main building. Several smaller pathways branch off along the way connecting with a pond and various pavilions/teahouses scattered around the garden. A wide lawn surrounds the mansion. Hidden behind thick foliage is the menagerie of the Mirza. The two massive enclosures each contain a specimen of the savage Adarus found in the Grey Spines surrounding Llyhn the eternal. The Adarus are kept for display but are also used for more nefarious purposes by the Mirza.

A shallow canal blocked by a portcullis at the entry point leads from the river into a basement opening in the mansion. This waterway is obscured from viewers in the garden by tall reeds covering the banks. The lush garden is patrolled every few hours by pairs of Ba'Waikh guards and occasionally by a Talath overseer with a leashed Adaru.



The opulent mansion resembles a temple covered in statuary and is divided into two major areas: The main abode with an attached satellite pavilion and the smaller private abode including a bathing house as well as a secondary pavilion.

Once the characters see the mansion narrate the following: “Constructed on a platform base covered in bas-relief the entire mansion floor is elevated roughly two metres above the ground. Columned galleries and walkways surround the structure of the mansion while statues and sculptured panels make up most of the extravagant inside structure supporting the massive roof.

Rising in graded peaks, mirroring the effect of a mountain range the roof has curved shikhara spires soaring above the main halls and smaller spires topping the various side pavilions and balconies. At regular intervals flights of steps grant access to the mansion from the garden via entrance porches leading into the adjacent galleries and terraces.”

TIMED EVENT: GUARD PATROLS

As long as the characters are within the mansion walls there is a chance that they may come across patrolling guards. Every half an hour in game time make a roll to see if a guard patrol approaches the characters' location [9]. If guards are present roll to determine the patrol.

1-9: Two Ba'Waikh guards

10-11: Two Ba'Waikh guards with a Talath overseer

12: A Talath overseer with a leashed Adaru (only in the park area, otherwise re-roll)

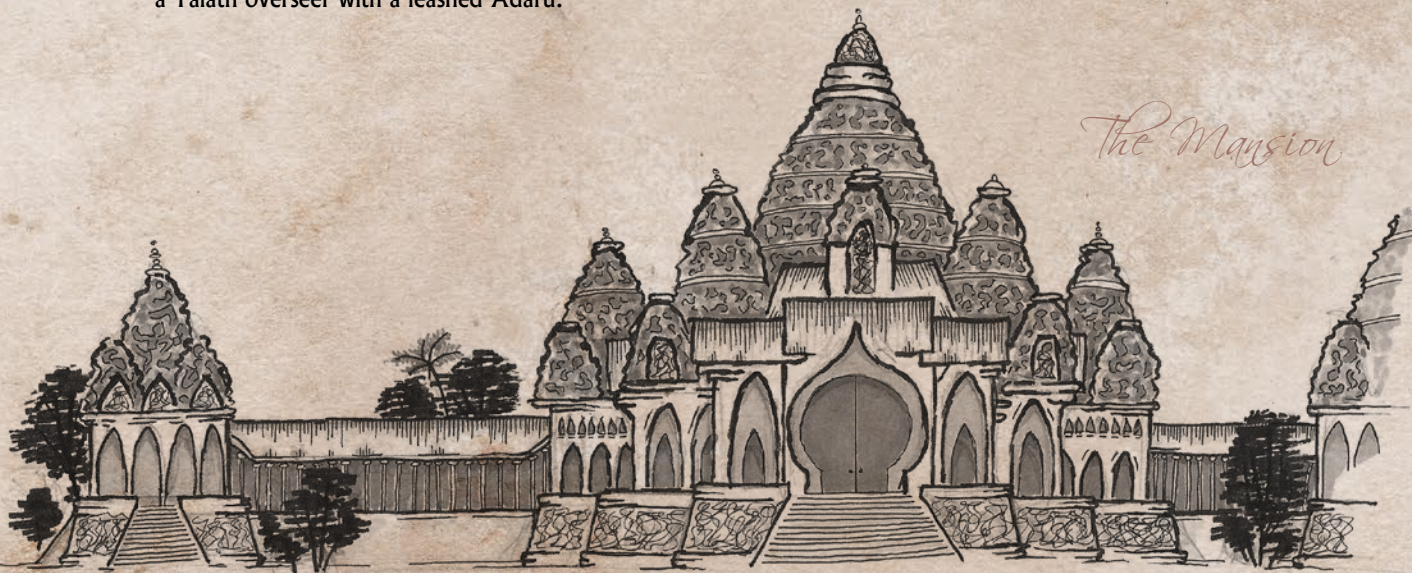


TABLE 5.3 : OBSERVATIONS AROUND THE GARDEN

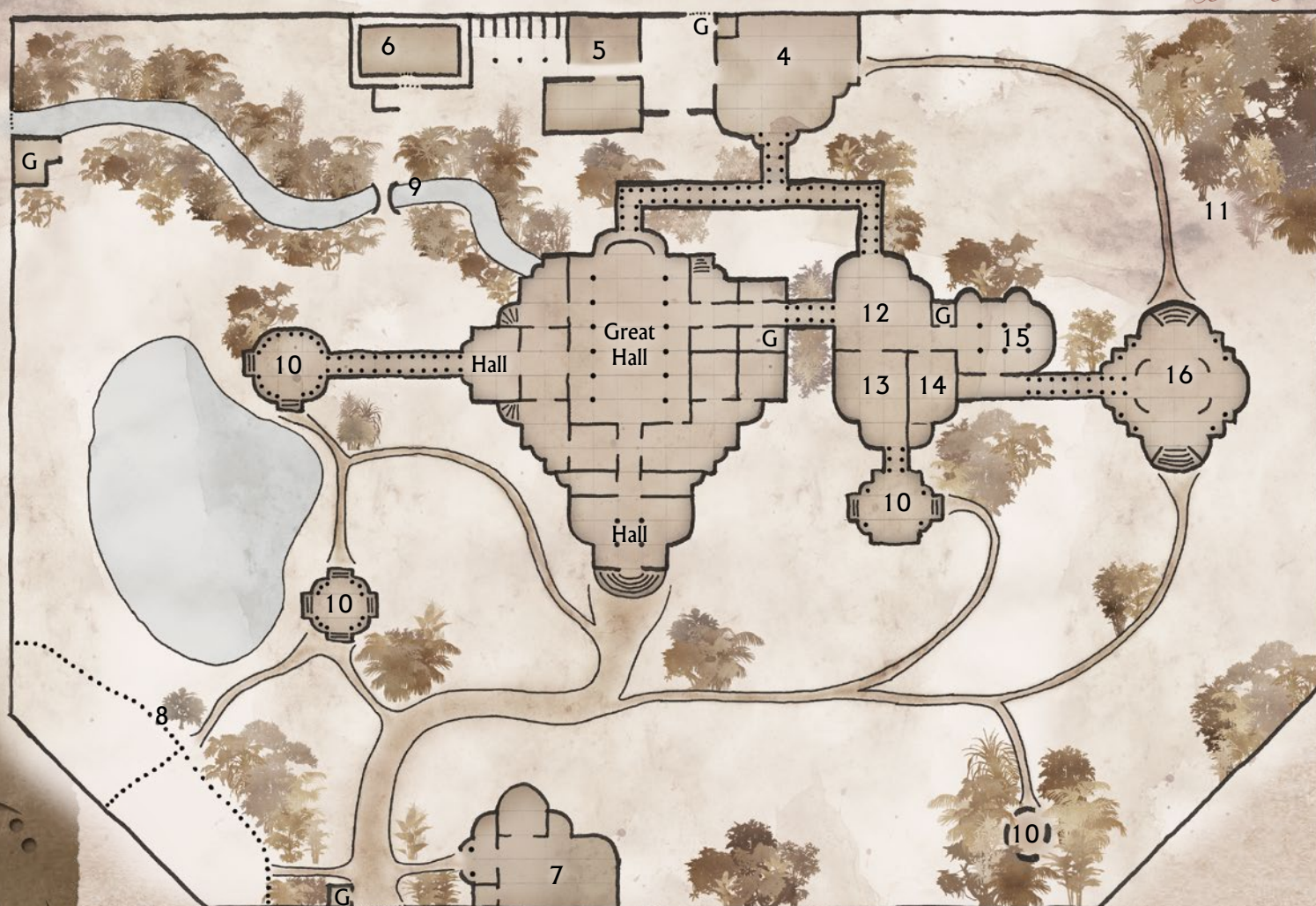
- If the characters survey the house extensively, they may notice several Na'Aqh - it should be kept mysterious and not directly revealed that it has three bodies. The Arbiter can mention that Na'Aqh leaves (read the description) the mansion and then casually mention it again a bit later. If questioned about it answer that the characters have not seen him return, leaving the option open for them to have missed it.
- The characters can manage to overhear some of the guards gossiping about "the taking" and pick out various tidbits of information:
 - Some unexpected complications had occurred in the form of actual resistance.
 - The prizes were still secured, but those that fought back could be coming...?
- If any of the characters managed to catch a glimpse of the raider leader (Sayu Mah) during the abduction, they may recognise him among the overseers with his clearly revealing clouded eye.

SERVANTS GROUNDS (map location 4)

Behind the mansion thick foliage and vine-covered walls separate the servant quarters, storerooms and stable grounds from the garden. The servant quarters contain the kitchen and living quarters for the ten staff employed by the Aristocrat. These include gardeners; cooks and other staff acting as overseers and administrators for the slaves or for particularly crucial positions around the household, such as the master of ceremony. Each staff member has a separate sparsely furnished cell holding a sleeping mat as well as a small chest or cabinet for personal belongings. Beneath the kitchen is a cold cellar storeroom for foodstuffs, wines and other perishables.

STABLES, STOCKROOM AND WAGON HOUSE (map location 5)

These wooden utility structures are used for storing furniture, goods, vehicles and beasts. The stables hold two giant beetles used for hauling goods. The Aristocrat travels exclusively in her palanquin carried by eight slaves, requiring no other beasts of burden. The lavishly decorated palanquin can be found locked in a room in the wagon house alongside a couple of trolleys and handcarts used for gardening and other mundane tasks. The stockroom mostly holds hay and animal fodder as well as equipment used for the gardens and general maintenance of the mansion.



SLAVE QUARTER (map location 6)

The slave quarter consists of a stout stone structure enclosed by a high wall with a single heavy fortified door guarded by at Talath overseer. The slave quarter is unexpectedly clean as the Mirza is very meticulous about the appearance and condition of her human slaves. They are treated like witless beasts yet constantly preened to look perfect, so as not to offend the delicate senses of their mistress.

The slave population is kept at roughly thirty individuals at all times, ensuring enough labourers to take care of tasks while keeping a reserve, should the mistress deem some unworthy of continued servitude. All slaves directly attending the Mirza are humans, and young well-trained beautiful specimens at that. The remaining slaves tending unseen tasks such a kitchen and stable duties are a mix of various species.

All slaves in the mansion seem exceedingly frightened - even for slaves - and clearly avoid interaction with anyone other than their immediate overseer. The reason for the anxiety is that in addition to the possessiveness and evident abuse of the Aristocrat, slaves have begun mysteriously disappearing.

GUARD QUARTERS (map location 7)

The guard's quarters are built up against the outer wall close to the main gate. The sandstone structure holds residential areas, dining hall, training grounds and an armoury, serving all the needs of the guards. This building is always occupied, guarded or locked and therefore almost impossible to enter and search. The armoury holds weapons and protective garb fitted to Ba'Waikh or Talath physiologies and is therefore impracticable for any character that does not have the large

or small Attribute: Basic quality halberds, short swords, daggers, lamellar and laminated armour. The only other kit of interest that can be found is in Sayu Mah's locked chest; a dark grey suit matching what the abduction raider was wearing.



TRIGGERED EVENT - THE PUNISHMENT

Irrespective of which pavilion the characters happen by first, the below occurs as soon as the characters are within eyesight: "A considerable throng of people seem to have gathered inside the pavilion, with several tip-toeing to view whatever is happening in the centre. Sitting raised on a litter surrounded by guards, sycophants and guests the Mirza is looking down with keen interest in her beady little eyes. She will give a slight nod and the sharp crack of a whip is heard followed by an agonised scream of pain!"

As the scream dies out and turns into quiet sobbing the Mirza speaks in its croaking yet venomously sweet voice: "It will keep quiet! It will take its deserved penance with dignity or it will be cast out from my love! For am I not a merciful and loving mistress?" A notion to which the assembly audibly agrees.

The Mirza is in the middle of punishing a human slave for an imagined slight. If the characters manage to get a visual of the inside of the pavilion, they see a young man chained to the floor with a bloody lash across his upper back. A massive Talath with a clouded eye is standing over him with a nasty-looking whip raised - the characters may recognise Sayu Mah from the abduction if they noticed him in scene 2. The slave will fall silent and bend his head in submissive readiness for his punishment. The punishment will continue for several minutes until the slave collapses onto the ground, unconscious with pain and blood loss. If the characters try to intervene, they are met with strong resistance as the Talath and several guards confront them immediately; resolving the combat while the Mirza hastily retreats.

As the slave has fainted the Mirza immediately loses interest and directs the four nearest slaves to carry her away. The assembled party leave the pavilion - not sparing the slave a second glance except to step out of the pool of blood spreading on the floor where he lies. Before the characters can make a move to get to the slave Na'Aqh appears with two servants to drag the slave away. Recite or summarise the following: "A being effortlessly floating in a transparent sphere of blue gas flanked by two hooded servants glides towards the lifeless form. The stretched body reminiscent of a slick serpent with tentacle protrusions distributed at regular intervals along the body length writhes endlessly within the orb, while a featureless face constantly swerves left and right as if somehow sensing its surroundings without evident eyes."

Trailing Na'Aqh in its gas sphere, the two servants pick up the slave and drag him towards the nearest mansion entrance. The characters are free to follow Na'Aqh, who under the circumstances is too focused on the task of removing the slave quickly to notice any followers. Once inside the mansion Na'Aqh floats toward its quarters while the servants go down one of the stairs leading into the basement - Proceed to EVENT 5.1

Should the characters decide to confront Na'Aqh it directs its servants to attack while using its mystic powers to pacify the characters then make its escape.

MENAGERIE (map location 8)

Close to the main gate two iron-fenced pens have been built against the outer wall. Each holds a young Adaru. These predators are used for patrolling the grounds, display and occasionally entertainment for the Aristocrat. The Adarus are not tame and only the designated Talath beast master is able to handle them. If disturbed in their pens the Adarus will make loud hissing noises potentially attracting attention from either guards or guests in the vicinity. Adarus are naturally voracious and will seek to attack anyone coming near, even their trainer if he is not vigilant. During encounters they work as a team using distraction and ambush tactics as they would in the wild. If they meet resistance causing severe injury they retreat to hide in the garden or flee the premises.

THE BASEMENT ENTRANCE (map location 9)

The waterway cutting through the garden leads to an opening into the platform base on the backside of the mansion. See description in Scene 6: THE MANSION.

THE PAVILIONS (map location 10)

The mansion has two pavilions connected to the main buildings by walkways, a tea pavilion by the lake and a furnished patio inside a dense grove. These areas are used as recreational grounds for the Mirza and her entourage. They all boast lavish divans placed in a ring or semi-circle, low tables for refreshments and a central area for entertainment.

THE GROVE (map location 11)

Heavy impenetrable foliage and tall trees make up this sizeable grove. In the centre - inside a massively thick bamboo bush - is a hidden tunnel entrance leading to the underground cavern beneath the mansion.

Unless the bamboo and other undergrowth is felled, the entrance is inaccessible to anyone who is unable to fly or float; making it ideal for the Aml'Nāqru.

EVENT 5.1 - FOLLOW THE SLAVE

Once down the stairs the servants will quickly carry the unconscious slave into the unfinished passageway and through the hidden fissure leading down into a cavernous grotto beneath the mansion. At the risk of being noticed the characters may follow quickly enough to see the servants disappear into the passageway, however if they progress more cautiously, they find the cellar empty and have to examine it in order to figure out where the servants went.

EVENT 5.2 - FOLLOW NA'AQH

Na'Aqh floats past the guards into the private abode section of the mansion. Accidentally leaving the door slightly ajar in its haste it enters its room to meditate - hovering in mid-air - for approximately half an hour. As it is informed telepathically by its siblings that the slave is awake and another ritual is ready to commence it drifts into the alcove at the back of the room and down the slide.

GUARD POSTS (map location G)

Several smaller guardrooms holding spare weapons and alarm gongs are scattered around the grounds in strategic locations such as the main gate, waterway portcullis, the servants' entrance and inside the mansion.





SCENE VI: MANSION IN DARKNESS

SCENE SYNOPSIS

The characters enter and explore the mansion, unveiling the Mirza's studies of humanity and discovering the basement and secret cavern beyond the unfinished hallway.

LOCATION

THE MIRZA MANSION: The mansion reflects the obvious vanity and decadence of the Mirza. Very few objects or arrangements serve any obvious practical function... A debauched sense of aesthetics without distinguishable purpose seems to permeate the entire abode.

NPC'S

Na'Aqh and the Mirza.

NOTES

Note that if the characters enter in pursuit of Na'Aqh and its servants they see that while Na'Aqh hasten towards its room in the secluded area of the mansion, the servants carry the unconscious slave towards the nearest stairs leading into the basement.

SCENE VI

MANSION

As the characters enter the mansion, paraphrase or narrate the following: "The mansion reflects the obvious vanity and decadence of the Mirza. Everywhere you look extravagant gaudy decorations and sculptures meet your gaze.

Very few objects or arrangements serve any obvious practical function... A debauched sense of aesthetics without distinguishable purpose seems to permeate the entire abode."

Most rooms in the mansion and pavilions are recreational; leisure or dining areas and as the characters explore, they find very little of interest to their search in the main mansion. The guests for the masquerade are milling about eating, drinking and engaging in whichever debauchery they can conceive.

As the characters explore the mansion the Arbiter can use the occupant table to determine who occupies each room, allowing the characters opposed stealth, subterfuge or similar rolls to remain unnoticed if they enter. Character behaviour and disguises grants applicable modifiers.

TABLE 6.1 : ROOM OCCUPANTS IN THE MANSION (D12 ROLL)

1-4: The room is thronged with masked guests - intoxicated and harmless unless provoked.

5-7: Several slaves are serving refreshments to the lounging and inebriated guests.

8-9: This room is brimming with masked guests conversing and laughing loudly. 1-2 Ba'Waikh guards are patrolling the room.

10: A Talath overseer is overlooking the jovial guests.

11: This room has 4-6 guards as the Mirza and her entourage are lounging in this room.

12: A Na'Aqh is floating among the guests. (It gets a +3 modifier to spot the characters.)

The Mirza and Na'aqh can be encountered in several (non-adjacent) rooms as they move around the mansion.

THE PRIVATE ABODE

In contrast to the public mansion the private abode is entirely empty of people. Guards stationed at each entrance redirect all guests to the festivities in the garden, the pavilions or the main house. To get inside the characters must either force their way or avoid the guards to sneak inside.

STATE ROOM (map location 12)

This grand room is intended and adorned for the Mirza to receive special guests and visiting dignitaries. The room is opulently decorated with low tables and pillows to accommodate guests and has large open windows giving a beautiful view of the exotic vegetation of the back garden. Displayed on one wall the Aristocrat has a series of trophies.

Although primarily consisting of hunting trophies, two skulls that seem to be human in origin can be found among the collection. One has been carved with intricate patterns, the other decorated with jewellery and semiprecious stones and they seem to have been placed with special significance on a mantelpiece.



LIBRARY (map location 13)

The library holds a decent collection of papyrus scrolls, as well as stone slabs and clay tablets comprising mostly of financial and trade accounts. A few poems and epics can be found on a separate rack. A large table dominates the middle of the room and it seems that the Mirza or a scribe is working on a treatise as several fresh clay tablets are piled here. If any of the characters can read, they soon realise that this is an account of human behaviour recounted much as a scholar would depict the lives of animals.

NA'AQH's QUARTERS (map location 14)

This spacious room is entirely empty and dark as it has no windows or other sources of light, such as oil lamps. At the back wall an alcove holds what seems to be a fairly newly placed door. The door is locked but can be picked or forced open [7]. A round slide leading into the darkness below indicates that whoever is using this passage does not need to walk, as the incline is much too steep for legged creatures to comfortably descend.

The slide curves into the darkness and it is impossible to see where it might lead. The characters can attempt to descend utilising climbing, acrobatics or another similar skill for an extended action of two rolls [9]. The slide is roughly 12 metres long leading downwards in a spiralling arc, ending in a sharp drop as it emerges from a hole in a wall two metres above the floor. Anyone failing their climbing roll slips and soon find him or herself in mid-air about to impact with a hard stone floor.

The room is shrouded in complete darkness and the characters are unable to judge how deep the drop is without a light source, although they can poke or otherwise use their equipment to measure the distance to the floor. Any noise made in this room reverberates loudly.

Proceed to SCENE 7 - THE ANTECHAMBER.



BEDROOM (map location 15)

The floor of this lavishly decorated room is completely covered with thick pads; cushions and pillows. Thick drapes cover the windows keeping the chamber in a deep dusky twilight. The Mirza obviously likes to have the entire room at her disposal for sleeping or whichever activities she pursues in these chambers. The air is heavy with exotic perfumes and fragrances spilling from censers mounted on six pillars in the centre aisle of the room. A tapestry covers an exit to the gallery leading to the bathing pavilion.

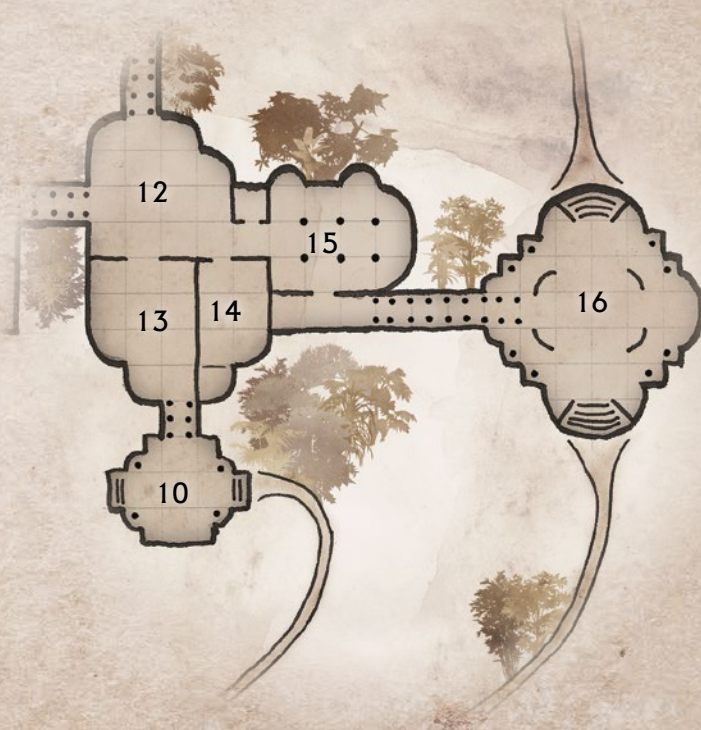
Several small furry creatures with wings are buzzing about the room keeping a safe distance from any of the characters. On further examination the characters notice that each has a thin chain attached to a limb preventing it from flying out of the room. All the chains are attached to a ring in the centre of the floor. If the characters investigate, they notice that three chains are resting on the floor leading to semi-devoured remains of the chained creatures still attached to the ends. These poor creatures apparently serve as living snacks for the Mirza.

BASEMENT STAIRS (map location S)

There are three fairly steep stairs leading into the basement area of the mansion. Proceed to SCENE 7 - THE BASEMENT.

BATHING PAVILION (map location 16)

The façade of this pavilion is every bit as richly decorated as the rest of the mansion. The main room is arched and roofed with high domes above the central elliptical bath. A cleverly hidden aqueduct brings a continuous current of cool water into the 12 metres long and two metres deep bath. Divans and lounging chairs surround the bath with table set with refreshments.



SCENE VII: WHAT LIES BENEATH

SCENE SYNOPSIS

The characters enter the mansion basement or cavern. Either they are following the servants dragging a slave, trailing Na'Aqh or simply found an entrance to the complex. Regardless of the circumstances and timeline a sacrificial ritual is being prepared by the zealots and Na'Aqh.

LOCATION

THE BASEMENT & CAVERNS: An underground complex beneath the mansion and grounds. Partly cellar complex and partly natural cavern.

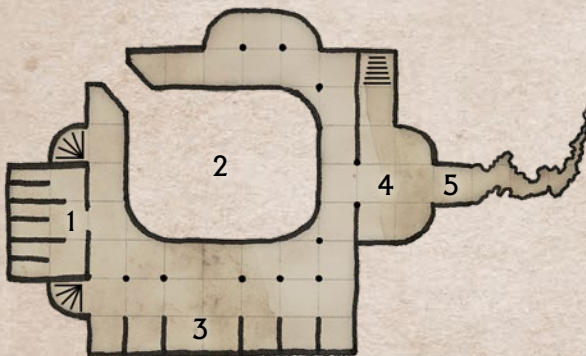
NPC'S

Na'Aqh and Sayu Mah.

TRIGGERED EVENTS

INTRUDERS: Should the characters be discovered and Na'Aqh warned before they reach the main grotto raiders and zealots are dispatched to deal with them.

THE VOID INFLUENCE: Once inside the caverns the characters may feel the emanations from the Veil perforation in the grotto.



1. Wine cellar
2. Inlet
3. Storage stalls
4. Dome chamber
5. Unfinished tunnel

SCENE VII

THE BASEMENT

As the characters descend the steep stairs into the basement, they enter a large columned loading area with an inlet (map location 2) holding two skiffs with the masts taken down. The basement is damp and quite cool despite the heat outside and seems abandoned except for the lit oil lamps providing illumination.

A large opening in the wall allows the skiffs to sail onto the canal in the garden. Several stalls with wooden dividers line the back-wall; mostly empty storage space for supplies (map location 3).

The loading area has two adjoining rooms. A stout locked door with a metal grill bars the way into the largest room, which is a well-stocked wine cellar holding a mix of common wines, rare vintages and select infusions (map location 1). Opposite to the wine cellar a passageway is branching off from a half-dome shaped alcove (map location 4).

The passageway appears to have been left unfinished as the cut stones quickly deteriorate into a natural rock tunnel (map location 5). The jagged tunnel continues for roughly sixteen metres into the bedrock and all immediate evidence indicates that it was abandoned a long time ago. If the characters investigate the alcove and tunnel refer to the table below.

TABLE 7.1 : OBSERVATIONS IN THE BASEMENT

- Characters may notice odd trails in the dust leading into and out from the unfinished passageway.
- The basement floor is level, but the passageway leads slightly downwards the further in it goes.

If the tunnel is surveyed to the end the characters spot a hidden fissure veering off. The fissure leads to an underground cavern - proceed to MAP LOCATION 6 - THE HIDDEN FISSURE.

ARBITRARY EVENT: THE UNINVITED

To build the tension the Arbiter can have a servant, slave, lost guest or guard walk into the basement: Collecting wine from the cellar, patrolling or leading the lost guest back to the festivities upstairs.

THE CAVERNS

As the characters enter the cavern, they begin to experience odd sensations making them feel slightly uncomfortable due to the proximity to the Void rift. Characters with Void sensitivity can potentially recognise the signs of emanating Void influence.

TRIGGERED EVENT: THE VOID INFLUENCE

Once inside the cavern complex, characters must make Stamina rolls [7] to see if they are affected. A successful roll indicates that the character feels an odd sensation but manages to shake it off. A failed roll results in a randomly determined emanation effect [Void emanation table 1-6]. For each new room the characters enter make an additional roll: if failed, roll on the table and swap the previous result if applicable.

THE HIDDEN FISSURE (map location 6)

As the characters enter the concealed fissure, they find themselves in a narrow damp and chilly cavernous crevice winding its way further inwards.

Creatures bigger than ordinary humans would have difficulties squeezing through. Semi-fluorescent fungus is growing on the walls outlining the surroundings although shedding no light beyond its immediate vicinity. The floor and walls are roughly hewn from the bedrock with little precision or evident craftsmanship.

THE PASSAGEWAY (map location 7)

After the first bend the fissure expands into a proper passageway high enough for a human to walk upright and wide enough for two or more to go abreast.

ARBITRARY EVENT: PURSUING THE SLAVE

If the characters are following the servants dragging the slave from the punishment event.

The servants are carrying the slave further ahead moving sluggishly as the weight of the unconscious slave is slowing them down. They occasionally stop to breathe - looking backwards and potentially spotting the trailing characters. They continue to the cavern waiting room.

The rough walls are filled with nooks, crannies and deep cracks while the uneven floor - which is filled with chipped rocks - continually slants downwards making the characters feel as if they are being drawn forward. After about 30 metres of winding passages (it seems much longer) the tunnel widens and leads into a small semi-circular chamber dimly lit by a few torches on wall-mounts.

Combat in the passageway is affected by cramped conditions, causing a -3 penalty to size 3 or smaller weapons while making size 4 weaponry unusable.



- 6. The hidden fissure
- 7. The passageway
- 8. Waiting room
- 9. Sleeping chamber
- 10. Preparation chamber
- 11. Antechamber
- 12. Meditation chamber
- 13. The grotto
- 14. Void rift
- 15. Cavities
- 16. Escape tunnel
- 17. Slide from the mansion

TRIGGERED EVENT: INTRUDERS

Should the characters be discovered and Na'Aqh warned before they reach the main grotto a group of D6 raiders and zealots are dispatched to handle the intruding characters. These raiders are dispatched from the grotto allowing for some time to pass before they reach the characters' location. Should this event be triggered more than once Sayu Mah leads 2D6 raiders looking for the characters.

CAVERN WAITING ROOM (map location 8)

The downward course of the passageway comes to an end as it opens into a room. If the characters are trailing the punished slave proceed to the triggered event. If the characters enter alone read or paraphrase the following: "You peek into an elongated room partially natural partially cut from the bedrock.

The ground has been levelled and is covered with sand. Various tapestries with obscure images line the rough walls and several tables with chairs are placed haphazardly around the room. A low passageway on the right leads into a room lost in shadows while a high another leads further into the grotto. A figure dressed in a gaudy orange robe with a yellow veil covering its face sit quietly at a table as if waiting..."

If the characters wait and observe, a sound is heard from further inside the grotto making the zealot get up and walks into the preparation room. If the characters decide to confront the zealot, he seeks to flee and warn his fellow zealots about the intruders. Should he manage to escape the Arbiter can go to TRIGGERED EVENT - INTRUDERS and calculate a fitting amount of time until the dispatched raiders and zealots arrive. Unless otherwise warned Na'Aqh assumes that the intruders are taken care of and continue preparing for the ritual.

TRIGGERED EVENT: FOLLOWING THE PUNISHED SLAVE

As the servants enter the room a single zealot dressed in a flowing orange robe and a yellow veil stands ready to receive them. The servants stop, dumping the slave on the floor and exchange words with the zealot while a Na'Aqh triplet appears from the mouth of another passageway. As the unconscious slave begins to move and groan in pain the veiled zealot picks him up and carries him into an adjacent room. The Na'Aqh follows floating quietly and then disappears down another passageway as the servants turn to go back the way they came from; straight towards the characters. The characters need to hide quickly or be discovered.

SLEEPING CHAMBER (map location 9)

Inside this empty low-ceilinged room woven mats and blankets are scattered about covering the floor.

The room is a sleeping area that fits nine people if they keep close quarters. A few shelves on the back wall hold personal items, regular clothes, a single orange robe and yellow veil - as worn by the zealots - as well as two sets of dark clothing as worn by the raiders who abducted Tehmeena.

THE PREPARATION CHAMBER (map location 10)

Narrate or summarise the following: "This chamber is six metres high with rough steep walls. Braziers dimly light the room while censers waft incensed smoke towards a naturally arching ceiling.

A bulky chair with manacles to restrain arms and legs stands towards one wall and a stone platform dominates the centre of the room. An orange-robed figure is bending over a human form laying on the platform while two other veiled and robed figures are standing at attention, ready to assist."

The zealot from the waiting room has placed the still dazed slave on the platform and is drawing intricate circular patterns on his chest and face while chanting a toneless litany. A wreath is placed on the brow and a gag in the mouth as the slave is being prepared.

If the zealot is allowed to finalise his work unhindered, he pulls the slave to his feet and together with the two assisting zealots walk down the far tunnel towards the main grotto. Proceed to SCENE 8 - THE RITUAL.

If the characters intervene, one zealot flees towards the main grotto to alert Na'Aqh and the congregation - prompting the TRIGGERED EVENT - INTRUDERS if he escapes - while the other two draw their wave-pattern daggers and move to intercept the intruders. If all zealots are pacified without notice proceed to SCENE 8 - THE RITUAL.



THE ANTECHAMBER (map location 11)

As the characters reach the hole in the wall, they find themselves in clammy and cold darkness. If a light source is brought, they see that they are roughly two metres above the floor in an empty square room with bas-reliefs covering every surface of the walls, floor and ceiling.

The reliefs depict endlessly intricately writhing patterns with no obvious motif except for a recurring spiralling pattern with slight variances on each surface.

If the characters did not bring a light source, they can feel the writhing shapes of the reliefs with their hands and feet but are unable to discernible the pattern unless they can examine an entire surface.

The reliefs are cut directly into the bedrock and are seemingly made with great precision. The bas-reliefs covering every surface are deep, making it awkward to move around, suggesting that whoever uses this room does not move on normal legs or perhaps not on legs at all.

There is nothing else inside this room except a second hole a metre up on the far wall leading further into the complex.

TABLE 7.2 : OBSERVATIONS IN THE ANTECHAMBER

- A twisted spiralling version of the twelve-rayed sun icon can be recognised within the swirling patterns of the bas-relief. [Viewing this iconography will trigger a memory!]
- The surfaces seem newly cut and polished, showing no wear or tear.
- There are no wall-mounts for torches or anything else indicating that the inhabitant(s) require no light to see.

THE MEDITATION ROOM (map location 12)

Beyond the short passage of the hole is another bigger but also empty room, likewise covered in bas-reliefs. This space is dark, but an opening across the room allow flickering lights in the next room to slightly illuminate the surroundings.

The bas-relief patterns here are different from the antechamber and distinct shapes can be made out, although they make no sense to the human mind.

They are carved in such a way as to appear to be shifting when you move across the room, making them seem unnatural and giving the characters a certain sense of foreboding.

Three plinths are positioned in the centre of the room in a pattern following the bas-reliefs carved into the floor. The plinths have no apparent function, but they look tarnished and worn as if something - or someone - has been rubbing against them incessantly.

The plinths are "anchoring posts" used by the triplet Na'Aqh to coil its bodies around, anchoring themselves during meditation.

TABLE 7.3 : OBSERVATIONS IN THE MEDITATION ROOM

- The swirling patterns in the bas-reliefs are depictions of common renditions of vortices in the Void.
- Anyone with occult lore or an enlightenment ranking of 3+ can recognise the shapes as being associated with the mindless ghostly abominations of the Void.

A further tunnel at the opposite end leads out of the room. Indistinct voices can be heard from beyond and the silhouette of Na'Aqh can be seen against the backlight. As the characters watch Na'Aqh gently floats into the grotto beyond and disappear from view.

If the characters follow the tunnel, they find that it ends roughly four metres above the floor of a large grotto.

The tunnel-exit is a vantage point permitting the characters a view of the entire cavern below. It is possible to jump or climb down the wall, but it would leave climbers exposed to discovery. Proceed to SCENE 8 - THE RITUAL.

THE ESCAPE TUNNEL (map location 16)

This roughly carved tunnel, located three metres above the cavern floor, leads to a dense and lush grove in the mansion garden. It is built to serve as a secret escape route for Na'Aqh.



SCENE VIII: THE RITUAL

SCENE SYNOPSIS

The characters discover Na'Aqh as it performs a ritual to attract the mindless abominations of the Void. The captured Telal and Tehmeena are discovered and Behzad's involvement is revealed as an abomination emerges but no ascension occurs and a Na'Aqh entity is killed. The two remaining Na'Aqh entities flee in separate directions with Tehmeena and Telal in tow as the grotto begin to collapse.

LOCATION

THE GROTTO: A natural cavern excavated and adapted to accommodate the Cult of the Darkened Sun. A Veil perforation exists in a fissure in the main grotto.

NPC'S

Telal, Tehmeena, Na'Aqh, Behzad and Sayu Mah (if alive).

TRIGGERED EVENTS

THE VOID RIFT: Should the rift ever be revealed it induces Fear in unenlightened characters.

SCENE VIII

Regardless whether the characters come from the preparation or meditation room read or recap the following: "You look over the rocky edge into a large grotto with a broad crevasse extending half of the width.

The middle of the crevasse is obscured by a canvas stretched across from the edges. While the dancing flames of oil lamps dispersed about the floor do little to illuminate the overall gloom several outlines can be seen moving about.

A procession of eight yellow-veiled zealots chanting in an unknown and harsh tongue emerges from a cavity on a far ledge. Their voices are reverberating around the room as they walk ceremoniously towards the stairs leading down to the grotto floor.

Between them you can make out a hunched human shape staggering along and Na'Aqh bringing up the rear."

As the eyes of the characters adjust to the dimness of their surroundings more details become apparent to them.



TABLE 8.1 : OBSERVATIONS IN THE GROTTO

- Three zealots walk down the stairs from the preparation room with the semi-conscious slave between them.
- The procession of eight zealots and Na'Aqh move down towards the crevasse with the hooded hunched form (Tehmeena) between them.
- On a far ledge with two deep cavities the remaining raiders are eyeing the ritual about to being below.
- Another Na'Aqh sibling is waiting below with two zealots holding a third prisoner: Telal. [Seeing this triggers a memory!]

The characters discover Na'Aqh as it performs a ritual to attract the mindless abominations of the Void. The captured Telal and Tehmeena are discovered and Behzad's involvement is revealed as an abomination emerges but no ascension occurs and a Na'Aqh entity is killed. The two remaining Na'Aqh entities flee in separate directions with Tehmeena and Telal in tow as the grotto begin to collapse.

TRIGGERED EVENT: THE VOID RIFT

If the canvas should ever be removed and the Void rift revealed all unenlightened characters must make a Fear roll [9] with the object of fear being the rift.

Several of the zealots move slightly back from the black mist as if in fright, but Na'Aqh reacts instantly seemingly forcing them to stand their ground by its sheer willpower and presence. As calmness settles among the zealots the three Na'Aqh untangle and turn in synchrony towards the waiting prisoners on the plateau. The veiled Behzad - holding a ceremonial dagger in his hand - advance towards the three zealots restraining Telal, Tehmeena and the now fully conscious slave.

The traitor seems hesitant but urged by Na'Aqh he moves to the edge of the mist-saturated canvas and calls in a loud but trembling voice: "Peta Babkama Luruba Anaku. Kima Parsi Labiruti. Eluana Bel Ade U Mammit!" Any character versed in occult lore or rituals is able to recognise the litany of this blasphemous ceremony: "Open the gate for me so I can enter here.

Treat her in accordance with the ancient rites. Raise up unto vassal!" With trembling hands Behzad cuts a long slash in his forearm dripping the gleaming blood unto the canvas. He lifts a flap of the canvas while he slowly turns towards the slave being brought forth. Laying the dagger on the ground he invokes a chant and viciously pushes the pleading and screaming slave into the unmoving darkness below the canvas.

Arms flailing the slave disappear his screams abruptly silenced as if swallowed by the ocean but not a ripple appears in the canvas. An eerie silence hangs in the room as the zealots stop their chanting; waiting in stillness.

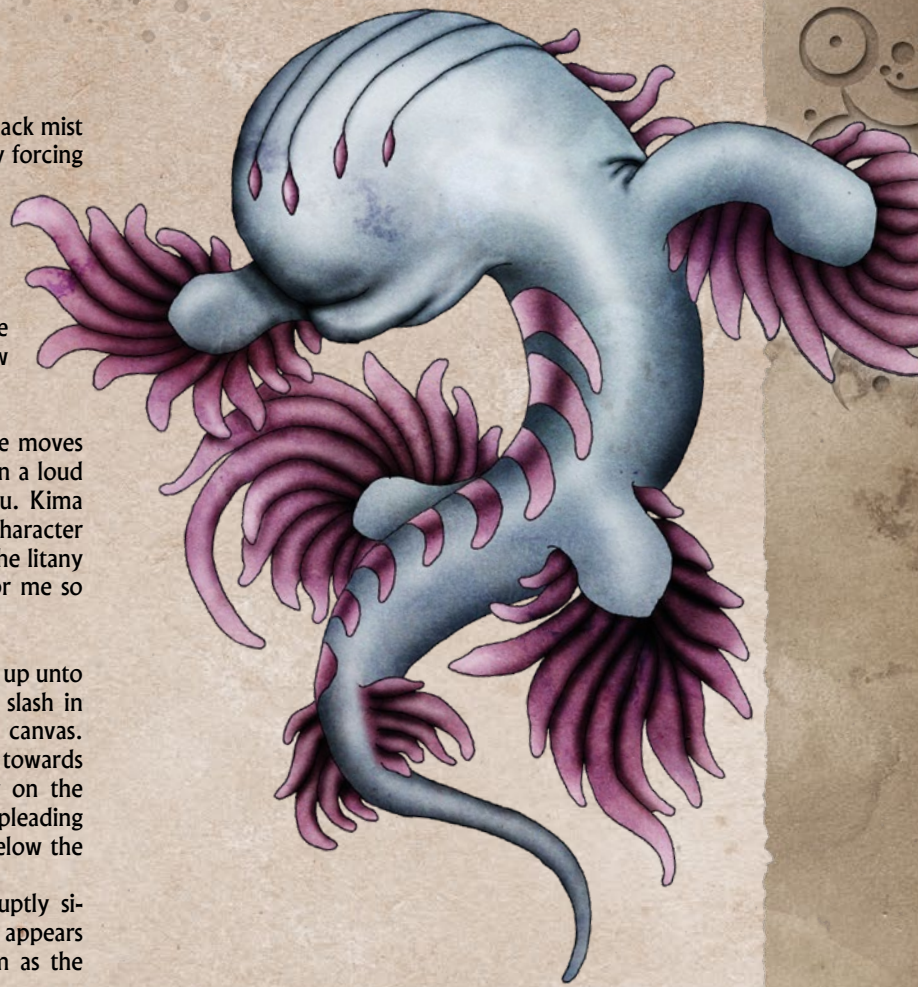
As the silence drags on the characters begin to sense something stirring below the canvas, a pulsating energy coming from the rift. It is not something physical or mental, but something wholly beyond the ordinary senses and capacities of human-ity to understand; something truly alien.

With incredible speed a shapeless ethereal fume shoots out through the canvas as if it was not there, pummeling the near-est zealot and throwing him violently across the room into a rock wall. With a sickening crunch the zealot hits the wall leaving a splatter of dark blood as he slumps to the ground in a distorted heap.

Behzad shrieks in alarm and jumps back in surprise, dislodging his bronze veil revealing his identity. Characters witnessing the emergence of the fumes must make an immediate Willpower roll [7] or succumb to Fear as the Void entity begins to materialise from the rift.

Two more amorphous and pallid fumes spiral out through the canvas knocking down zealots and incidentally grabbing one of the Na'Aqh triplets by its tail. As soon as the fume has a hold it begins dragging the Na'Aqh towards the rift.

Although the fume seems ethereal and blurry - as if out of focus and of no particular shape or consistency - its hold on Na'Aqh is all too real. In panic the Aml'Nāqru sibling is writhing and struggling, desperately trying to free itself from the grip drag-ging it towards the misty abyss. The telepathic screams of all three Na'Aqh echo inside the heads of the characters - in-sistent in its primal terror.



Once the zealots realise what is happening and that Na'Aqh has no control, most of them panic and flee towards the preparation chamber and passageway into the mansion basement.

The two remaining Na'Aqh grab Telal and Tehmeena and quickly glide toward separate exits followed by a zealot able to keep his wits about him, leaving their struggling doomed sibling behind!

The characters can opt for pursuing one Na'Aqh sibling (proceed to EVENT 8.1), split up and pursue both Na'Aqh siblings (proceed to EVENT 8.2), ignore the Na'Aqh and flee the grotto (proceed to EVENT 8.3) or stay in the grotto and face the emerging Void entity as Zealots and Na'Aqh flee the cavern.

The Void entity strains to enter the grotto through the rift, causing the cavern to tremble. Massive chunks of rock and dirt are plummeting from the collapsing ceiling as the ethereal fumes thrash about and gradually emerge further from the rift below the canvas.

Every 9 seconds (3 combat rounds) another fume materialises from the rift causing tremors in the grotto and increasing the dread of the encounter. For each additional fume materialising a Willpower roll [7] must be made, adding + 1 to the difficulty per fume, to avoid being affected by Fear. After three minutes the entire grotto will collapse killing anyone remaining inside, presumably blocking the rift and emerging Void entity.

EVENT 8.1 - PURSUING A SINGLE NA'AQH SIBLING
As the characters pursue one Na'Aqh sibling the other makes its escape with its captive. The Na'Aqh they follow instructs its loyal zealot to delay the oncoming characters. "With a blank stare the zealot turns to face you as Na'Aqh continues towards the tunnel leading from the grotto. Slowly but deliberately he draws a curved dagger advancing on you slashing the air with the sharp blade."

The zealot engages the characters but utilise only defensive manoeuvres to delay rather than hurt the characters; seeking to hold them off long enough for Na'Aqh to escape. The Na'Aqh however, is slowed down considerably having to force its captive along and is easily reached by the remaining characters while still inside the cavern complex once they have dispatched the zealot.

Once faced with no other options it turns its full fury on the characters using its full arsenal of powers and physical might to hurt or subdue them in order to make its escape. Its first action is to attempt to dominate one of the characters and force him or her to attack the others.

If this is achieved it attacks any remaining characters with its powers and its lashing tail attack. While it fights it broadcasts its telepathic speech which is a mix of rage, terror and hatred as all three Na'Aqh communicate together. If the characters decide to retreat without securing the captive Na'Aqh does not press its advantage but rather withdraws and make good its escape.

If the characters manage to defeat Na'Aqh they can bring whichever captive they decided to go after to safety as the grotto continues its inevitable collapse.

ARBITRARY EVENT: DEATH OF ONE NA'AQH

The Arbiter can decide that during this encounter the abandoned Na'Aqh sibling is pulled into the Void and obliterated, making its telepathic voice die out and sending the two remaining Na'Aqh into a maddened state of fury, acting erratically, thrashing about and ignoring the characters for D6 rounds.

As the characters emerge from caverns and basement a panicked crowd of guests is swarming around the mansion. The bath pavilion has collapsed and in its place is a massive crater where the grotto used to be, the water from the hidden aqueduct slowly filling it with water.

On the trodden and deserted garden lawn outside the mansion the remaining Na'Aqh - driven mad by the loss of its sibling(s) - is drifting erratically around in the air while dragging the unmoving body of its captive across the grass in its tail.

As the characters emerge it will turn towards them and filled with vehement rage and blinding grief telepathically scream: "YOU! You have done this! You and your filthy

breed of vermin have destroyed my sibling(s)! You will suffer for this!"

With a violent flick of its tail it flings the lifeless body of the captive - Telal or Tehmeena depending on whom the characters rescued - at the characters (roll to hit) and floats into the air leaving the characters behind, facing a furious Mirza and her guards.

EVENT 8.2 - CHASING BOTH NA'AQH SIBLINGS

As the characters split up to pursue the fleeing Na'Aqh siblings these order the two remaining zealots to hold off the pursuers. Narrate or paraphrase: "With blank stares the zealots turn to face you as Na'Aqh continues towards the tunnel leading from the grotto. Slowly but deliberately they each draw a curved dagger advancing on you slashing the air with the sharp blades."

The zealots engage the characters, utilising only defensive manoeuvres in order to delay rather than harm the characters; seeking to hold them off long enough for their Na'Aqh masters to escape.

The Na'Aqh are slowed down having to bring their captives along and are easily reached by the characters once past the zealots. If faced with no other options than to fight the Na'Aqh siblings turn their full fury on the characters using powers and physical might to hurt or subdue them. The first action is to attempt to dominate one of the characters and force him or her to attack the others.

If this is achieved Na'Aqh attacks any remaining characters with its remaining power and its lashing tail attack. In their maddened state they both fight until victorious or dead. If the characters decide to retreat neither Na'Aqh will press the advantage but rather withdraw and make good their escape.

EVENT 8:3 - RETREAT!

If the characters opt to abandon the grotto and leave the captives to their fate, they can move out of the cavern complex alongside the panicking zealots and emerge to the tumultuous scene of a panicked crowd as the bath pavilion disappear into a crater where the grotto once was.

Floating high above the mansion grounds the two remaining Na'Aqh circle with their captives dangling in their slick tails. As Na'Aqh spot the characters they slowly turn and with a vicious flick of their tails release the flailing bodies of Telal and Tehmeena.

Falling towards the ground the two elders hit the dirt with a hard thump and lay still. As the Na'Aqh float into the air they leave the characters in front of a crater where once the bath pavilion stood with two (probably) dead elders at their feet...





PART 1: CONCLUSION

As the characters likely flee the Mirza's mansion, she and her guards will not pursue them far as the palace is largely in ruins and the garden is in chaos with milling with cultists, raiders, guests, slaves and guards.

Feerada will welcome them in the enclave possibly setting them up with temporary accommodation while brooding over how to appease the Mirza to avoid potential repercussions.

ADVANCEMENT

While Arbiters are free to grant experience, enlightenment and Wastah progressively after each session - assuming that the adventure is not played in its entirety during one session - they can consider the below allocations:

EXPERIENCE POINTS

In addition to individual achievements or notable collective accomplishments it is recommended that characters are awarded 1-3 experience points per completed scene.

ENLIGHTENMENT

Characters may potentially obtain enlightenment from the following occurrences:

- Unenlightened characters witnessing the Void rift in the grotto.
- Any characters witnessing and affected by the Void entity's assault in the grotto.

WASTAH

Through this scenario characters may potentially obtain Wastah with the following NPC's:

- Feerada
- Maiara
- Kûn Azhar
- The Mirza (although unlikely)

REWARDS

While Arbiters are free to let the characters pilfer and otherwise obtain valuables throughout the adventure the below guidelines can be applied as guidelines:

- The reward from Feerada.
- Likely rewards from Telal or Tehmeena (should they survive).
- The mansion holds a variety of valuable items that can be pilfered. But they would be difficult to convert to copper dhins unless sold on the black market or similar at significantly devalued prices.
- Weaponry and armour found in the guard quarters, mansion or other places may be of a size usable to humans and would generally be of basic quality.
- Various vendors and other establishments in the Pai'Karaan area can provide opportunities for wealth accumulation.

PART 2:

THE VEILED INSCRIPTIONS

By Dan Cross and Jon Creffield

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The adventure starts in the human enclave of Dhaarese, a poor district on banks of river Margidda. The siblings are approached by Tahmtan the Im'zu (alternatively, if Tahmtan died in some unlikely accident in the events of Volume I, the Im'zu might be named Slahnaq, with similar informational access). He tells them of a dying child who needs help. He explains that the child named Adnan was turned into a living Void conduit for some horrid ritual. The child's mother, a human woman named Hunlona, is too terrified to seek direct help for fear of retribution. She does not want to endanger the rest of her family - those not already murdered (see below). Rahaat decides to hire Tahmtan to secretly recruit Telal's progeny to stop the unfolding events, as Maiara was a client of the Amari Infusers and that made him quite an asset. Tahmtan is instructed to tell the siblings that this mission is upon the behest of Telal (or Tehmeena if Telal is dead), as he supports Rahaat, but does not otherwise want his involvement known.

Despite being spurned low caste humans, Hunlona's family managed to acquire wealth dealing in exotic substances and strange elixirs. They forged contacts in low and high places, but in doing so earned the enmity of The Qamsa (see below).

Her child is a halfblood because Hunlona was impregnated by Izdubar, one of The Qamsa. Izdubar is partly Daimonic and has been using a telepathic connection to exploit the poor child for his own purposes, which is turning the boy into a mindless, murderous and inhuman form.

Worse still, this happened before to one of Hunlona's children: her firstborn child transformed into a monster, resulting in numerous family deaths.

The Qamsa are a group of powerful, mysterious entities that rule over The Hidden Hollow. It is a place between worlds where exotic substances, bizarre items of myriad use, and rare written material are traded without the knowledge and related tithe or tribute to the Unseen Rulers.

The Hidden Hollow is a subterranean cavern-enclave beneath the city's streets, the entrance to The Hidden Hollow lies within a trading dome called The Aromatic Souq, situated high on a pinnacle in the Dear Bitaan district. The aromatic souq is fragrant with distinct, attractive, strange and refreshing smells, but it is more than spices, teas, perfumes and incense which can be bought here.

Trance-inducing teas, intoxicating vapours and hallucinogenic fumes kept in small glass vials and other suppositories are readily available and even vendors of scent-based toxins and poisons can be found in the hidden corners of the souq.

There is a winding corkscrew inside the pinnacle leading down into The Hidden Hollow and hiding an illicit market "behind" a legitimate one. The corkscrew path is initially very tight - twisting down in gradually widening loops until it eventually becomes a wide loop when it arrives at the Hidden Hollow itself. Here, under the protection of The Qamsa, the representatives of the most powerful and wealthiest amongst Llyhn's inhabitants trade prohibited and other exotic goods without paying tithe. Thievery is dissuaded by the threat of The Qamsa's vengeance - although save for Izdubar the beings never emerge from their black node and nobody truly knows what they are. The Unseen Rulers govern the Eternal City with an iron fist, so The Hidden Hollow and its true purpose is diligently kept secret from them and their servants.

The most sought-after information in the Hidden Hollow involves the Amari Veiled Inscriptions, two tablets holding a recipe for a substance known as Ruyah. It is a variant of a more potent concoction that it is said the Unseen Rulers use to ensure that their navigators do not suffer Void distortion. Some believe that taking this addictive psychedelic substance reveals facts about the Void and might reveal the identity of the city's rulers; it has become one of the Qamsa's main sources of revenue now. Addicts take it for the visionary experiences it induces, but its original intent for Void navigation is a closely held secret.

The Daimonic creature Izdubar, who has twice impregnated Hunlona, is the Least of The Qamsa - effectively a powerful minion of the others, particularly Adrahis, known as the Seeker of Knowledge.

In ethereal form, Izdubar impregnated Hunlona during her sleep. Now the child is of age, Izdubar is infusing his essence into his progeny, so he can possess the boy's body and travel into the depths of the Void, to visit a distant alien master, a godlike Void entity.

Secretly, one of the Qamsa hopes to summon this entity to destroy the Eternal City while the others hope to be given knowledge and power that will enable them to challenge the Unseen Rulers and instigate their own reign. Each such trip to The Master of The Qamsa brings greater "enlightenment" about the nature of reality and Mystic secrets. Once the "lesson" is learned Izdubar returns to his own body and sets the child loose, now a monster of insanity, to kill The Qamsa's rivals. Izdubar believes the other members of The Qamsa entrust him with this task because they intend to proliferate his power to match theirs, but in truth, they are exploiting him as each such journey across the Void destroys not only the host's body but Izdubar's mind too, incrementally.

Izdubar is utterly subordinate to Tu, the most powerful of The Qamsa Void-touched entities. As Izdubar is the only member of The Qamsa to leave their black node, he has a bodyguard called Axayaca: Foremost soldier of The Qamsa. Tu ironically charges money to families for Axayaca to hunt down and destroy the demon children that Izdubar creates. Axayaca does not know the truth of the matter and thinks he is hunting down rampaging creatures of destruction his masters point him to, not realising The Qamsa created them to wreak havoc. In the final scene, if the siblings could convince him he had been duped by the Qamsa in this matter, Axayaca might change allegiance.

Hunlona is but one unfortunate rival of The Qamsa to have been cursed by Izdubar's nocturnal visitations. He has created and destroyed many children. Because the trade in narcotics is a treacherous one, many of The Qamsa's competitors operate from hidden locales, but only one family truly drew the attention of the masters of The Aromatic Souq.

Hunlona's family had specialised in the trade of mysterious and strange infusions, mostly substances of various kinds, the concoctions a family secret. They are known as The Amari Infusers. This is what brought upon Hunlona the unwelcome attention of The Qamsa, bent on cornering the market. She has allies though, those offering not only money but much wisdom to the group if they agree to this mission.

One ally is Rahaat, a Devotee of Misterimadh, the name for the supposed "silver lining" of the Void, their mantra "one must traverse the dark to find the light." Their deity is one of revenge and justice but is, in fact, The Void itself in a misguided way. Rahaat is a Ka'Alum and one who pulled away from core allegiance to the Ka'Alum Federation to establish a religious sect.

Hunlona was an early devotee because she and Rahaat shared an interest in finding old tablets, particularly the Amari Veiled Inscriptions, containing written alchemical secrets reportedly stolen from her family by The Qamsa a decade ago. These are the writings which contain a recipe for Ruyah, the powerful hallucinogenic substance that is rumoured to grant fragmentary understanding of the Void and potentially of the Unseen Rulers of the city too. Hunlona believes its Void suppressing influence will help her son because she heard it can reverse the terrible effects of travelling through the Void.

Tahmtan leads the group before Rahaat who becomes their patron for this mission and enlists them to the aid of Hunlona. They only have days to prevent Hunlona's son from transforming. The Qamsa have finished with him, he has returned from his final Void journey and is now gradually becoming an abomination as the exposure to the Void's distortive taint continues to contort him physically and mentally.

The siblings will need to travel to the submerged enclave of the Shaauru to gain information about the tablets, then explore the upper circle of the Hidden Hollow, finding the tablets that can restore Adnan, and then finding what's needed to defeat the murderous plans of Tu, information that will serve them well in volume III.

NOTABLE PEOPLE

Some notable people, places and factions from Part I may reoccur - these are not noted in this overview.

ABD ALIM (AMARI): Abd Alim is Phamea's older brother, first born of Hunlona from her previous marriage.

AB'HEKIM: A master infuser who is a slave to the Shaauru in their underwater colony Eankabut.

ADNAN AMARI:
The son of Hunlona. The poor boy has been possessed and exploited by the Qamsa.

ADRAHASIS: Adrahasis is a member of the Qamsa and perhaps the most committed to the original intent of reclaiming Earth for mankind.

ANZOR
A halfblood practitioner of Mysticism, member of Rahaat's order and owner of a MindNebula.

AXAYACA: The principal soldier and servant of the Qamsa.

GADATAS: Gadatas cares nothing now for mankind, the Qamsa or anything other than his own ascension.

GHAL'AR: An imposing Talath, who stands guard over the Qamsa library, stationed beside Hal'sujalat, the Ba'Waikh keeper of records.

HAL'SUJALAT
This learned Ba'Waikh is "Keeper of Records" in the Qamsa Library, and one of the few cognizant of the importance of the Veiled Inscriptions.

HUNLONA AMARI: Mother of Adnan, the boy turning into a monster.

IZDUBAR: Izdubar is the weakest member of the Qamsa; going mad and being duped by the rest.

KATYA: Katya is a human Pit Slave liaison, adept at capturing various races for the Qamsa to press into slavery.

PHAMEA (AMARI): The disowned daughter of Hunlona and learned in Mysticism.

RAHAAT: A Ka'Alum, founder and devotee of the Misterimadh temple as well as ally of Hunlona.

SHE THAT IS UNNAMED: The only female member of the Qamsa and she believes all humanity should be gifted with a measure of the Qamsa's power.

TAHMTAN/SLAHNAQ: An Im'zu chatter broker who is now working on behalf of Hunlona and Rahaat.

THE MINDNEBULA: A weird exotic entity that interrelates purely via a telepathic connection.

THE MYRIAD
This Shaauru is the leader of the Shaauru underwater colony found on the bottom of the Margidda river.

TU: A member of the Qamsa who has a lunatic scheme to summon a godlike entity, believing that rejuvenation follows devastation.

UBEELE: A Variin follower of Misterimadh who helps the characters because it owes a favour to Rahaat.

UKBALTHOO: A curious dwarf-like being who is an obsequious and useful guide.

ZIZY: A heretic and excommunicated member of Rahaat's Mystical order, who betrays the characters to the Qamsa.

MAIN LOCATIONS

DAER BITAAN: Large district on the eastern shore of the Eternal City. Dominated by high pinnacles and containing multiple trading domes.

EANKABUT: A submerged Shaauru colony in the Margidda river.

HOUSE OF THE MUQRIDIN: A sandstone building housing well-recognised coin lenders, built into the rock of the Pinnacle, run by a strange species called the Mudirs who exchange monies and make loans to the high-caste wealthy. The Al'iidara area is hidden from the street, entered through the guarded backend of the building.

KIMIAYIY MARKAZ (Qamsa Alchemy lab): A place near a thinning of the veil of reality, where new drugs are created for the Qamsa, infused with rare substances to generate various strange powers.

THE AL'IIDARA: The place where records and bookkeeping is handled for the Qamsa. This area is accessed only by passing through the House of the Muqridin.

THE AROMATIC SOUQ: A trading dome situated on a pillar in the Daer Bitaan district of the Eternal City.

THE HIDDEN HOLLOW: Located in the pinnacle beneath the Aromatic Souq.

THE MARGIDDA: The river flowing through the Eternal City from the Morning Palace.

THE TEMPLE OF MISTERIMADH: Located on the Shallowwater shore just outside the Feeradani enclave.



GROUPS & FACTIONS

THE AMARI INFUSERS: A family that specialises in the trade of mysterious and strange teas, infusions and secrets, as well as intoxicating substances of various kinds. Hunlona, Phamea, Ab'Hekim, Abd Alim, and Adnan are all members of or associated with this family.

THE DEVOTEES OF MISTERIMADH: Allies of your patron Telal who follow the Ka'Alum Rahaat in his worship of a god of revenge and justice, believing that there is a "silver lining" of the Void, their mantra "one must traverse the dark to find the light." They regard the Ruyah hallucinogenic substance to be sacred. Rahaat, Anzor, Ubeele, and Hunlona are members, but Zizy, once a member, betrays them early on.

MINIONS OF THE QAMSA: Most followers of the Qamsa are unaware of the true aspirations of their masters but serve them in The Hidden Hollow. Others are aware of the Qamsa dream of reclaiming the Cosmos for humanity, with many later inducted into a mystical order known as the Order of Laghaz, which forms during the events of Vol III.

THE QAMSA: The Qamsa, once mortal Babylonians, were forever changed by their exposure to the Void and alien entities following the cataclysmic events on Earth. Their quest for power was sparked by outrage at mankind's mistreatment and a desire to find Earth once more.

SCENE OVERVIEW

SCENE 1: TAHMTAN SEEKS AID

SCENE 2: MURKY WATERS

SCENE 3: ON UNKNOWN PATHS

SCENE 4: INTO THE DARK

SCENE 5: THE KIMIAYIY MARKAZ

SCENE 6: THE BOY

CHARACTER CREATION

This scenario is designed for 2-5 characters who have a total of 60 to 75 character points each, one or two rankings in enlightenment and potentially a ranking in Wastah.

Characters that have progressed from part I of the campaign are likely to have advanced enough to attain these characteristics and at least some of the protagonists should have "Void sensitivity" by the time these events unfold.

Whether Telal is alive or not, assume Rahaat is also his ally, soon to become their new or secondary patron together with Tehmeena.

CHARACTER BACK-STORY

Characters carried over from part I naturally retain their back-story while any newly introduced characters fittingly can be some of Telal's other missing orphans who have returned to the Feeradani enclave during the events of the first scenario.

This ensures a similar upbringing, secret tattoos and allegiance to Telalt as the original protagonists, enabling them to seamlessly get interwoven in the story.



SCENE 1: TAHMTAN SEEKS AID

SCENE SYNOPSIS

The first scene allows the players to reacquaint themselves with each other's characters, assumed to be the siblings from part I.

In this scene, the siblings are approached by Tahmtan the Im'zu hired by Hunlona to recruit them to solve her tragic and perilous issues. They are given information about the boy Adnan and his mother, and if accepting the lead and promise of reward, taken to the place of worship that also hides the activities of the Amari family. They meet Rahaat, Hunlona and Anzor, and told of their mission. Zizy, however, betrays his friends from the start and sets up an ambush designed to stop the siblings before they can take more than a few mere steps after accepting the undertaking...

LOCATION

THE FEERADANI ENCLAVE: The human enclave located in Dhaarese, a poor district on the banks of the river Margidda...

NPC'S

Adnan, Anzor, Hunlona, Rahaat, Tahmtan and Zizy.

NOTES

If Telal is dead replace him with Tehmeena.

The Im'zu encountered could be Tahmtan from Part I, or if he is deceased, it would be an Im'zu named Slahnaq.

Zizy's betrayal happens during this scene as the group is recruited. He goes to The Qamsa's agents and betrays his order, telling them of the plan to send the characters after Ab'Hekim, but gets tortured for his troubles all the same.



SCENE VI

Read or paraphrase the following: "You know this place well, the human enclave of many memories both edifying and terrifying.

The area sprawls out ahead of your walk, easily pictured in your mind. The shaky suspension bridge leading to the enclave from the platform closest to the shore, all of the alleyways and passages snaking through desperate looking dilapidated pile dwellings. Looking around, you recall the precariousness of mud and clay buildings stacked chaotically above the river Margidda, all held up by stilts and platforms radiating out from the central plaza area amid the principal structures of the Feeradani district.

The familiar stench of the air permeates your nostrils; tar, refuse and dead fish. This place was long your home, and though you've only recently returned to these streets, you and your siblings know how to find your way through the moving shadows cast by the flickering torches and oil lamps that do little to brighten this lacklustre place under Llyhn's yellowed sky.

The Temple of Misterimadh is hidden in the twisting alleyways and dimly lantern-lit streets along the shore just outside the Feeradani enclave in the Dhaarese district on the banks of the river Margidda. Its darkened entrance is found among the ramshackle buildings with gabled rooftops in an inconspicuous dreary dwelling of clay, the small room within concealing a secret entrance to the temple proper.

Like the enclave itself, there are pile dwellings and stilt structures in this area, stretching out on docks along the shore, with one mooring platform accommodating a few meagre fishing skiffs. Silt sharks just beneath the water's surface await the occasional drunk fishermen falling into the muddy waters.

Telal, that elderly and kind man who raised you had requested you return here and seek the Ka'Alum Rahaat, the leader of the Devotees of Misterimadh. And so you have, respecting Telal's patronage and his request to seek out an old ally.

The tattoos you and your siblings share happen to be the very symbol of the Misterimadh cult, that being a stylised sun with twelve rays of varying lengths, each said to symbolize one of the Deities of your abandoned Earth. Telal once said that Rahaat's preached a "silver lining" of the Void and that their mantra was "one must traverse the dark to find the light."

Telal mentioned that Rahaat taught the light would lead to rediscovering the Old Gods, who if awakened could lead

humanity back to its birthplace and restore order for all nonhuman beings. Long ago, Telal related to you that the Devotees of Misterimadh initiated him into their mysteries and shared with him a rare and powerful intoxicant to gain visions.

Finding the Temple of Misterimadh would be nearly impossible for most, as their order could run afoul of the Unseen Rulers, and so they keep their locale secret.

Telal had informed you that if you all go to the Drinking Den at dusk, you'll be recognised by your tattoos if exposed, and eventually met by one who could provide further instruction, an Im'zu, whose name was not revealed."

EVENT 1:1 - MEETING THE IM'ZU

If the characters decide to go to the Drinking Den straight away and await being recognised by the Im'zu with the information promised, the Arbiter may decide he does not show up on the first try, prompting the siblings to further explore the enclave, or the Im'zu may appear and move the plot along immediately.

If the characters do not encounter the Im'zu right away, they may learn of recent happenings in the enclave from talking to regulars in the tavern or walk about and mine for information from the denizens on the streets.

The Arbiter should feel free to introduce some information unrelated to the content of this scenario, leading to subplots newly improvised, while others hinting at the dangers and mysteries to come through this material. But eventually the characters will learn of some key rumours circulating about the knowledge seekers of the enclave.

The characters may spot random enclave members from earlier in the tavern or about town.

Some may not appear at all as they could be dead. Whether Behzad the councillor, or Feerada, the despotic founder and leader of the human enclave, or any other NPC, none have much knowledge themselves beyond the hints given in the Rumours table.



TABLE 1.1 RUMOURS ABOUT THE ENCLAVE (IN TOWN OR IN THE DRINKING DEN)

- "There are rumours of a ritual that is practised on the bodies of human children, used as unwilling slaves for the masters of The Aromatic Souq".
- "Some children have transformed into abominations, and someone has paid a brute named Axayaca to destroy the contorted children".
- "The Amari Infusers have been exposed, cut down by some mysterious rival. Ab'Hekim, the most experienced merchant of the Amari Infusers has gone missing".
- "Hunlona, have you heard of her? The Mother of Infusers. We hear it was her children that turned into monsters, the first destroyed by Axayaca, a Daimon hunter. It's tragic, rumour is that she is in hiding, her family and supply of such wonderful and strange concoctions ruined for us all."
- Word on the street is that there is an intoxicant, Ruyah, that gives one visions. The Misterimadh cultists think it's like some higher meaning, but on the street we know it's fun, and sometimes induce visions, revelations and epiphanies. Some say drinking it might even reveal the truth about the Unseen Rulers! Sounds dangerous to play with that..."
- "Those who are causing this mayhem? Who knows? They are a breath. A shadow. Some say they hail from The Aromatic Souq, pulling the strings of crooked merchant and murderer alike. I am a simple man. I know nothing, and I wish to know nothing. In matters such as this, the ignorant live longer than the wise..."

TABLE 1.2 OBSERVATIONS WHILE IN THE DRINKING DEN

- If the characters choose to hide their tattoos and look themselves for an Im'zu in the Drinking Den. Note that Tahmtan is never without his loyal bodyguard Oqq the Talath.
- Watching the characters all the while, listening from the shadows, is Zizy, the heretic excommunicated member of Rahaat's Mystical order.

Irrespective of when and how the characters get to the point of contact with the Im'zu, they will either be approached or recognised as the encounter unfolds.

Narrate or summarise the following: "You spot the pudgy, dark greyish form of an Im'zu clearly leering at you, looking somewhat pleased, like perhaps it had just eaten a delicious worm. It seems to grin, its mouth filled with tiny pointed teeth. It beckons you over with one side flipper, and waddles to a good place for conversation".

The Im'zu explains to the protagonists: "You all bear the mark of the 12-star, being in league with the honourable Telal, a friend of the one who sent me. He expects you to assist, and though There is a reward, your loyalty we do not question.

The Ka'Alum Rahaat, a priest of Misterimadh, summons you to tell you of grave happenings, but fear not for he has no dealings with those who would perform human sacrifice. Telal nor Tehmeena would associate with such a kind. Rahaat is of a different breed. He will explain much."

ARBITRARY EVENT: ZIZY THE SPY

Zizy seeks to keep two or three patrons between himself and the siblings. However, if a player character states specifically that they are looking out for anyone watching them, then succeeding in a very challenging [11] Awareness roll reveals the following, "A shaven-headed man with a nose bleed sits in a nearby corner, dabbing at the blood with a ragged piece of cloth. He catches your eye before looking away." If a player character asks for more information, reveal that the man is about thirty years of age and dressed in simple grey robes worn over a pair of black leather trousers. There are a dirk and scroll case bound to a rope belt at his waist. If approached, Zizy apologises for looking, saying either that he mistook them for a friend or, if appropriate, that, 'I thought I recognised you as the swordsmen who fought so valiantly for Dhaarese.' If asked about the nosebleed, he says his health troubles him - although truthfully, his nose bleeds when he is tense. A contest between Zizy's Persuasion opposed by a protagonist's Willpower might reveal this or any of his other claims as falsehoods. If this leads to a confrontation, the thugs Zizy has hired (see 1.3) will intervene. Zizy will try to flee during the fray.

Assuming no confrontation occurs, Zizy seeks to avoid further conversation, but if pressed, feigns a desire to hire the siblings for what he describes as a profitable endeavour with moderate risk. He says he will tell them more shortly but needs to confer with a partner first.

During the conversation, an easy [4] Awareness check reveals stubble on his shaven head and eyes hollow through lack of sleep. Should a player character score an exceptional success, they notice a tattoo half hidden by Zizy's robes that looks much like the one the siblings bare. If asked about this, Zizy will stall, saying it is a matter he must discuss with them but not now (he will look about melodramatically and put one finger to his lips).

Zizy will seek to leave as quickly and with as little interaction as possible. As he walks away, the protagonists will note that he has a clubfoot and walks with a swaying motion, one leg dragging behind the other.

TABLE 1.3 KNOWLEDGE OF THE IM'ZU

- A child is dying, and his mother is a friend of the Temple.
- The child is a Halfblood, his mother impregnated by a Daimonic creature. The boy has been afflicted and stigmatised; to open a Void conduit, forced to travel in and communicate with a distant alien master, a godlike entity.
- The child's mother is Hunlona. Her family specialised in the trade of mysterious, surreptitious and strange substances of various kinds, the concoctions a family secret. They are known as The Amari Infusers. This is what brought upon Hunlona the unwelcome attention of some rivals, bent on cornering the market.
- Hunlona was also an early devotee of Rahaat, as they shared an interest in finding old tablets, particularly the Amari Veiled Inscriptions, containing written alchemical secrets reportedly stolen from her family by The Qamsa a decade ago. These are the writings which contain the recipe for a powerful hallucinogenic substance said to temporarily grant visions and sometimes understanding of the Void... 'Rumoured it is that even glimpses of the Unseen Rulers might it bestow,' the Im'zu will say. Hunlona believes it will help her son because she heard a rumour it can reverse the terrible effects of travelling through the Void.

Once explained, the Im'zu gets to the point: The characters are charged with seeking out the Amari Veiled Inscriptions to restore Hunlona's boy before he is wholly warped into a mindless monster.

A particularly observant character may detect somebody shady closely watching this exchange once it commences. A check against Awareness (+ any applicable skill) would reveal this man staring at the group. If spotted, read the following: "The one spying is rotund, with gnarled, tanned skin, a long oval face and going bald, except for a scraggly beard, he has a few tangles of unkempt brown hair falling from the back of his head. He seems to be looking your way but quickly turns his head".

He is a lackey of Zizy the heretic hired to spy on the Im'zu. Zizy knew the Im'zu was hired by Rahaat to recruit mercenaries to find the lost Amari Veiled Inscriptions. The spy's name is Diza, but he is cowardly and interested only in money.

If the protagonists approach him, he will simply try to leave. If they stop him, he will apologize for staring and say he was just thinking about his last meal and beg for money.

A successful Persuasion roll [7] will get him to admit he was asked by Zizy to spy on the activities of the protagonists and their information broker. Admitting such will undoubtedly motivate the Im'zu's bodyguard to apprehend the man and drag him along into the next event at the Temple of Misterimadh.

EVENT 1:2 - THE TEMPLE AND RAHAAT'S MISSION
If the protagonists agree, they will follow the Im'zu to the secret location of Rahaat's temple.

Narrate or summarize the following: "You are led through the twisting alleyways and dark streets to the shore just outside the enclave, whereupon your guide stops and looks up. A glint, a small flash of light, momentarily appears atop one of the gabled rooftops.

He nods, glances back at you and says, 'it's safe to proceed'. You are guided through the wooden door in a nearby dreary dwelling of clay into a plain rectangular room with sparse furniture: a single cot, a small table holding a flickering candle, an old, dusty wooden desk and chair.

The Im'zu lifts an old braided rug under the cot and reveals a trap door. Lifting it up, he beckons you all to follow down a narrow, darkened staircase below. Taking a lit candle from a wall sconce, its guttering flame throwing shadows about its flat-faced head, the Im'zu says, 'Someone important must you meet!'

As they follow, they come into a well-lit stone-flagged basement; its whitewashed walls inscribed with swirling, black, cloud-like images.

Bronze lanterns decorated with silver stars and orange suns hang from the ceiling. Dominating above all, situated high on the wall over an altar-block bearing a clay jug and two pewter mugs, the same twelve-rayed sun symbol tattooed on each sibling is emblazoned.

Read or paraphrase the following: "Two people kneel in prayer before the altar, one is a middle aged woman with long brown hair bound into a ponytail hanging down her back. She wears a simple brown dress and shawl.

Beside her, a man wearing grey robes rocks silently as he prays. He too is of middle years and has a short, squat build. An undulating, shimmering, tentacled entity clings to his head and shoulders, like a half-worn hood.

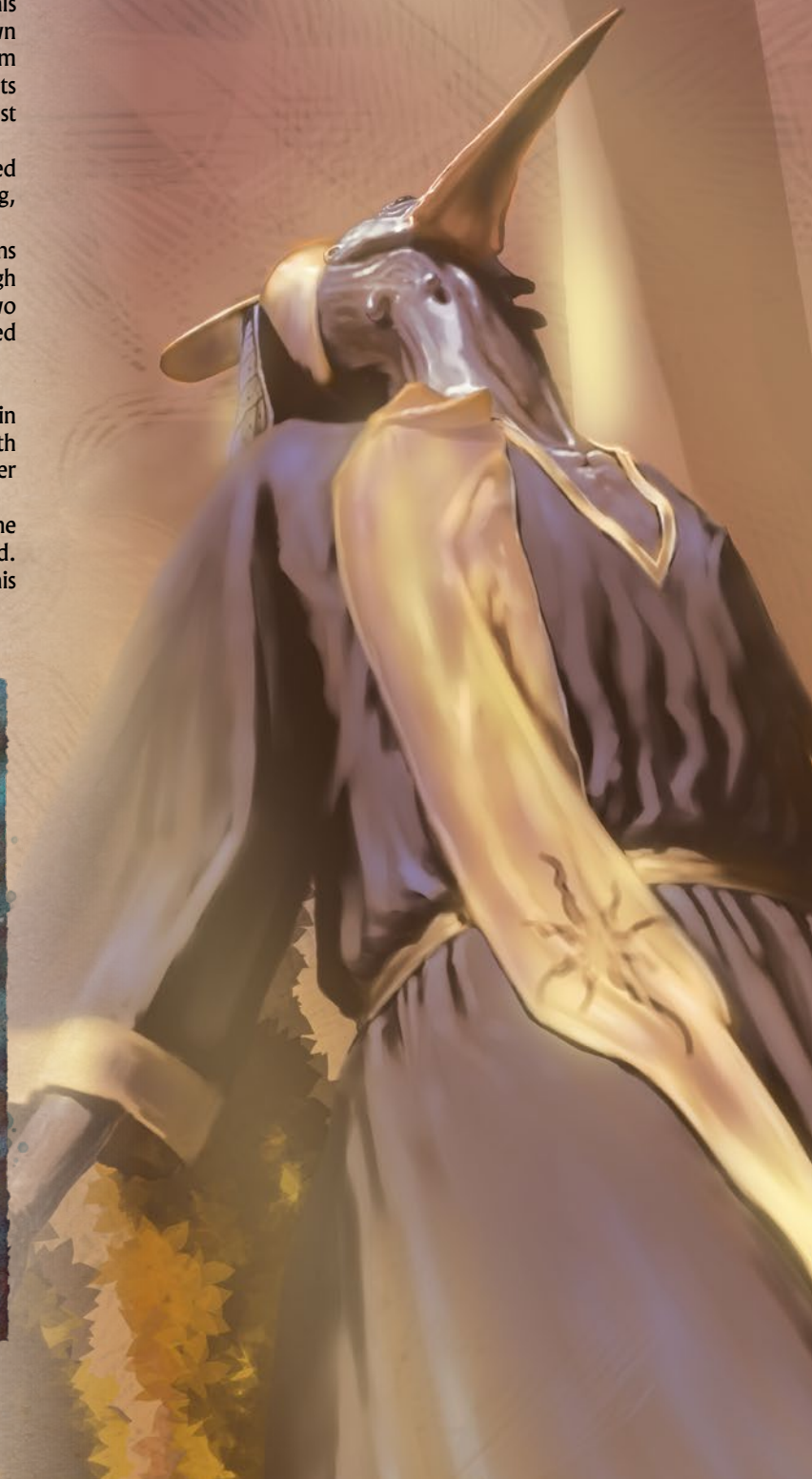
Standing beside them, a black and silver feathered Ka'Alum turns its beaked head towards you. 'Thrice welcome, oh blessed ones,' he says, before facing your guide and asking, 'It is they? Those blessed by Misterimadh?'

"The Im'zu nods hesitantly, saying, 'These are Telal's wards, those who bear the mark, yes.'

The Ka'Alum introduces himself as Rahaat, claiming to be the lead prophet of the Devotees of Misterimadh and begins to converse with the the siblings.

TABLE 1.4 ENQUIRIES ABOUT RAHAAT AND THE DEVOTEES OF MISTERIMADH

- Rahaat states that Misterimadh is the "silver lining" of the Void.
- Rahaat discovered the hidden truth of Misterimadh during a substance-induced trance where he learnt that "one must traverse the dark to find the light."
- Rahaat was friends with Hunlona's grandfather, he who brewed a pure version of the visionary and Void-suppressing intoxicant now commonly known as Ruyah. This pure form granted Rahaat his holy visions.
- The pure version of Ruyah is sacred. It was in these visions that Rahaat glimpsed the sun symbol that is now his cult's icon. That the siblings bare this emblem as well is surely a divine sign. He is quick to explain his interpretation of the symbols is uncorrupted, unlike some before him.
- The Devotees of Misterimadh are a secret assemblage of worshippers dedicated to the precepts of justice and vengeance.



The kneeling woman is Hunlona, she whose son Adnan is even now transforming into an abhorrent entity. Hunlona is the head of what remains of the Amari infusers and Rahaat is hiding her and her son for fear that their hidden enemies might strike them down.

"Save my son," she says. "Bring a cure for my boy, justice for my family, vengeance against our persecutors, and I will reward you well."

Hunlona makes the siblings an offer to help her, saying: "There are weapons, armours and intoxicants hard for our people to get. I have the contacts to find such for you. Do you tire of dull blades and ragged armour? For you, I shall find clothing that would grace a high caste warrior. To each of you, I promise goods to the value of 300 dhin if you will but save my son."

When questioned about how they can be helped neither Hunlona nor Rahaat knows for sure, but they suspect that a strong and pure dose of the infusion that granted Rahaat his visions will be of help as it suppresses the influence of the Void. It, along with other family secrets known as the Amari Veiled Inscriptions, was stolen a decade ago.

Rahaat is appalled that this holy infusion is now being sold as a common intoxicant, even if in a less potent form. He both wants to help Hunlona track down the source and regain the tablets, so the substance can only be used for "holy" purposes.

If asked who stole the Amari Veiled Inscriptions, again, Hunlona cannot be sure, but she and Rahaat suspect a cabal of shadowy beings known as the Qamsa. To discover the truth of this, and where the Qamsa might be found, Hunlona would have the siblings question an infuser named Ab'Hekim, who was once in her family's employ.

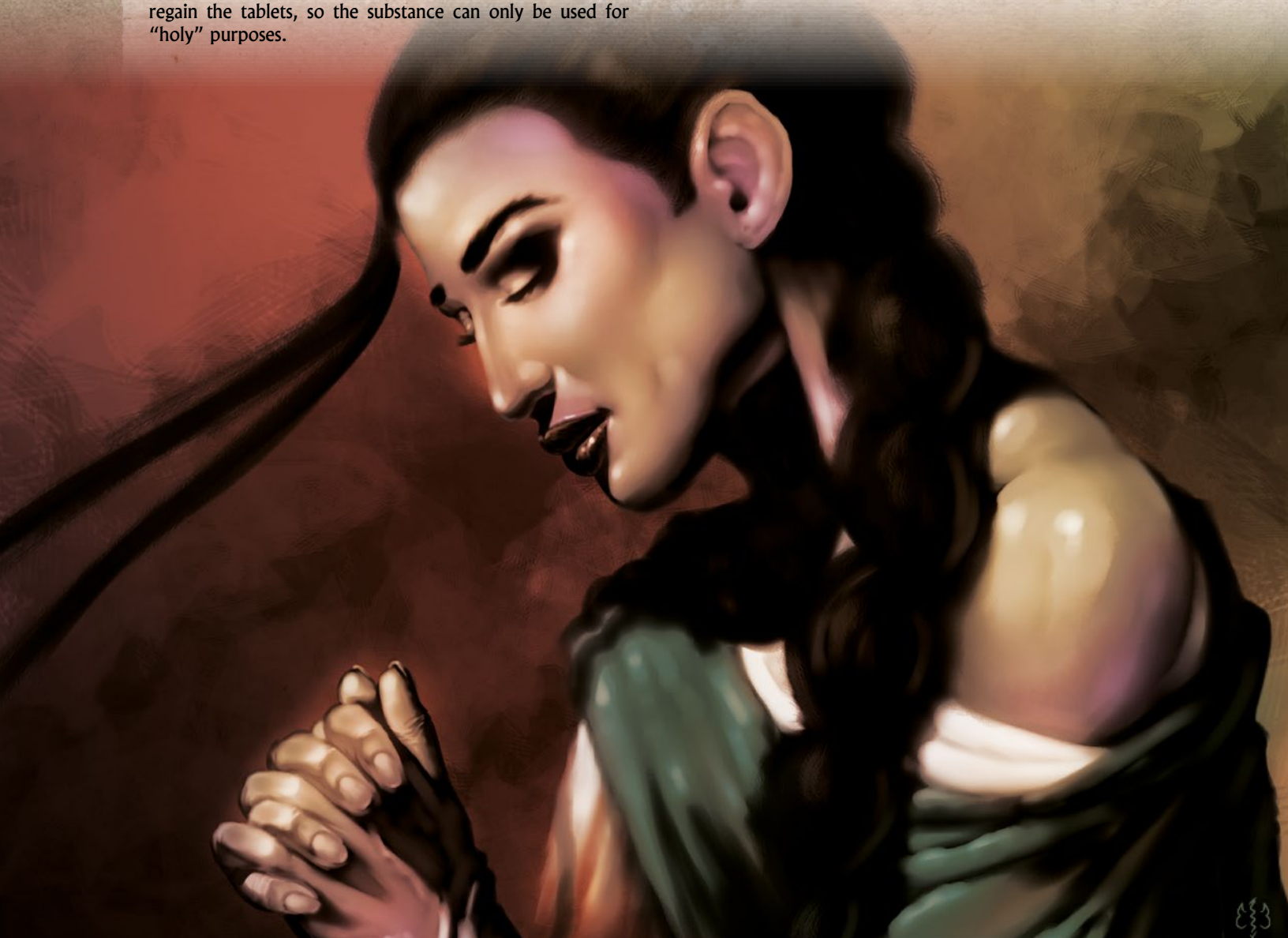
Ab'Hekim worked with Hunlona's grandfather. He might know the ingredients and method of making the Void-suppressing substance. Failing that, Hunlona suspects he was involved in the theft of the Amari Veiled Inscriptions and might know how and where they can be found.

Inquiries about the whereabouts of Ab'Hekim reveals that he is now a slave of the Shaauru of Eankabut.

The siblings have likely never heard about the Shaauru and are told that they are an otherworldly species of multi-legged web-spinning water-dwellers that make a living dredging the river for lost cargoes.

Rahaat can reveal that the Eankabut coloney is a submerged bubble-village of reeds and web built amidst sunken ships on the Margidda river bed. One can breathe once within the bubble-chambers.

Rahaat knows a bit about the Shaauru believing them so outlandish that it is impossible to know their thoughts, claiming that they are unpredictable and easily angered.



When pressed about how the siblings can possibly get to question Ab'Hekim Rahaat offers that Anzor will go with them. He has valuable and extraordinary skills.

"You can offer his services to the Shaauru for a year and a day if they will free Ab'Hekim into your care. Anzor will help in this." Rahaat promises as he beckons to the kneeling man.

Anzor is of human ancestry but with an Oord father. "He is well on the path to enlightenment" Rahaat will say. If asked about his ancestry, Anzor will say only that his mother was a graceful gladiator who made the act of killing into an artistic joy: "so elegant was her work with net and trident that his father fell in love."

Immediately the characters will notice that a nebulous 'thing' seems to be stuck to Anzor's head. Noticing their stares Anzor will quickly explain: "It is known as a MindNebula and it is my ally; an entity that can share and enhance my thoughts. So too, it can draw forth another's memories by force, using its tentacles, whether the person is alive or recently dead. But this I would rather avoid for it is a cruel process when the subject still lives."

If the siblings are willing, Anzor will guide them to a place on the riverbank where a guide awaits them - one who can assist them in the perilous descent 'neath the murky waters and help them enter Eankabut.

The Arbiter can improvise other details of this meeting as required. Rahaat is a persuasive and passionate talker, however, if a player character expresses suspicion about the visions the Ka'Alum received, a successful opposition of Willpower versus Rahaat's Presence reveals the following, "As he speaks of his deity and order, Rahaat's eyes widen, his voice rises to a squawk, and the sparse feathers on his back noticeably tremble. There is a zealous, single minded aura about him, one that you suspect holds no room for doubt - or reason?"

ARBITRARY EVENT: QUESTIONING DIZA

If the spy from the Drinking Den was brought here, Rahaat would question him, and Anzor will threaten the unfortunate man with his tentacled companion's ability to extract the truth. Diza quickly spills all he knows, which isn't much. Zizy gave him 2 copper dhin to follow the Im'zu and see what transpired when he met with the siblings. That's it. He does not know why.

Rahaat will lament that Zizy was a true believer, but that dark heretical thoughts have crept into his mind of late. 'Poor misguided Zizy,' he says, 'better the mortification of the body than to betray your oaths to our order.'

To the siblings, he will add, 'Spare him further suffering or the acquisition of yet more sin. With great mercy, end his life if you can.'

He will then describe Zizy's physical appearance if the protagonists have yet to meet him

ARBITRARY EVENT: THE AFFLICTED CHILD

Should the characters ask to see Adnan, Hunlona is resistant but can be persuaded if one of the siblings suggests an inspection will help them locate a cure.

If so, read or paraphrase the following: "From the temple, Hunlona guides you along a side passage. She holds a torch, the rough-hewn walls throwing back shadows.

From ahead, you hear a wheezing cry and then incoherent shouts. She draws up before a sturdy door, removes a key from her pouch, and stealthily unlocks it, beckoning you to look through.

'Do not enter,' she says, 'It will agitate him and cause my beloved boy yet more pain.'

"Holding the torch a little higher, Hunlona directs its orange light over the writhing, misshapen figure of a boy sprawled atop tousled blankets on a simple wooden bed. Cushions lie scattered about him, some torn. One side of his head is swollen and red, an eye bulges out, its black pupil swivelling towards the door. The child heaves, lurches to one side with the clanking of chains, his movements revealing not only the ties that bind him but the monstrously enlarged limbs that already show the beginnings of claws."

Hunlona will resist further intrusion on the siblings' part. If such is forced or insisted upon, the interloper might check against occult lore or similar [10] to recognise the mutations as a by-product of Void distortion (If they are Void sensitive or have access to the Mystic Void sphere, they might detect traces of Void emanation in him).

If they press their investigation closer, the tormented child will lash out with a +3 modifier to the attack. A hit from his enlarged fist inflicts 1d6 + 1 damage and act as a knock-down attack; potentially flinging a protagonist across the room (note this damage, and Adnan's attack ability, will increase as the transformation progresses).

Protagonists witnessing these events should make a Fear [5] Willpower check to avoid rolling on the fear effect table (see core rules)



EVENT 1:3 - THE AMBUSH

If the characters choose to accept the commission, Anzor guides them out of the temple and back through the dark streets. Vagrants and the homeless huddle between buildings. Occasionally a drunken bravo struts by or a desperate streetwalker offers her wares. 'Our guide awaits us,' Anzor will say. 'We must hurry.'

However, convinced that Rahaat's fervid devotion to "the silver lining of the Void" is nothing more than a dangerous, substance-fuelled fancy, Zizy is determined to stop him from claiming the Amari Veiled Inscriptions. He fears madness and death for the misguided souls of the Eternal City if Rahaat's religion spreads.

In desperation, he has taken what few copper dhin he possessed and hired some thugs to waylay the siblings. The band in his employ is a gang of muggers and bullies calling themselves the Hammer Boys (although several are female).

The leader of the Hammers is Bloody Zeg, a beast of a woman scarred from knife fights. While most gang members are unarmoured, she sports leather bracers on her forearms and layered cloth on her bulky torso.

Zizy will not take part in the ambush himself, but if he interacted with the protagonists at the Drinking Den, he might hail them, beckoning them towards an alley where his thugs can attack with the benefit of surprise, potentially utilising backstab attacks. In any event, he will flee the combat at once if he is present at all.

Failing an ambush, the thugs stride purposefully out of the gloom, accosting the group as they traverse the bridge leading south from the central plaza (2). They shout to the siblings that they must 'Forget about them inscriptions!' and then rush to the attack. The thugs are brutish and lack finesse in their fighting style. Unless given the opportunity for a surprise assault, they favour all-out-attacks or knockdowns.

ENCOUNTER: THE HAMMER BOYS AMBUSH

Antagonists: The Hammer Boys

Conditions: Low light (-1 to actions)

Read or paraphrase the following: "Your assailants are a group of burly men and women. Their hair is cropped short, they are armed with clubs and dirks, and only one, a powerfully built woman, has any armour. They are on you in a rush, swearing and striking without heed for defence."

Anzor is not a warrior, he will take up a defensive stance or dodge as best suits the situation.

More accustomed to mismatched street fights than swordplay, gang members losing half their health will begin to dodge. As soon as one Hammer is killed, any injured thugs will seek to disengage and flee. Only Bloody Zeg has the courage and fury to fight to the death - if somehow incapacitated and persuaded into their employ, she would make a fine bodyguard for the siblings.



Captured gang members will reveal that Zizy hired them. They will describe his physical appearance and limping walk. They do not know why they were hired but explain that 'Zizy told us to say you got to leave them inscriptions alone.'

With the battle won, the siblings are free to continue their journey to the riverbank and their descent to the horrors of Eankabut.



SCENE II: MURKY WATERS

SCENE SYNOPSIS

In this scene, the protagonists are led to the edge of the Shaauru colony by Anzor or find their way there with proper instruction. The plan is to offer up the gift of Anzor's skills for one contractual year in exchange for the right to extract knowledge from the brain of Ab'Hekim.

The Variin Ubeelee helps them to breathe underwater as they seek to descend to the Shaauru colony.

If the siblings decide to try and rescue Ab'Hekim rather than simply extracting his knowledge, the Shaauru will attempt to take Anzor and the rest of them as food instead, ignoring Phamea's desire for capture, because the loss of Ab'Hekim altogether is intolerable to them. They will also invariably find Ab'Hekim feels too old and worn to attempt escape, which poses another problem...

Once the group exits the enclave, they will be met by Phamea, maybe two of the Myriad's giant Shaauru guards (depending on how the encounters unfold), four Aq'jarea Qamsa soldiers, and Katya, human female Slave liaison to The Qamsa. Phamea wants Anzor's head, and to interrogate the siblings to see what part they have to play in this matter and exactly what information may be gained to better decipher the Veiled Inscriptions she helped steal a decade ago by betraying her mother.

If the group have the sonic orbs, their vibrations have a curious impact on the Shaauru, causing them great distress through the vibrations that resonate through their sensitive hairs. When exposed to an activated stone, a Shaauru is reduced to a quivering inert state. Careful observation of Shaauru behaviour when negotiating for or stealing the statues could have revealed this weakness to the siblings, or desperate slaves might tell them too in the hope they might be freed.

LOCATION

SHAAURU COLONY: North of the Feeradani enclave the Shaauru Colony is located on the bottom of the Margidda river. Their colony consists of the typical underwater weed, kelp and silk bubbles and also encompasses many sunken vessels in its construction. Although not far below the surface the colony is gloomy because of the ever-present silt and murky waters of the Margidda. Outside of the bubbles, silt sharks are a deadly threat. All is gloomy because of the ever-present silt.

NPC's

Katya, Phamea, The Myriad, Ubeelee and Ab'Hekim

NOTES

The group is unaware that they've been trailed by a minion of The Hidden Hollow, who was hot on the trail of the siblings and their allies. A human thief and spy named Phamea, who is the disgraced and disowned daughter of Hunlona's first marriage, followed them to the enclave and seeks to steal the extracted knowledge of Ab'Hekim. She negotiates a deal with the Shaauru in advance to allow her to capture the characters after they get what they need from the master infuser.

The Shaauru are known to abduct people from the shanties on the river bank to use as food and slaves. This is tolerated if the missing people are of low caste. In exchange the Shaauru salvage sunken ships and lost cargoes for the wealthy merchant cartels of Llyhn.

SCENE II

EVENT 2:1 - FINDING THE COLONY

Read or paraphrase the following: "The Hammer Boys no longer a threat, Anzor guides you out of the dark streets, leading you north of the Feeradani enclave to a small fishing hamlet outside the district proper.

'Our guide awaits us,' Anzor says. 'We must hurry to Eankabut. As Rahaat explained while at the temple, beneath Margidda river is a colony of otherworldly beings called Shaauru. These spider-like entities dwell amidst drowned ships encapsulated in air bubbles supported by webs, kelp and weed. They make a living dredging the river for lost cargo. They are so alien to your kind that it would be impossible for you to know their thoughts. However, I can communicate with them through my MindNebula. That is why I accompany you; we will offer my services to them, in exchange for Ab'Hekim's freedom.

You must escort him to safety if he is still breathing. If I can extract the knowledge we need of the Veiled Inscriptions from him myself, then, by all means, escort us both back to safety, but do not sacrifice yourselves for me, Misterimadh will protect me."



If the protagonists ask Anzor to clarify what information Ab'Hekim has that is so valuable, he explains, "a strong and pure dose of Ruyah that granted Rahaat his visions will be of help as it suppresses the influence of the Void."

Ab'Hekim was the most experienced merchant of the Amari Infusers, a protegee of Hunlona's grandfather Arif, who created the original, pure recipe for Ruyah, and he helped write The Veiled Inscriptions.

The Qamsa stole the inscriptions, murdered Arif, and abducted Ab'Hekim a decade ago. They sold him into slavery to the Shaauru, which we only discovered recently through some perilous espionage, and the help of one who owes the temple a favour, the Variin Ubeelee. That is whom we go to now."

If asked more about Variin, Anzor explains: "The species were once famed as transcendent dreamers, philosophers and poets of immense talent and ability.

Both Chaos and Cosmos was theirs to roam, and no boundaries could restrain the bodies, thoughts or dreams of the Variin. But the great dreams of the Variin have been extinct for aeons. Nobody knows what caused this change. Some believe they keep dire secret which they dare not share with anyone, but it matters not to us, as we only need Ubeelee to assist us with entering Eankabut."

Read aloud or paraphrase: "The river flows sluggishly here, black under the nebulous night skies, its waters undulating like a slow-moving serpent. Slum trash piles up on the muddy shore where a jetty that is more gap than wood juts out over the river's ebon flow. Anzor slows his pace, pointing towards a set of rotting wooden poles that lead out into and are gradually submerged by the water."

As they get close to the river a vaguely humanoid female with light turquoise skin, tentacle manes and five glowing green eyes emerge from the water floating up into the air and hovers suspended over the surface looking at the characters.

Anzor introduces them to the hovering creature; whose real name is unpronounceable but is called Ubeelee by the locals. The creature is a follower of Misterimadh and owes Rahaat a favour. After a brief discussion with Ubeelee the guide bids the characters close their eyes and open their mouths towards the still hovering Ubeelee.

If the characters do as they are requested the Variin spits in their mouths, which produces a thick membrane, making it difficult to breathe. (they should close their eyes to not get mucus in their eyes)

The membrane across the characters' mouths acts as a gill and grants temporary water breathing ability, lasting up to half an hour.

If the characters refuse, they will have to risk suffocation as they later descend to the Shaauru colony in the river.

EVENT 2:2 - ENTERING THE COLONY, WHERE ETERNAL WATERS FLOW...

In this scene the siblings' journey beneath the Margidda River.

The siblings in arrive at the back of the river under the guidance of the Variin. She says to them in a sibilant voice, "beware the Shaauru, imprisoned here in perpetual gloom are slaves taken from the banks of the river. They care not for your kind, you are like sheep to them, of utility perhaps, but you must prove your utility. One can breathe once within the bubble-chambers".

Read or paraphrase: "Ubeele glides a short distance out into the river where a wooden platform about three metres across bobs on muck-filled water. As you follow, you note black patches on the timber".

TABLE 2.1 OBSERVATION AT THE PLATFORM

- Closer inspection of the black patches reveals them to be dry blood, although from which creature or species is indeterminable.

Read or paraphrase: "The Variin explains this raft is moored here; serving as a buoy attached to a thick cord descending to Eankabut. She indicates you are to grasp hold of it and pull yourselves down with her leading the way.

Anzor hands each of you a small crystal orb filled with a phosphorescent glow. 'Noctiluma Algae Lamps he explains; torches and lanterns are not terribly reliable down there. Do not use them until I say, you do not want to startle the Shaauru.

He then says, 'There is one more thing you should know: Feerada has in part secured our way to this place, understanding our intent to enter the Shaauru domain, and asks only that we recover something of value.

Retrieving the vibrating stones, to negotiate for or steal them. These are the sonic stones, and should they be here as suspected, they are of immense value, but a danger to the Shaauru, so beware of their reaction to such a thing exposed.

Feerada intends to placate the Mirza and give them as restitution considering recent events, but that will not be your concern once delivered".

Anzor is a knowledgeable scholar and understands what the stones are. If asked he will explain. The Arbiter may paraphrase: "Beyond a region of the Void known to scholars as the Ghastly Straights, a cluster of worlds revolving around and pass through the outer rings of the deep world Aseriod. Under the influence of Aseriod's transformative vapours, strange lifeforms evolved.

Sonic Stones are semi-conscious igneous beings. Gurus and philosophers who claim that reality is best understood as gradations of vibrations point to the stones as proof: in light, they continuously vibrate; a gentle almost imperceptible shaking.

In the Cosmos there are sonically attuned species for whom eyesight and conventional sound are unknown; such beings perceive the stones' sonic ripples much as a human might view an exquisite work of art. They "see" beautiful shapes and images when exposed to the vibrations.

Place two stones in proximity and the vibrations increase; so too does music audible even to man: melodies no fleshly artist could conceive. By arranging stones in clusters, orchestral rhythms and trance-inducing harmonies are evoked.

A typical stone is a pastel-hued sphere about the size of a melon. The stones draw minute sustenance from light; place them in darkness, even for a brief period, and they become inert until exposed to the light once more.

Certain races particularly sensitive to tremors, predominantly those adept at using vibration for communication, are known to respond more keenly to the stones; sometimes with joy but for other species with debilitating shock."



Read or paraphrase the following: "Peering through the silt-choked waters, you see Ubeele's tentacled mane fan out behind her as she dives down towards a series of mansion-sized humps on the river's bed. Pulling yourselves down through the waters on the cord, as you draw closer you perceive these humps to be colossal air bubbles, large enough to encapsulate the remnants of sunken vessels. The largest bubble is central to the rest: three more are attached to it, evenly spaced about its circumference."

The Margidda's waters are mild here but the fifteen metres down to the colony are as mud-dark as any stretch of its shark-filled depths.

As the siblings descend, the Arbiter may utilise the ever-present Silt Sharks to put pressure on the players to get down to Eankabut.

Let the players know that streamlined shadows are gliding through the water around them and roll D3 to see how many sharks in the vicinity might notice the descending characters. Make opposed rolls (stealth against awareness) to see if the sharks actually spot them and the ones that do will rapidly swim closer to investigate. If an approaching shark is spotted, the siblings might choose to try and rush to Eankabut's air pockets. Either way, opposed Athletics or Agility test might determine the outcome of an aqueous pursuit.

Should the sharks attack and draw blood others will be attracted to the scuffle and smell of blood in the water.

ARBITRARY ENCOUNTER: SHARK FIGHT

Conditions: Underwater fighting causes a -3 penalty to all actions and severely limits which combat manoeuvres the characters can feasibly employ.

As the characters are unable to communicate by anything other than hand-signals (or applicable esoteric capabilities if available) while underwater, the Arbiter can fittingly limit players to do the same for the duration.

If no shark is encountered, continue with: "Coming closer still, you see the air bubbles are supported by intricate layers of web-bound kelp and other water plants creating an airtight layer containing a dome on the bottom. The masts of one sunken ship even poke through the central bubble's skin.

The cord is anchored by a mud-black boulder near the southern-most bubble's rim. Ubeelee beckons to you to let go of the rope and swim behind her; the current is not strong here. Through the bubble's skin, distorted by its surface, you make out a riverboat on its side and stacks of earthenware amphorae and crates."

If the siblings follow Ubeelee, continue with the description below; if they prefer to scout Eankabut's exterior, allow them to do so: describe the contents of each air pocket in a slightly distorted way, remembering that they are gloomy too. In-terfering with the bubbles' skin or otherwise alerting the Shaauru bring 1d4+1 of their number to investigate. The Shaauru are in a state of anger/aggression and will attempt to drive the siblings off so tranquillity can be restored. Ubeelee will seek to dissuade via hand signals any attempt to scout the exterior.

When and if the siblings are ready to enter the first bubble, Ubeelee swims to a point close to the boulder-anchor where three white rocks have been laid close to the bubble's exterior. Here there are thick growths of weed, multiple web layers, and two pliable layers of skin about 3 cubits (1.5 metres) apart, which form an antechamber of breathable air. One by one, the siblings can push their way within.

As they do so, read or paraphrase: "A vaguely cone-shaped creature begins to crawl down the side of the capsized

vessel. It stands about 3 cubits tall, its bulky body made up of wrinkly overlapping folds of grey flesh with sparse clumps of furlike purple hair.

A plump head with two eyestalks and a wide mouth emerges from the skin folds. The being clings to the ship's timbers with four multi-jointed, hooked limbs that allow it to scuttle down quickly. It has two more viciously hooked and barbed arm-appendages project out towards you as it draws near. Its body hair undulates as its feet drum upon the floor."

The Shaauru anticipate occasional visitors; in this case, Ubeelee, a being known to them, has secured their permission for the siblings to enter. All the same, serenity cannot be restored until the visitors have left. The Shaauru are thus in a state of aggression, and it could easily spill over into an attack.

To the Shaauru, human beings are useful tools and labour. They are incapable of regarding them as conscious beings as their own state of consciousness and identity is so vastly different.

The Arbiter might consider the Shaauru's response from this perspective: how might you feel if a group of sheep arrived at your house, somehow communicated that they wanted to leave one sheep with you in exchange for another sheep?

There are a few advantages for the siblings in this; one is that the Shaauru can find it difficult to tell one human from another. At times when this is an issue, you might test their Awareness or Intellect against an imposter's Presence.

Read: The multi-limbed being, presumably, a Shaauru, moves to bar your progress but does not act hostilely.

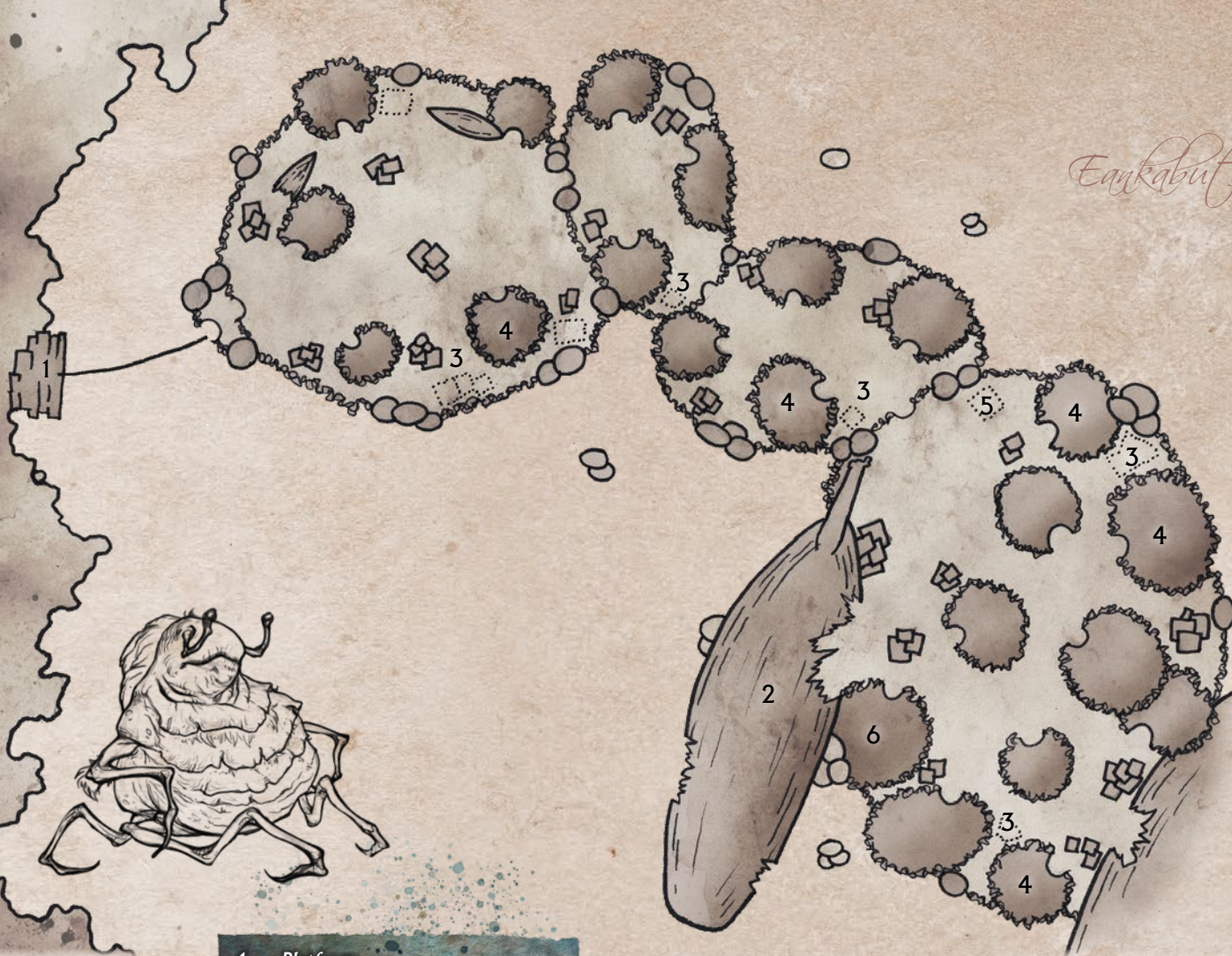
If asked, both Ubeelee and Anzor indicate that the siblings should be patient.

Assuming the protagonists are able to avoid angering the Shaauru at this initial stage, once the others have arrived, they will escort the siblings towards the central bubble. Ubeelee will not accompany them but remains at the entrance. She immediately leaves if combat is initiated at any time during the siblings' visit.

ARBITRARY ENCOUNTER: SHAAURU CONFLICT

Conditions: Soggy ground (-1 move and on rolls to maintain balance) and darkness (-1 to all combat actions)

If the protagonists act aggressively or attempt to move past the Shaauru, combat will begin, and there will be no possibility of negotiating Ab'Hekim's release. 1d4+1 Shaauru arrive within one minute. If combat has started, a further 1d4 will arrive every 60 seconds until either 12 Shaauru have been slain or the siblings driven off. If 12 are killed, the Shaauru collapse this bubble with effects as detailed in the bubble collapse sidebar.



1. Platform
2. Sunken war galley
3. Slave cages
4. Slave hovels
5. Ab'Hekim's cage
6. Abode of the Myriad

Read or paraphrase the following: "Your gaunt-limbed hosts guide you past the piles of crates and amphorae towards another umbilical opening leading towards the larger central bubble. Coming through the strangely-clingy films of water, you find yourself beneath the towering side of a sunken war-galley, its proud ram bearing a screaming face. The galley's side is torn open, and the space beyond is the scene of much activity. It seems that it is used as a storage place and many human slaves labour here, sorting through items salvaged from the surrounding river beds."

Inspecting the slaves, the siblings find them slow moving and slack-jawed. They are drugged by an elixir of Ab'Hekim's design. It leaves them physically capable but only able to understand simple verbal commands. Characters can succeed in awaken the slaves to a keener level of awareness by pushing them to speak, shaking or otherwise trying to rouse them. A difficulty 5 roll is required using appropriate skills or abilities as approved by the Arbiter.

Any awakened slave reacts with shock, fear and bewilderment, they become desperate: "Free me! You must free me from this place! The things, the things, they eat us!"

It is unlikely the siblings can keep a drugged slave aware enough to answer more than a few simple questions, and if held in a conscious state by three or more successful rolls, a slave will become temporarily deranged. This affront to tranquillity will bring a Shaauru's swift intervention with a 50% chance it kills the offending slave, otherwise dragging it through the water and humid atmosphere to another location.

On a second successful roll, one says: "the stones...the sculptures...Shaauru hates..." and point in the direction where those sculptures are found.

There was a quartet of rare sonic sculptures kept in crates by the now drowned owners aboard a trading vessel that recently sank in the river. Sonic sculptures create sound-images imperceptible to humans but are greatly valued by certain otherworldly species.

Recovering these is the price demanded by the Mirza (or her allies) for the damage and intrusion caused by the events of Volume I.

When Feerada learned of the siblings' intention to make the watery descent into the silty depths of the Margidda, she asked for them to negotiate for or steal the vibrating stones. The request was delivered through Rahaat and Anzor, as explained in event 1.1



EVENT 2:3 - NEGOTIATING FOR AB'HEKIM

If the characters have avoided angering the Shaauru to this point, they will be led to the central bubble to meet with the colony leader known as The Myriad.

Read or paraphrase the following: You are led to the central bubble of the colony through a network of kelp-and-silk-constructed tunnels between the domes. Anzor takes his Noctiluma Algae Lamp out of a black bag he had affixed to his waist, the bluish green light dimly illuminating the area, allowing human eyes to see in some detail.

The MindNebula shifts position upon his head as he does so, it's skin briefly pulsing a violet hue. The Shaauru beat their legs with a drum-like sound, emitting an eerie sound of low intensity, but they settle quickly, perhaps through the psychic communication of the MindNebula to engender tranquillity. You see dozens of the creatures around the floor and walls of the bubble, clinging at various angles to lattices of kelp, seaweed and silk".

Anzor intones, "Ab'Hekim is there..." and points to a tall cage hanging from webbing on the far side of the bubble, one probably used to transport several wild animals salvaged from one of the shipwrecks.

In it is an odd sight, an elderly man in what was once expensive garb standing over a mouldy table holding an alembic, beakers and other objects too small to see clearly. He is bent over, appearing exhausted, like an old gnarled tree limb after a forest fire. The man turns slowly and stares mutely in your direction.

At that moment, a large Shaauru leaps and scuttles through the clusters of eggs attached to rocks for gestation, the others remaining still as it approaches closer, the blue light of your Noctiluma Algae Lamps revealing skin of a yellowish sheen, with the tufts and appendages a dark hue of brownish purple.

Anzor's posture is defensive, you notice beads of sweat upon his brow. "Talk to it. This is their queen. I'll translate through the MindNebula. Do not say the wrong thing and beware your unspoken communication!" he insists.

At this point the protagonists must attempt to communicate the deal, offering Anzor's service in exchange for Ab'Hekim's release. Since the Shaauru uses no traditional language, their body language, the tone of voice and words chosen to communicate through Anzor all affect outcomes. This would be daunting (DR 22) (if not for the MindNebula) if only to prevent the Shaauru from becoming confused or hostile to the intrusion.

With Anzor helping, getting the Shaauru to agree requires a very challenging [11] or higher difficulty action, depending on how the characters have acted while in the colony. Any previous incident where the characters have provoked or incited the Shaauru, such as having roused a slave, for instance, will add 1 to the difficulty.

The characters may utilise skills to aid their efforts with controlling tone and body language. A failure triggers hostility immediately, while exceptional success has an effect on what happens after the communication effort in the next event...



EVENT 2:4 - NEGOTIATIONS (PHAMEA HIDES IN THE SHADOWS)

Phamea awaits in the shadows of the silky antechamber. She is the daughter of Hunlona from a previous marriage, disowned by the family because she was involved with the killing of her great grandfather Arif and the stealing of the Veiled Inscriptions. She would like nothing more than to destroy the family who had refused to teach her the ways of the Infusers and kept her in the cold all her life.

Regardless of the outcome of the character's attempt to negotiate, she believes she has secured the Shaauru's permission to take the protagonists prisoner to bring them back to the Qamsa for interrogation, but not before using them to extract from Ab'Hekim the knowledge needed to fully decipher the inscriptions (see scene 4). She will attempt to remain hidden and listen to the events until such time Ab'Hekim speaks secrets or has his knowledge extracted by the MindNebula, after which she will try to get ahead of the characters or follow to ambush them at the shore where Katya and Qamsa soldiers await.

SHAAURU RESPONSE: Attack!

Conditions: Soggy ground (-1 move and on rolls to maintain balance) and darkness (-1 to all combat actions).

There are twelve Shaauru here, and they seek to overwhelm, using their hooked appendages as weapons and attacking from multiple angles. The Myriad retreats, but the other female Shaauru (randomly determine D12) have glands set in small barbs on their front limbs enabling them to inject a paralysing toxin to disable prey. The Shaauru female makes a called attack and on a successful hit - causing normal damage from the hook - the barb penetrates injecting a neurotoxin forcing the victim to make a Stamina resistance roll [7] or suffer temporary (D6 rounds) paralysis to the targeted limb.

Favoured manoeuvres comprise backstabbing, grapple, sneak attack, dodge and called attack for females with toxin barbs. A further 1d4 will arrive every 60 seconds until either 12 Shaauru have been slain or the siblings driven off. In the event that 12 are killed, the Shaauru collapse this bubble with effects as detailed in the bubble collapse sidebar.

If a violent encounter occurs, the Myriad decides that the loss of tranquillity is too great to bother with the Phamea's attempt at an ambush and will seek to capture Phamea and simply expel her to the surface along with the dead bodies of all those who had aggravated her colony.

SHAAURU RESPONSE: Willing to negotiate...

The Myriad will communicate to her colony that Ab'Hekim may not be released, for he is too valuable to them, and thus Anzor is off the hook, but the MindNebula may be allowed to extract what knowledge is needed. Once permission is granted, Anzor (and presumably the protagonists) approach Ab'Hekim's cage and are granted entrance to extract his knowledge.

Ab'Hekim will stand wearily and say: "I know what that creature you are holding is", pointing to the MindNebula. "I'm not getting out of here alive, and likely neither are you, sadly. I'd tell you all that you need to know, but we

BUBBLE COLLAPSE

If the Shaauru causes a bubble collapse, the water will come flooding in possibly knocking characters over (opposed roll vs. potency 5) and potentially causing damage D6 as they are struck by wreckage and debris. The athletics skill is of help here for speed. If the Variin's membrane is still working it prevents drowning even if there is a temporary loss of a sense of direction, up and down, otherwise the Arbiter can apply suffocation calculations.

Once the bubble is collapsed or flooded characters must swim to safety, avoiding silt sharks and attacking Shaauru until they get to the surface, whereupon, regardless of timing, they will face Phamea, Katya and her soldiers attempting to capture them.

do not have time. Rahaat no doubt sent you all here. I'm an old man. The inscriptions are located in Daer Bitaan within a place called the Al'iidara. Have your creature take what information it needs if you can escape with it, but I ask you out of mercy to have it utilise its full psychic capability to quell any thought process forever. Let me die in peace that way. Act quickly though, Hunlona's daughter knows you are here, and she is as vindictive as ever. She is working with the Qamsa, and has made a prior agreement with the Myriad..."

The protagonists must act quickly. The MindNebula, knowing of the impending danger to itself and its companions, will float from Anzor to Ab'Hekim and overtake him like a marionette, drawing upon his knowledge and abilities to help defend them, even as it destroys Ab'Hekim's body.

The MindNebula will extract from Ab'Hekim's mind where he believes the Veiled Inscriptions tablets are, which as he says aloud is the Al'iidara. Ab'Hekim is mistaken, however, as the protagonists will learn in Scene 3.

The MindNebula will also absorb his knowledge of how to decipher much of the inscriptions needed to create the more potent Ruyah, but it's learned that he is only knowledgeable enough to understand half of what's needed. As far as he knows, the only other person who can decipher the rest of the formula is Hunlona's grandfather, Arif, who is believed to be dead.

Once that is done, the protagonists will have little time to process the fact that Myriad was expecting this. The Myriad intends to help the Qamsa steal the MindNebula, seal its extracted knowledge (perhaps by destroying the creature), and hand them over to Phamea for interrogation by the Qamsa.

However, it does not occur to the queen Shaauru that this will destroy Ab'Hekim's mind and ability to make further potions for her slaves. She will be angered once this is realised, and that anger directed at Phamea too. The timing of full realisation up to the Arbiter.

SHAAURU RESPONSE: If sonic stones are used! If the protagonists find the sonic stones, Ab'Hekim may see them and say "the stones: Place them in darkness, even for a brief period, and they become inert until exposed to the light once. Expose them now and live to tell about this, for the Shaauru will freeze like the dead". He knows their vibrations have a curious impact on the Shaauru, causing them great distress through the sensations that resonate through their sensitive hairs. When exposed to an activated statue, a Shaauru is reduced to a quivering inert state. Careful observation of Shaauru behaviour when negotiating for or stealing the statues could have revealed this weakness to the siblings, or desperate slaves might tell them too in the hope they might be freed.

EVENT 2:5 - CAPTURE OR ESCAPE?

Once back to the surface, the protagonists immediately encounter Katya and four Aq'jarea soldiers employed by the Qamsa, waiting on the shore. If the Myriad decided to help, there will also be two large Shaauru blocking the way. Phamea arrives soon, following close behind. They intend to drag and transport the group to the entryway of The Hidden Hollow in the Daer Bitaan district, and from there to face interrogation by the terrifying one called Bultazaar in a place called the Al'iidara, where record and bookkeeping are handled for the Qamsa (see scene 3).

Read or paraphrase: A woman stands nearby off the shore, flanked on either side by two Aq'jarea soldiers. She's slim and lithe, though her arms are muscular. She wears leather armour, green-hued pants, and bracers. Her hands are oddly masculine, gripping a short sword in one and a dagger in the other. Raven black hair spills over her bare shoulders. She regards you coolly with dark, wild eyes, a menacing smile spreading out along her otherwise captivating face. She says "I am Katya, here to inform you that your activities are in defiance of the authority of the Qamsa, whose interests you threaten. You will come with us".

A moment later, or whenever appropriate, read: An attractive and athletic looking human woman climbs out of the river, quickly scrambling up onto the wooden platform, wiping a mucous membrane from her mouth, then begins to advance toward you. Her wet hair is long, a loose blue shirt soaking wet and a bit revealing.

She wears a flask tied to a cloth belt around her green-hued salwars [for the forgetful Arbiter: salwars are pants], but what's more noticeable is her immediately drawing a short sword from a sheath at her hip. Katya and the Aq'jarea soldiers glance at her and do not seem surprised by her presence. 'Phamea, we've got our quarry' says Katya.

Arbiter's Note: 'Phamea convinced Ubeeel that she was an ally by showing her Amari family tattoo, and Ubeeel granted her means of water breathing.

Anzor will stay on the edges of the battle and defend himself, and if the protagonists defeat their foes, he will use the MindNebula to extract what they know (see below). If the fight swings against them, Anzor escapes with the MindNebula when the siblings encounter Katya and Phamea. Several more soldiers will appear to chase him through the streets but disappear in pursuit and will not engage the protagonists. The Arbiter may assume he gets away and returns to the Misterimadh Temple.

If they manage to defeat their foes, any of the soldiers will be cowardly enough to reveal where they were to be taken for interrogation. Both Phamea and Katya will use their soldiers as shields to escape if they feel defeat is possible but might try again to capture the characters as they make their way to the next stage of the scenario.



Katya

Knowledge extracted by the MindNebula from captured ambush assailants:

Phamea: The Amari Veiled Inscriptions are somewhere in the Al'iidara, she believes as did Ab'Hekim, but believes they are to be moved to a place somewhere equipped for deeper research. Zizy exposed some of Rahaat's plans to her because he decided that the devotees of Misterimadh and their allies - The Amari Infusers - posed a danger through their naïve beliefs.

He told Phamea because he knows she has a hatred for her mother and the Amari family. He told her that the Infusers' most likely plan was first to grab knowledge from the Shaauru's slave Ab'Hekim.

She knows that where she takes prisoners for questioning in an area accessed only by passing through the House of the Muqridin, located in the Aromatic Souq. The Muqridin is a group of money lenders of a species called the Mudirs.

Katya: The Qamsa instructed Katya to help Phamea capture the siblings. She does not know anything about the Veiled Inscriptions but is curious about the secrets of the Amari family because she is adept at concocting and infusing teas that induce pleasurable trances. She knows her orders are to help Phamea bring the siblings to Daer Bitaan and hand them over to the Qama's frightful interrogator.

Aq'jarea soldiers: All they know that is relevant is that they are charged with protecting Katya and Phamea and to aid in the capture of their quarry.

Shaauru: If the Myriad commands it, the Shaauru will aid Phamea and Katya in the capture of the siblings, but they otherwise have no knowledge of anything relevant.

Arbiter's Note: Should the characters seriously threaten or deliver a killing blow to Phamea or Katya at this stage, they will flee or become incapacitated, rather than dead.

Should this occur Arbiters are encouraged to introduce additional Qamsa forces, wild beasts from the surrounding jungle or another disruption attracted by the racket of the fight, to ensure that Phamea and Katya do not die or are captured.

While it is generally discouraged to intercede in such a manner, Katya or Phamea dying or getting captured at this point in time will upset future events. If no plausible escape is possible new NPC's must be created to take over their roles for future occurrences.

If the protagonists evade capture and think to return to the Misterimadh Temple, Anzor will allow them to take the MindNebula with them. The MindNebula however, is an independent entity and will not just unquestioningly take directions from the characters.

Once the siblings go to Daer Bitaan, whether by capture or by their own volition, Scene 3 begins.



SCENE III: ON UNKNOWN PATHS

SCENE SYNOPSIS

This scene leads the group to the entryway of The Hidden Hollow in the Daer Bitaan district. Either they are led there by force, captured by Katya and Phamea, or they learn from their defeated foes where they were to be taken for interrogation: the “backdoor” to the upper reaches of The Hidden Hollow.

In an interrogation room within Al’iidara, they will confront a terrible foe, an alien creature whose only joy in existence is torturing and interrogating others. While (hopefully) defeating or driving away this creature, they encounter Zizy, chained vertically to a large wooden plank against the wall. He is scared, hurt and exhausted, but conscious. On the off-chance he was concealing extra information, he was tortured by the Qamsa’s terrifying interrogator after freely telling what he knew. If the players listen sympathetically to Zizy’s views, he could have a change of heart and offer to help them, but they would have to free him of his bonds and ensure he does not die of his wounds.

Zizy was excommunicated from Rahaat’s order because he believed there was no “silver lining” to the Void, especially after he found out that Rahaat’s religion has roots in an evil cult. Note this betrayal and excommunication happened almost immediately before the group was hired, so he knew of the plan. After glimpsing the Void’s bleakness in a vision and learning of the religion’s true origins and subsequent schism, Zizy was convinced that nothing good could come from that maelstrom of chaos.

Deciding that the devotees of Misterimadh and their allies The Amari Infusers posed a danger through their naïve beliefs, Zizy exposed some of the likely plans, predicting to the agents of The Qamsa that the Amari Infuser family would now seek to retake the Veiled Inscriptions, those stolen by The Qamsa’s minions. This knowledge led to Katya and Phamea’s actions in the Shaauru enclave. He told them that the Infusers’ most likely plan was first to grab knowledge from the Shaauru’s slave Ab’Hekim.

If the group came here after defeating the opponents who sought to take them prisoner, rather than in bonds themselves, Zizy will be quite apologetic for all the trouble (his torture made him feel quite bitter). He will tell the siblings about The Hidden Hollow’s library. The river portal leads to the Qamsa’s hidden world where the library structure keeps people safe from the worst of the Void effects. This structure is where the Amari tablets can be found. Here the Qamsa’s servitors can meet with them without suffering Void effects and receive orders etc.; thus, it is both a library and a place of meeting etc. But Zizy is then so frightened

of potential repercussions from The Qamsa that he may become a turncoat again and inform the guards where the siblings are heading. Zizy is mainly interested in saving his own skin but does have some interesting information, if necessary extractable with the MindNebula, the strange mind and information-sucking creature that is carried by Anzor (even if both Anzor and Zizy are dead).

Either way, a fight to escape this part of The Hidden Hollow might lead to chase scenes or several successive skirmishes. Some of the leaders send greater and lesser foes to try and take down the group, including Axayaca, the Qamsa’s chief Talath soldier, and Aruk Tudh, the Talath in charge of guarding the coin-lenders money as well as the guards around The Aromatic Souq.

The siblings may find a way to blend in with common workers fashioning rare materials for use in creating unusual substances and illicit goods in general. Or they could use a diversion to move deeper into The Hidden Hollow and continue to find where the lost tablets of the Amari family lie.

Zizy’s information provides a clue to the character’s relation to The Qamsa. This clue leads to further information that will help them in Volume III with travel into the deeper regions of this place.

LOCATION

THE AROMATIC SOUQ, DAER BITAAN: Daer Bitaan is a bustling place of trade and the largest and busiest district in the Eternal City.

Situated high on a pinnacle - away from the stink of the streets - the trading dome known as the Aromatic Souq is fragrant with distinct attractive, strange and refreshing scents, but it is more than spices, teas, perfumes and incense which can be bought here.

The Hidden Hollow, a subterranean cavern-enclave beneath the city’s streets, is hidden within the pinnacle - its entrance concealed within the Aromatic Souq. It is a secret place between worlds where exotic substances, bizarre items of myriad use, and rare written material are traded without tithe tax or tribute to the Unseen Rulers.

Within the Hollow an inn and other buildings overlook a spiral path as it descends deeper into the dark to the Hollow’s core: A Void rift called the Black Node.

A secret tunnel leading through the Fungus Caverns to a second rift: The Vortex Gateway. It leads to the Qamsa’s library.

NPC's

Zizy, Katya, Phamea, Axayaca, Aruk Tudh and Bultazaar.

NOTES

In this scene, as they explore, the protagonists may learn it would be unwise to enter the deeper recesses of the Hollow itself.

WHAT THE PROTAGONISTS SHOULD KNOW: The Amari Veiled Inscriptions are thought (mistakenly) to be hidden somewhere in the Al'iidara, where record and bookkeeping are handled for the Qamsa. This area is accessed only by passing through the House of the Muqridin, located in the Aromatic Souq. The Muqridin is a group of money lenders of a species called Mudirs. This information was extracted from the mind of Ab'Hekim in Scene 2 if he did not directly tell them.

Arbiter Note: The Amari Veiled Inscriptions are actually located beyond the Vortex Gateway in the Library of the Qamsa, which the characters will soon learn.

WHAT THE PROTAGONISTS MAY KNOW: Katya and Phamea's instructions from Axayaca (the Qamsa's primary lackey and executioner) were to take them to the Al'iidara area, where bookkeeping is done, accessed only by going through the house of the coin lenders (House of the Muqridin). Bultazaar, the Interrogator, awaits in his torture chamber within the bounds of the Al'iidara while holding Zizy prisoner.

WHAT THE CHARACTERS DO NOT KNOW: The Qamsa intended to have the protagonists interrogated by a terrifying creature named Bultazaar, one brought in from an alien world as a minion able to strike such fear into others that they will reveal secrets to avoid being in its clutches. They want to know what they have learned beyond what Zizy revealed of Rahaat's intentions. Furthermore, while Ab'Hekim believes the tablets are in the Al'iidara itself, they are located beyond the Vortex Gateway in the Library of the Qamsa.

SCENE III

EVENT 3:1 - ENTERING DAER BITAAN

Read to the players, regardless of whether they were brought here as prisoners of Katya and Phamea or came here after learning where the tablets are from Ab'Hekim's brain. If not held prisoner, they will know where their interrogation was to be staged. They will not be blindfolded if prisoners, so what is initially seen is the same.

"You are now in the largest district in all of the Eternal City, Daer Bitaan. The streets are extremely crowded, throngs of sentient creatures of all possible types going about their business.

Natural rock pinnacles soar high into the yellow sky, structures stacked up and clinging to their precipices, the envy of the most insane of architects. You see trading domes and amphitheatres surrounded by an endless array of other establishments.

You have heard of the arenas here, games held every day where spectators win and lose betting on the lives of the gladiators, but you are not moving toward those arenas. You are not exactly sure where you are going yet, so you walk along the labyrinthine cobblestone streets through souqs, bazaars and slave markets; the torrent of people surrounding you feels like a living current.

You have noted that the riverbanks and canals are heavily patrolled by Jinassar, civic servants and tithe collectors of the Unseen Rulers, but your current situation brings you elsewhere, toward one pinnacle in particular. Your nose is filled with an unidentifiable mixture of fragrances, spices and food as you walk into the shadow of the isolated vertical spire housing the Aromatic Souq".

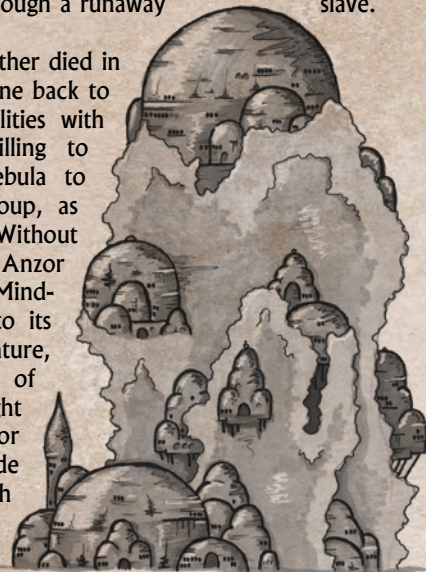
THE CHARACTERS AS PRISONERS: If the protagonists are prisoners, this may be a fortuitous time to try to break away while they can slip away into the crowd. Breaking free of bonds, hands tied behind one's back, is no easy feat, but a Strength, sleight-of-hand or similar check against a difficulty of 10 may break or slip the bonds outright.

If a character managed to palm something with which to cut the binding cords, a check against Larceny might assist with the effort in surreptitiously breaking the bonds.

THE CHARACTERS ACTING FREELY: If not prisoners, it is likely because the siblings fled from or defeated Katya and Phamea. If defeated, it could be they used the MindNebula to get the information from their would-be captors on their motives and the place of the intended interrogation or convinced them to talk, if not simply beat it out of them.

However, fleeing may leave them clueless as to the location of their intended interrogation, where Ab'Hekim mistakenly believed the inscriptions were hidden. In that case, the Arbiter can rely on the encounter where they find out about this place through a runaway slave.

Note that Anzor either died in Eankabut or has gone back to his own responsibilities with Rahaat. He is willing to allow the MindNebula to accompany the group, as detailed in scene 2. Without the presence of Anzor however, the MindNebula "reverts" to its alien Void entity nature, with motivations of its own and might require coaxing or incentive to provide the characters with help.



TRIGGERED EVENT: MEETING AXAYACA

If the characters escape Katya and Phamea, whether before entering Daer Bitaan or afterwards, it will not be too long before they encounter Axayaca for the first time. He will have decided to take matters into his own hands and gathered some Hidden Hollow guards to aid him in the capture or killing of would-be thieves. Spies spotting any of the characters' stylised sun tattoos would then lead Axayaca to them. If the protagonists tried to blend with the masses using some sort of disguise or are otherwise careful not to reveal any distinguishing characteristics (Purebloods may have a tougher time of this as they tend to stand out amongst the myriad otherworldly species). Characters may utilise subterfuge or similar to avoid detection, difficulty [7] or the Arbiter may employ opposed spotting rolls between Axayaca and the characters stealth capabilities.

If undiscovered here, detection will occur later in the sequence of events. For example, Axayaca could fail to find the siblings on the streets and only be alerted to their whereabouts when they make themselves known by causing a ruckus at some point.

Read the following whenever the characters are spotted on the street, the exact timing of which is up to the Arbiter but is not likely anywhere near where the Jinassar patrol such as markets, docks or similar "public" spaces.

"A huge Talath emerges to confront you, stepping out before you along with five rough looking men brandishing swords.

Its skin is brownish-red, and long jet-black hair, thick as a mane, is pulled back into a long tail. He is brawny and wielding a wicked looking greatsword. His pale eyes fix on you, solemnly, without a hint of humour or curiosity. 'You may surrender yourselves now or be subdued' he intones in a deep, gravelly voice while advancing, his entourage following closely to protect his flanks and back".

Attempting to speak to Axayaca may make him pause if adequate submissive and non-threatening demeanour is displayed. Any social roll versus a difficulty 7 will cause him to pause and listen, but with little patience. A critical success commands his attention longer. There is precious little the siblings can say that will hold his attention for more than a moment.

If the siblings defeat Axayaca his guards will flee.

AXAYACA VIOLENT ENCOUNTER (SEE ADVERSARIES AND NPCs)

Conditions: Crowded street with onlookers but no detrimental circumstances except for potential weather and lighting. Spectators might choose to intervene or accidentally get involved if the Arbiter decides.

Depending on the conversation between the opposing sides Axayaca seeks either to subdue the characters by using stunning, knock-down, pinning or similar attacks, or to outright kill them urging his thugs to use deadly force.



EVENT 3:2 - THE TERRIFIED GIRL

If the characters are unaware of the plan to lead them to the Al'iidara for interrogation, they will find out about it through a runaway slave named Sijyn in this event.

While walking through the streets of Daer Bitaan narrate or summarise: "A young human slave girl wearing ripped and tattered clothing is running through the crowd when she trips and lands heavily on the ground, her momentum causing her to skin her knees. She lifts her tear-streaked face off the cobblestone and looks at you all pleadingly. 'Please, hide me or kill me...just...please...do not let me face that thing' she cries.

If the characters are still Katya and Phamea's captives, those two will ask or realise who the girl is and quickly bind her too, taking them all to a holding area for a few minutes where the characters are under guard and have an opportunity to question her.

If the characters are free and unrestricted, they can help and question Sijyn as they see fit although the poor girl might cause unwanted attention if they remain in a public space.

When the siblings have an opportunity to question the girl, the following dialogue might be used. The Arbiter can paraphrase/modify as appropriate with plausible questions and possible answers grouped below. Gaining this information will further the siblings' understanding of events and foreshadow things to come.

Sijyn does not fully understand what has happened. She has only a child's understanding of the people involved and their motives. But her innate cleverness, maturity and experience, coupled with her bright and insightful nature, make Sijyn a valuable source of information.

Importantly, she has just run away from the building giving access to the Al'iidara. If the siblings do not know where they were to be taken, the Arbiter should make sure that Sijyn reveals its location to them.

If appropriate, the Arbiter can opt that Sijyn was present in the Mirza's mansion and that she recognises the protagonists as the ones who disrupted the ritual in the caverns.

Q: What's the matter, child? Who are you?

A: My name is Sijyn. Please, hide me or kill me...just... please...do not let me face that thing.

Q: What thing?

A: A Taedhib. My father knew...he KNEW, but did it anyway...

Q: Your father?

A: His name was Aljara. He was an indentured Mystic in Na'Aqh's service. My mother and I worked in The Mirza's mansion too. Unlike the other humans there, we were not slaves as such, but neither were we free.

That strange three-bodied thing, the Aml'Nāqru called Na'Aqh, favoured my father and initiated us all into the Darkened Sun. My mother and I were scared, but my father insisted. He thought the cult would give him power.

Na'Aqh endorsed him because he had understanding of the Void and the entities dwelling there.

Hidden beneath the mansion was a fearsome place. A horror came through from the night. It killed everyone within its reach. Afterwards, Na'Aqh was maddened. My father thought to appease the thing from beyond by... by... giving me to the Void.... They were to... No! They were.... I cannot say, I cannot say... but what remained of me was to be hurled into that blackness before my life was gone...

Q: What happened next?

A: I fled into the city. Mother warned me of Father's plan. I left her there... the only way to escape the mansion was swimming 'neath the river gate. I thought I would drown but made it through. Mother tried but could not do it. She swam back. I left her behind...

In the city, I had nowhere to go, I lived a while on the streets. Men tried to... they tried... ah, but I escaped them. I had no food, no place to sleep. I began to beg, and that's when I was recaptured and brought here.

Q: Why were you brought here?

A: Without Na'Aqh to lead the Darkened Sun, my father sought new allies. He thought to find them in a place he called The Hidden Hollow.

Q: The Hidden Hollow?

A: Have you heard of the Qamsa? Father said they dwell in a pit of night beneath the Aromatic Souq.

Q: What happened to Na'Aqh?

A: "With one (or more) part(s) of it slain, the rest became crazed. I hear it wanders fungus-filled caverns 'neath this pinnacle."

Q: Your father sought new allies?

A: Before his indenture to Na'Aqh, my father served the Qamsa in a place he called The Library. He claimed it was beyond this world.

He said Na'Aqh had been in the Qamsa's thrall. Father hoped to win favour with the Qamsa again and be granted rulership over what little was left of the Darkened Sun. So he came back here to visit the library and seek an audience."

Q: Your father once served the Qamsa?

A: Yes, before the Qamsa chose to indenture him to Na'Aqh, my father worked long years in the Qamsa's hidden library. He learned Mystic secrets for them. Secrets about the birth of children. I heard my parents speak of things I did not understand.

Mother said to me that there was a Daimon. She called it Izdubar. My father taught it how to make and devour its own children. Mother said that if ever I heard Izdubar's whisper, she and I would eat Dusk reed seeds. It brings death. She said it was better than answering Izdubar's call."

Q: So your father returned to this library? Did the Qamsa make him the leader of the Darkened Sun?

A: No. they were jealous of his knowledge. Fearful that he might let others know the secrets he once showed them. They tortured Father, putting him in my cell between bouts of punishment. He was near death then, bleeding, his body

ripped. He whispered to me that he had been tricked saying: 'Because of you. This is because of you. They know I made you with my own blood. Izdubar used one of the sons I gave him to find that thing. Tricked me then into calling it forth.'

Q: Is this the thing you would rather die than face? I thought you said your father knew?

A: Yes, the Taedhib. And he did know. Not that he would be its victim, but that I would, my mother too. Yet still, he called it. The Qamsa told him he must prove loyalty by punishing us for my escape. He believed them and used his skills to call forth his own death from the Void.

Q: Where did this torment take place?

A: We were held underground in a cell. Once it had... questioned... my parents, the Taedhib left. I learned from our guards it had been granted a chamber for its foul work in the Al'iidara.

Q: The Al'iidara?

A: That is what my guards called it. They said the Taedhib awaited recently captured prisoners. I was dragged there, to suffer my parents' fate. They took me to a square building built from yellow blocks. A round coin-like symbol above its entrance. Furry man-beasts with googly eyes guard its door. It is not in the Aromatic Souq but built nearby, where rock bulges from the pinnacle. The entrance to the Al'iidara lies somewhere within. I know not where exactly, for as we got there, I fled.

A: What are the Taedhib?

Q: Before the worst of his torture, Father said they were ill-famed masters of cruelty. So much so, they offer servitude in exchange for victims to torture, terrorise and interrogate. This one is named Bultazaar. No knowledge, no secret can be kept from it. I heard its voice and I saw its... its... shadow... By the suns, I will not see its face. I will not. I heard what it did to Mother. Her voice! She begged and begged. If it is our fate to be its victims, then choke me. I would rather be dead."

If the protagonists are free of their captors and show any concern for the girl's future welfare, they may find somewhere for her to go that is safe or tell her to run to someone they trust. If the characters wanted to keep her with them, the Arbiter might subtly inform them that she is resourceful but still a traumatised child. She could be a useful ally in some respects with extra info, but also a liability as the siblings will need to shield her.



EVENT 3:3 - FINDING ZIZY

Eventually, whether in bonds or free of capture from either Katya, Phamea or Axayaca, the siblings will arrive at The Aromatic Souq.

As they walk up the pinnacle narrate the following:

"You've walked a winding path upward, toward the dome of The Aromatic Souq's pinnacle. The smell of spices, teas, perfumes and incense grow more intense as you travel farther away from the stench of the streets below. You pass the sights and sounds common to Daer Bitaan - the merchants and water-carriers hawking their services, cramped shops and craft workshops, and congestion of carts being pulled up the steep thoroughfare.

You now approach the dome itself, its walls sheathed in some strange alloy reflecting the light at dusk with a reddish hue. It covers the entire area of aromatic souq's main market. You see through huge, double solid-wood doors leading onward, under the shadow of the dome. But before you enter, you turn and see another distinctive building, cradled up against a large rock outcropping of the pinnacle.

It is a squarish two-story building constructed from sandstone, with two bronze barred windows above and to either side of the main entrance. A large terracotta circular coin-like symbol is inlaid above the front entrance. The entrance is formed by a large wooden door, standing open and guarded by two strange, squat, furry primates with huge, bulbous eyes. The two standing guards look like oversized, bi-pedal tarsiers wearing multi-pocketed cloaks, wearing leather armour and wielding daggers".

If the siblings were captured and still captive, they will be taken directly to the sandstone building and lead past the guards into the house of the coin lenders, known to the locals as the House of the Muqridin.

Regardless of whether they are free to explore or forced to enter, the characters may remember the coin lenders building leads to the Al'iidara area, accessed through a single entry point at the back of the coin lenders domain, its halls and rooms dedicated to bookkeeping and accounting carved out from the rock of the pinnacle itself. The interrogation room overseen by Bultazaar is within the Al'iidara, and that is where poor, unfortunate Zizy is held.

The creatures resembling huge bipedal tarsiers running the operations of the Muqridin are called Mudirs, and although they are not in thrall to the Qamsa specifically, they recognise and fear their influence. They are wealthy beyond measure themselves and greedy as a species, willing to charge exorbitant interest or turning away clients depending on caste.

They are paid handsomely by the Qamsa for acting as a front for the keeping of recorded activities of the Qamsa under their roof. They guard the entrance to the Al'iidara and allow only those in who are sanctioned by Axayaca or other important functionaries of the Hollow.

Discovery of secret records cataloguing the dealings of exotic and illegal substances within the Aromatic Souq would be disastrous for the Muqridin, as the Jinassar would

surely bring a swift end to their affairs and storm the hidden records, leading to swift retribution from the Qamsa. But they know of the siblings, and in this case, were instructed to allow them through, even if unbound and armed, to walk freely into the area where Bultazaar awaits hungrily, and without fear, eager to meet any challenge and extract every last bit of information, breath, and life from his quarry.

When approaching the front door of the House of the Muqridin, the Mudir guards turn and face the group, nod, and stand aside allowing them to pass inside without comment.

Arbiter Note: If the characters question the guards, they only divulge that they guard the coin lenders and know of no other business. Their voices are high-pitched, and they can communicate between themselves in a secret speech no human has yet deciphered.

As the characters enter the house, narrate the following: "Upon entering, you see a huge room lit by lamps lining the walls. There are tables set up symmetrically into aisles, each table seating a furry Mudirs granting loans to the patrons who stand awaiting their allocation of Dhin.

A large iron-barred area is situated in the back of the room, where the money is kept behind a gate fashioned with a large horizontal bolt. About ten Mudirs stand guard at that gate, all holding wicked looking daggers, yet they appear a bit listless. A single Talath guard stands on the opposite side of the gate, an Adaru laying down obediently at his side".

Although unknown to the siblings, this Talath, named Aruk Tudh, is the sibling of Sayu Mah who serves the Mirza, who specialises in the training of Adarus.

Aruk Tudh is loyal to the Qamsa and occasionally ventures into the jungles of Llyhn to capture and train Adarus to sell to wealthy people in need of such exotic and intimidating protection, tithing much of his earnings to the lords of the Souq. He will not leave his post to follow the siblings into the Al'iidara. In fact, he is under instruction to only allow the characters in, not even their captors if the characters arrive as captives at this point.

The many corridors of the records and bookkeeping area are temporarily shut down due to Bultazaar the Interrogator's arrival here, who chose this location for its isolation. Only one trembling scribe was left in the halls to record the information gained from the horrific torture.

Once the characters enter through the coin lenders coin-cage gate, they are invited or forced to enter the records area as per their instruction from the Qamsa.

A single door is shut soundly behind them when they enter, and even if Phamea, Katya or Axayaca managed to drag them to this point, nobody dares go further while Bultazaar is fulfilling his purpose.

Once the characters enter, read: "You enter a long, dark hall. The record keeping area is as quiet as a graveyard, the many doors leading to multiple rooms - normally occupied by scribes and accountants working busily on their ledgers

and books - are all shut and barred. As you move forward, the air grows progressively colder, and though it may be a trick of your eyes, the torches burning in the sconces along the walls between doors seem to cast abnormally long, flicking shadows. You see the hall terminates straight ahead after about 30 metres, a single iron door cracked slightly open."

If they approach the door, they will notice their steaming breath as the temperature drops. Their only option otherwise is to retreat back and fight their way through Aruk Tudh, his Adaru, and the Mudirs (who will have little idea of why such mayhem is going on but will be obligated to protect their assets).

ARBITRARY ENCOUNTER: ARUK TUDH CONFLICT

Adversaries: Aruk Tudh and Mudirs

Conditions: Outside of the Al'iidara, in the coin-cage, possibly with furniture, tables and other obstructive elements but no other detrimental conditions.





Recite the following: "Your breath becomes visible as you approach the door, and a sinister voice, smoothly sibilant and quiet but as sharp as a scimitar speaks: 'Enter and give me your minds. Give me your souls, your pain, your essence. Or do not. Either way, I take. Resist and suffer. Run and suffer'. Then silence. The door creaks open a little further, only inky blackness seen be-yond for a moment, but then clearing suddenly, like a black cloud blown apart to reveal a room of cold torture instru-ments lining the walls like a macabre art gallery. Air pressure builds along the hall, your ears pop painfully, and a chilly wind blows through the hall. A ghastly silhouette of a gaunt, humanoid creature with a spindly ridged back and four abnormally long almost spider-like arms steps smoothly into the frame of the door, its eyes reddish pinpoints of burning coal."

BULTAZAAR ENCOUNTER

VIOLENT

Adversary: Bultazaar

Conditions: The narrow hallway causes cramped conditions inducing a -1 penalty to size 3 weapons and rendering size 4+ weapons unusable, low lighting causes -3 to actions unless the combatant has night vision.

Bultazaar will fight until he becomes hurt - having lost half of his Health - at which point he will use his ability to create an obscuring cloud of inky darkness and his silhouetted power to escape down the hall. If the protagonists manage to kill, subdue or drive away the Taedhib, they are left to speak to Zizy.

EVENT 3:4 - TALKING TO ZIZY

As the characters enter the torture chamber narrate or paraphrase the following: "A man lies chained to a wooden slab on an incline. There is a standing mirror before him, allowing him to see his own sorry state, splattered with his blood.

He is a thin man with a shaven head, with expressive and pained grey eyes. You recognise him as the man you saw in the Feeradani Enclave Drinking Den.

His robe is ripped to shreds, his bare chest exposes a pattern of zig-zagging dagger wounds. You see a tattoo on his broken arm that looks much like

the one you have. His breathing is shallow and ragged, his look distant and agonised. He has cuts and bruises all over his body”.

The Taedhib had not quite gotten to the phase of its art it simply calls “the killing”, so luckily Zizy still has his ears, eyes and tongue.

The characters may question him before or after they set him free (assuming they do not allow him to die there). He is weak but can still speak. When the siblings question Zizy, the following dialogue might be used. The Arbiter can paraphrase/modify as appropriate. Likely questions and probable answers are grouped below.

Q: Who are you or what is your name?

A: My name is Zizy. I was excommunicated from Rahaat’s order because I realised that there is no “silver lining” to the Void as he taught. I know his religion has roots in the Darkened Sun, and you are working for him! I saw the dark in his soul in a vision. Nothing good can come from the Void. It’s just a maelstrom of chaos, constant change and annihilation. Rahaat, he is just like the cult of Na’Aqh, but truly ignorant of his own sickness.

While the characters may protest, explain that they are not cultists, or defend Rahaat, but Zizy will continue to explain:

A: The Devotees of Misterimadh, and their allies The Amari Infusers, they all pose a danger through their naïve beliefs. Yes, I exposed some of the likely plans! Of course I did! I thought the knowledge the Amari family wanted was too dangerous, better off in the hands of the Qamsa...now I understand that was a terrible mistake.

Q: What do you know about The Veiled Inscriptions?

A: I heard the Amari Infuser family wanted The Veiled Inscriptions. I knew the Infusers’ likely plan was to first grab knowledge from the Shaauru’s slave Ab’Hekim because they cannot completely decipher the encoded writings. So I told Phamea. She is a true Amari, though disgraced. Hunlona disowned her, says she is illegitimate.

Q: So you work for the Qamsa? Whose side are you on?

A: No, I have loyalty only to the truth. This city is dangerous enough without the likes of you bringing even more potent Ruyah to the people. That will surely bring destruction from the Unseen Rulers. You do not know the damage you could cause!

At his point, the protagonists may want to try to convince Zizy that they are not going to unleash the full strength of the Ruyah to the people. Perhaps explain they are only concerned for Hunlona’s boy. That they seek to fully destroy the cult that Zizy himself so hates. Compelling arguments and a social roll [7] would convince or sway Zizy to their point of view, or the characters could seek to intimate him, regardless of his feelings on the issues, and that would be even easier [5] given his fragile state. Either way, he will tell the siblings about The Hidden Hollow’s library.

Alternatively, the characters can circumvent all such attempts and simply grab whatever information is extractable with the MindNebula if they happen to possess



that creature and can convince it to do so. Such action with the MindNebula will kill Zizy in his current weakened state, from shock alone.

In case of success Zizy's response is as follows: "The Veiled Inscriptions are now in the Qamsa library. It's not here in this building as Ab'Hekim thought. It's not under the dome of the souq. No, it was a secret, but Phamea knew where the Qamsa intended to keep them after moving them from here and told me.

It's near the Fungus Caverns, a short distance westward from here, in a secret library. You can enter there through a tunnel, which opens up in the Fungus Forest, and you'll see a limestone tunnel leading to a subterranean river. The river portal leads to the Qamsa's hidden world where the library structure keeps people safe from the worst of the Void effects. They will never let you escape with the Inscriptions."

If the players describe Axayaca and ask about him, Zizy tells them how he learned from the Taedhib (who is rather talkative while torturing people) that the Qamsa deceives Axayaca into killing transformed children. He says "Axayaca does not know the truth of the matter and thinks he is hunting down creatures threatening his masters or their interests, not realising The Qamsa themselves created them to wreak havoc.

If you convince him he's been duped by the Qamsa in this matter, he might change allegiance, but probably won't take kindly to the news. It may be worth it though, as I think he'll become distrustful of his masters, and that helps you." If the siblings do get an opportunity to assert this news to Axayaca, he will grow angry and confused, shifting away from any intention of capture, opting instead for murdering them all to protect his pride, unless they can convince him otherwise.

With proper incentives, cajoling or arguments he may well turn against his masters and help them in the end. Note that the Arbiter may decide how Axayaca's allegiance or motivation changes as best fits the unfolding narrative.

Zizy might also reveal that there is a gatekeeper who will demand payment or a trade to bring the characters to where they wish to go. The payment or trade must be something to indicate they are familiar with the concoctions of the underworld, but Zizy knows and can divulge no more.

Zizy is mainly interested in saving his own skin, and so frightened of potential repercussions from The Qamsa that he may become a turncoat again and inform the guards where the siblings are heading if they leave him chained up to die. However, it is likely he would die of his wounds before his screams for attention could be heard, as nobody wants to enter where they think Bultazaar might be. Eventually, his body (and perhaps that of the dead Taedhib) would be found by Axayaca, to whom the Taedhib is subservient.

EVENT 3:5 - FINDING PASSAGES

There is a secret exit from the Al'iidara, allowing the characters to avoid fighting their way back through the House of the Muqridin. If they say they would like to explore the area for rooms and information, they will have to unlock the doors. The interrogation room has a barrel of acid, a brazier of hot coals, several buckets, a shard-whip, chains, wall cressets, fetters of various kinds, finger stocks, gags, a hoist, an iron boot, irons for branding, manacles, needles and pins, pliers, the rack where Zizy was bound, several ropes, salt, thumb screws, tongs, torches and several regular whips.

Unlocking or forcing doors and such in the halls is a difficulty 5 roll. All of the rooms are fairly small, each with a table, a candle and several bookcases lining the walls with tablets filled with records of the souq's legal transactions. The illegal sort is held in the Qamsa Library beyond the Vortex Gateway.

One room in particular on the west end has a secret passage behind a cabinet leading back out to the perimeter of the Souq. A difficulty 4 roll will reveal this when investigating. Similarly, the southernmost chamber shields a second secret entrance, giving access to a precipitous tunnel that twists down to the Fungus Caverns (see scene 4).

If the characters find their way into the open air outside of the dome, they may decide to rest somewhere, returning later to find the secret tunnel to the Fungus Caverns, or they may want to explore the Aromatic Souq to seek information concerning The Hidden Hollow.

However, the minions of the Qamsa are looking for them, causing exploration without disguise to be even more dangerous. At any given time, Qamsa spies and guards will try to kill them, as capture is no longer an option when it is discovered they were powerful enough to defeat Bultazaar.

The main entrance to the Qamsa's stronghold, The Hidden Hollow - a subterranean cavern-enclave beneath the city's streets - lies within the trading dome of The Aromatic Souq. However, the secret tunnel inside the Al'iidara to the Fungus Caverns is the safest and most discreet way to enter.

LOCATION 3:1 - THE MAIN ENTRANCE:

Within the Aromatic Souq trading dome is the Mudhif, ostensibly a house of rest for traders, but in its basement, guarded by three of Axayaca's warriors, a door grants access to a winding corkscrew path inside the pinnacle. It leads down into The Hidden Hollow, hiding an illicit market "behind" a legitimate one.

The corkscrew path is initially very tight, twisting down in gradually widening loops until it eventually arrives at the Hidden Hollow itself. Here, under the protection of The Qamsa, the representatives of the most powerful and wealthiest amongst Llyhn's inhabitants trade mysterious and sometimes proscribed goods without tithe to the Unseen Rulers.

As described in scene 5, entering the Hollow via this front door route is challenging. The way is guarded. The siblings must bluff or force their way past suspicious warriors. At the very bottom of the Hollow, if the characters decide to explore the area, they will run into real danger. They can go to the Hollow's upper circle - comprising an Inn and trading establishments - but descending further down the spiral path is treacherous.

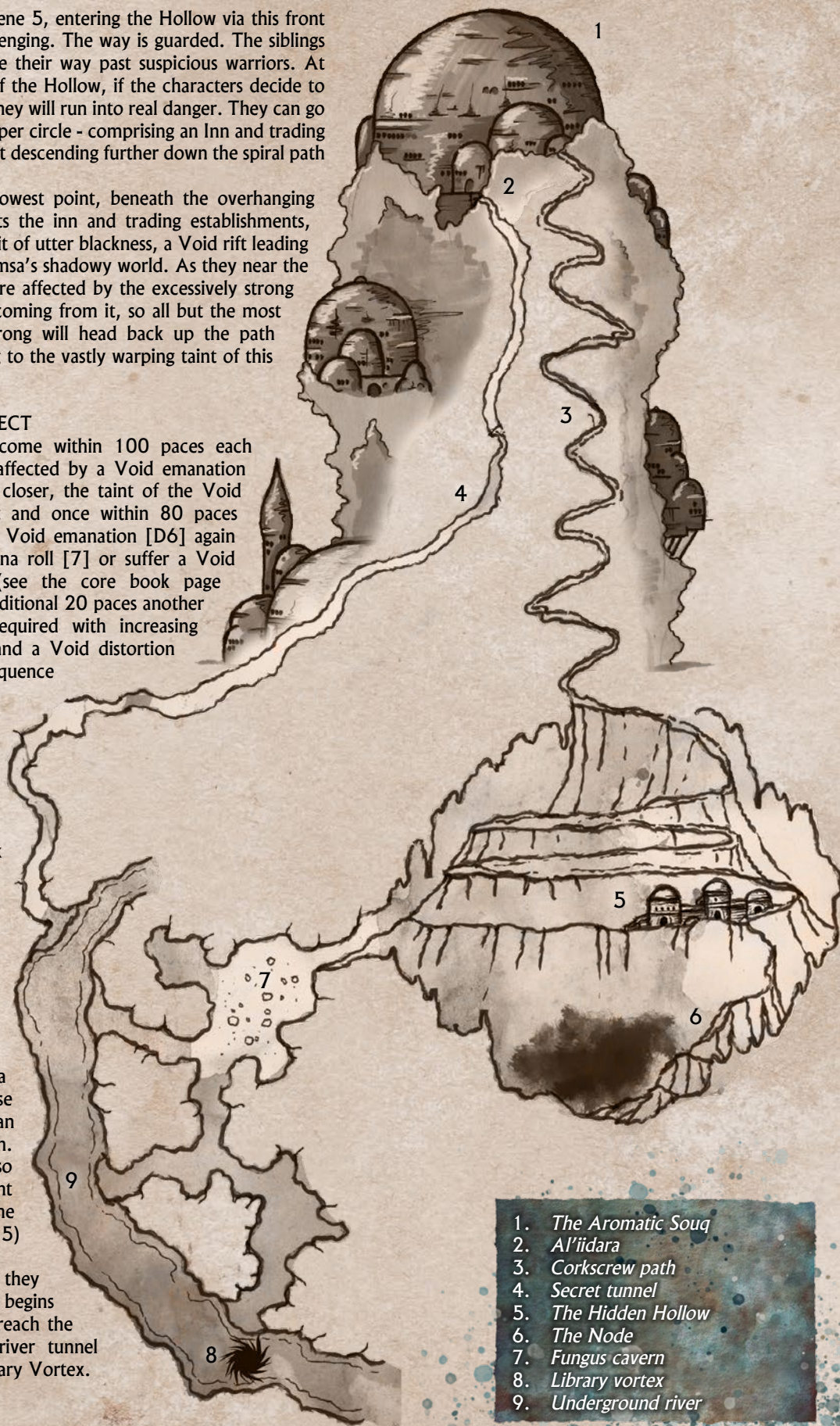
At the Hollow's lowest point, beneath the overhanging ledge that supports the inn and trading establishments, lies The Node: a pit of utter blackness, a Void rift leading directly to the Qamsa's shadowy world. As they near the node, characters are affected by the excessively strong Void emanations coming from it, so all but the most stubbornly headstrong will head back up the path before succumbing to the vastly warping taint of this rupture.

VOID NODE EFFECT

as soon as they come within 100 paces each character will be affected by a Void emanation [D6]. If they get closer, the taint of the Void becomes apparent and once within 80 paces they must roll for Void emanation [D6] again as well as a Stamina roll [7] or suffer a Void distortion [D6] (see the core book page 200). For each additional 20 paces another Stamina roll is required with increasing difficulty of +2 and a Void distortion [D12] as a consequence for failure.

The Arbiter may choose to weigh the odds heavily in favour of using the back door Fungus Cavern route into the Hollow. If the siblings failed to discover the secret door in the Al'iidara, they might learn of it in the Aromatic Souq from a merchant whose son died from an overdose of Ruyah. This merchant also knows of the "Front Door" beneath the Mudhif (see scene 5)

Whatever route they use, the next scene begins when the siblings reach the entrance to the river tunnel leading to the Library Vortex.



1. The Aromatic Souq
2. Al'iidara
3. Corkscrew path
4. Secret tunnel
5. The Hidden Hollow
6. The Node
7. Fungus cavern
8. Library vortex
9. Underground river

SCENE IV: INTO THE DARK

SCENE SYNOPSIS

The siblings have at this point encountered many trials on their mission to find the Veiled Inscriptions. After learning that Zizy, excommunicated from their Ka'Alum patron Rahaat's order, may have had rational reasons for attempting to stop the siblings, they may be experiencing dissonance about who exactly they are working for. However, it is difficult to deny the suffering of Hunlona as a mother concerned for the fate of her son, and clear that Telal and Tehmeena trust those of The Temple of Misterimadh and the Amari family.

Once arriving at the river in the tunnel through the Fungus Caverns, they encounter Ukbalthoo. He is an obsequious and useful guide whose purpose is to ferry invited visitors down the river safely through the Vortex into the Library. He will greet the group, tell them the Qamsa's rules for visitors, and generally seek to make their visit successful although his friendly demeanour will change if alerted to the sibling's identity and purpose.

Once in the Library, they will encounter The Keeper of Records, a Ba'Waikh named Hal'sujalat, and Ghal'Ar, his bodyguard, a Talath of grotesque proportions. From there the protagonists may beguile or intimidate Hal'sujalat into showing them which of the tablets are the Veiled Inscriptions and then attempt to leave with them before discovered.

The group might escape the Library Void by ferry with Ukbalthoo if they manage to miraculously convince the Keeper of Records that they have been instructed to possess or relocate the tablets, or they may find themselves escaping into the Fungus Caverns directly. Either way, the Qamsa will notice, as they have many eyes within the upper level of The Hollow.

One such sentry is a semi-mad Na'Aqh, the Aml'Nāqru who now roams the fungus caverns. When their presence is sensed by Qamsa, Na'Aqh will seek to engage the characters fleeing the library in the fungal caverns. If they somehow reach the Hollow proper, it will try to lure them back from the ledge-built enclave overlooking the node into the fungal forest again. If Ukbalthoo still lives, he might be sent by Na'Aqh to accomplish this trick.

Meanwhile, Aruk Tudh has been notified of the siblings' whereabouts and sent to kill them and reclaim the tablets with the aid of guards and Adarus. Axayaca might join the hunt, bringing several of his warriors with him, but exactly what he does depends significantly on his encounter with the siblings in Scene 3.

LOCATION

THE FUNGAL CAVERNS; THE VORTEX GATEWAY AND QAMSA'S LIBRARY: One hidden path from the Al'iidara leads down to the Fungus Caverns. The caverns can be accessed from the Hollow itself via a path leading from the ledge. In the Fungus Caverns, a tunnel leads into the river that must be traversed to arrive at the Library Vortex entryway. The river portal leads to the Qamsa's hidden world where the library structure keeps people safe from the worst of the Void effects.

NPC's

Ukbalthoo, Hal'sujalat (Keeper of Records), Ghal'Ar, Aruk Tudh, Axayaca.

SCENE IV

EVENT 4:1 - UKBALTHOO OFFERS PASSAGE

The characters might have travelled directly to Vortex Gateway passage through the precipitous connecting tunnel that twists down through the rock of the pinnacle from one of the rooms in the Al'iidara to the Fungus Caverns (see scene 3).

Or they may have escaped their interrogation and first found their way outside to rest somewhere in the Aromatic Souq or explored within the trading dome itself and found the "front door" leading down to The Hidden Hollow. Regardless of what they do or how they arrive, their mission takes them to the Fungus Caverns and the nearby subterranean river. Here the Vortex Gate leads to the Qamsa's Library.

The route to the Library from the ledge where the buildings are located necessitates more time traversing the Fungus Caverns and is likely to involve encounters with wild and dangerous creatures.

However, this less ideal route may be their only choice if they are unaware of or cannot locate the tunnel leading down to the Fungus caverns from the Al'iidara. Use the table below to generate denizens whenever the characters are travelling through the uncontrolled areas of the Fungal forest.

TABLE 4.1 - BEASTS OF THE FUNGAL CAVERNS
AND CAVE LEADING TO RIVER

D12 ROLL	BEAST/ADVERSARY
1-4	D3 PINCERWIGS
5-7	A SLOQ
8-9	A BARAST
10-11	D4+1 HOLLOW GUARDS PATROLLING TO KEEP CAVERN BEASTS AT BAY
12	NA'AQH, THE CRAZED AML'NÄQRU

Once at the tunnel entrance, read: "The canopy of ebony and ash trees lightens above as you approach a cave opening wreathed with toadstools, mush-rooms and mold growing in such numbers along its entrance it's like a rock maw vomited fungus all along your path. There are no unusual markings along the rock or apparent in the trunks of trees, and no sound other than the birds. It's quiet here."

A successful herbalism roll [4] will reveal rare mushrooms with special healing properties that allow characters to recover Health points up to their Stamina score per day regardless of other treatment for one day-cycle period. Eating two of these mushrooms in the same period causes an overdose and doubles recovery speed but causes the user to become un-conscious for D3 hours.



Based on instructions and descriptions heretofore found, a Navigation roll confirms that this is the place sought to find the Library. Characters looking for tracks [9] will reveal some footprints indicating comings and goings of humanoids. Once the group advances into the cave, narrate or summarise:

"As you enter the cool of the cave, you spot a tunnel hewn from the rock ahead, the floor more even in that direction, slanting down into the dark under stalactites. You smell water, salt and sulphur, and hear the distant sound of flowing water".

As the group moves ahead:

"The tunnel at the far end of the grotto leads one direction from the larger natural entrance grotto, down into the dark. Nobody seems to guard this passage, lit by strange glowing algae lining the walls, the light a slow pulse, inhales and exhales of red and putrid green. The sound of water grows, and then you see it, the passage opening unto the edge of a subterra-nean river. Sitting on the river's shore is a figure who looks like a short man wearing a cloak, his face hidden under a cowl. Behind him is moored an oared Abra skiff. He sits sort of awkwardly on a flattened rock and appears to be using a wood-en stylus to engrave a clay tablet in his lap".



Unless the characters opt to attack the figure (Ukbalthoo), he will speak to the group as soon as he spots them.

Note to Arbiter: Attacking Ukbalthoo will have severe consequences for the characters as shown later.

Paraphrase or read the following: "The robed figure looks up from his work, placing a clay tablet in his cloak and dropping the wooden stylus in a pocket.

He pulls back his hood, standing up to on stubby legs, turning his head askance, looking unalarmed but curious. You see revealed the face of a curious dwarf-like being whose head is angled 45 degrees to one side, so that his eyes and mouth are on opposite sides of his face.

'On behalf of She that is Unnamed, I welcome you to the Mouth of the Qamsa', he rasps coarsely. 'You come here for discreet knowledge, I can sense, and you know the cost of passage. I await'.

He holds out one hand, stubby fingers out-stretched, and stands as still as a statue, his motion almost exaggerated as if this were an audition for his part."

If the protagonists pressed Zizy further about gaining passage through to the Library Vortex, they would understand he is asking for an item in trade, something to indicate they are familiar with the concoctions of the underworld.

If not, the characters may use subterfuge, performance or similar abilities to try to convince Ukbalthoo that they are comfortable and familiar with this process, avoiding arousing any suspicion that they're "winging it" through the negotiation. Convinc-ing him requires roleplaying and a social roll [7].

If they convince Ukbalthoo they might hand over a bit of Ruyah, or some other illegal substance obtained on the streets of The Aromatic Souq or failing that, the siblings might offer 20 copper Dhin per person or a single valuable trade item. A critical failure will increase the price substantially but still allow them passage.

If they attack and kill Ukbalthoo to take his skiff, he has only a few coins and his clay tablet, on which he was writing an as-yet-unfinished poem. The only words read "I am Ukbalthoo, you know I am nobody. I am the river, nothing more".

Once they gain passage, narrate the following:

"Ukbalthoo escorts you onto the skiff, climbs on, sits near the bow and takes the oars, pushing off into the river. He turns the bow to point downstream, and you begin coursing down, aided by the river's slow current.

Like the passage leading to the river, the walls and cave ceiling are alight with glowing fungus, casting a dim, pulsating light. 'I am Ukbalthoo, you know I am nobody. I am the river, nothing more. That's my story. You will speak with Hal'sujalat, you know of that Ba'Waikh, and he will know you', he says, coughing and grunting between his words. After a short travel downstream, you feel a change, an alteration and shift of perception. Ukbalthoo grunts, swivels his head to eye you, his mouth speaking from the other side of his face, sounding somewhat garbled: 'we enter,' he says, his tone factual."

As they approach the Vortex, all unenlightened characters must make a Void aversion roll [7], modified by Willpower. If Ukbalthoo notices anxiety in his travellers, he will hold out a jar of salve that - if rubbed under the nose - is an intoxicant that relieves some of the anxiety and physical reaction of travelling across the Void rift.

Characters will become dazed (see Delirium) but gain a +3 to their aversion roll, potentially calming them down enough to be transported through the Void perforation. It is not an unusual reaction from Ukbalthoo's passengers, so he is prepared for as much, as it is good for business to avoid unprepared passengers diving into the river. Any characters failing the roll will refuse to enter the perforation, and - if forced - make a roll on the Fear table.

Narrate or paraphrase: "As you sail into the dully iridescent black fog you feel your senses tingling as if something is trying to unravel your very being. You get the impression that you are penetrating an odd surface not quite unlike a dry liquid. A sense of unsettled-ness, disorientating, and anxiety explodes in your brain as you open your eyes to complete and utter blackness and a vast sense of aloneness grips you."

Void sensitive characters will soon be able to discern foggy currents and impossible shapes fluctuating around them, while un-enlightened characters will simply remain oblivious retaining a deep sense of unease.

Ukbalthoo, being the navigator used to this journey, and able to sense the currents and torrents of the Void, can orient himself, and has a disciplined mind for travelling through the perforation into the Qamsa's borderworld, quickly guiding the vessel to the perforation leading to the library. The characters will have no sense of time during the crossing, but it will take up to half an hour.



EVENT 4:2 - THE LIBRARY

The library is a Void-pocket (borderworld) affecting calamities and other Mystic usages accordingly. As soon as the characters enter apply a Void emanation roll [D6] for each with the result affecting the character for the duration of their stay in the library.

Relate the following: "As the skiff emerges from the black obliviousness it floats gently onto a body of water, halting at the edge of a wooden platform with the river's water flowing silently into a wall of darkness ahead and behind.

To your right is an impossibly high wall of obsidian, glistening with gem-like encrustations, and mirror-like stones reflecting your images in impossible multitude. The height of the wall is undeterminable, fading into unfathomable black and at an odd slanting angle in your vision.

To your left is a room that appears carved out of imagination rather than earth, the walls bordered only by darkness as deep as a dreamless sleep.

The room is large, probably fifty paces across and wide, and has no other doors, its smooth plastered walls painted a dark maroon, lit by sconces holding dim lanterns between large cabinets filled with clay tablets. Each cabinet appears to have its contents described in cuneiform above the top shelves.

In the centre of the room is a roundish platform of stone, sort of a dais, atop it a large, high backed chair with a seat of woven rush and a grid pattern in its sides. Sitting upon the chair is a slender, short biped with pale blue-greenish skin-tone. It turns and looks at you with large eyes above no noticeable nose-structure.

The feathery protrusions over each eye, to either side and below the mouth typical of a male Ba'Waikh. Standing guard nearby is an unblinking Talath, his head atop a thick neck and bulging torso, wearing a mishmash of plate, chain and leather armour, and he leans on the leather-wrapped end of a large mace.

His face is hawkish, his expression unconcerned; he does not even glance at you. It's so quiet that for a moment one might fear hearing loss, but the strange, hunched boatman breaks the silence, his voice jarring in the stillness.

'The Library of Adrahasis, beware of these rules: All trades must be in equal value. The Keeper of Records will know and appraises wisely.

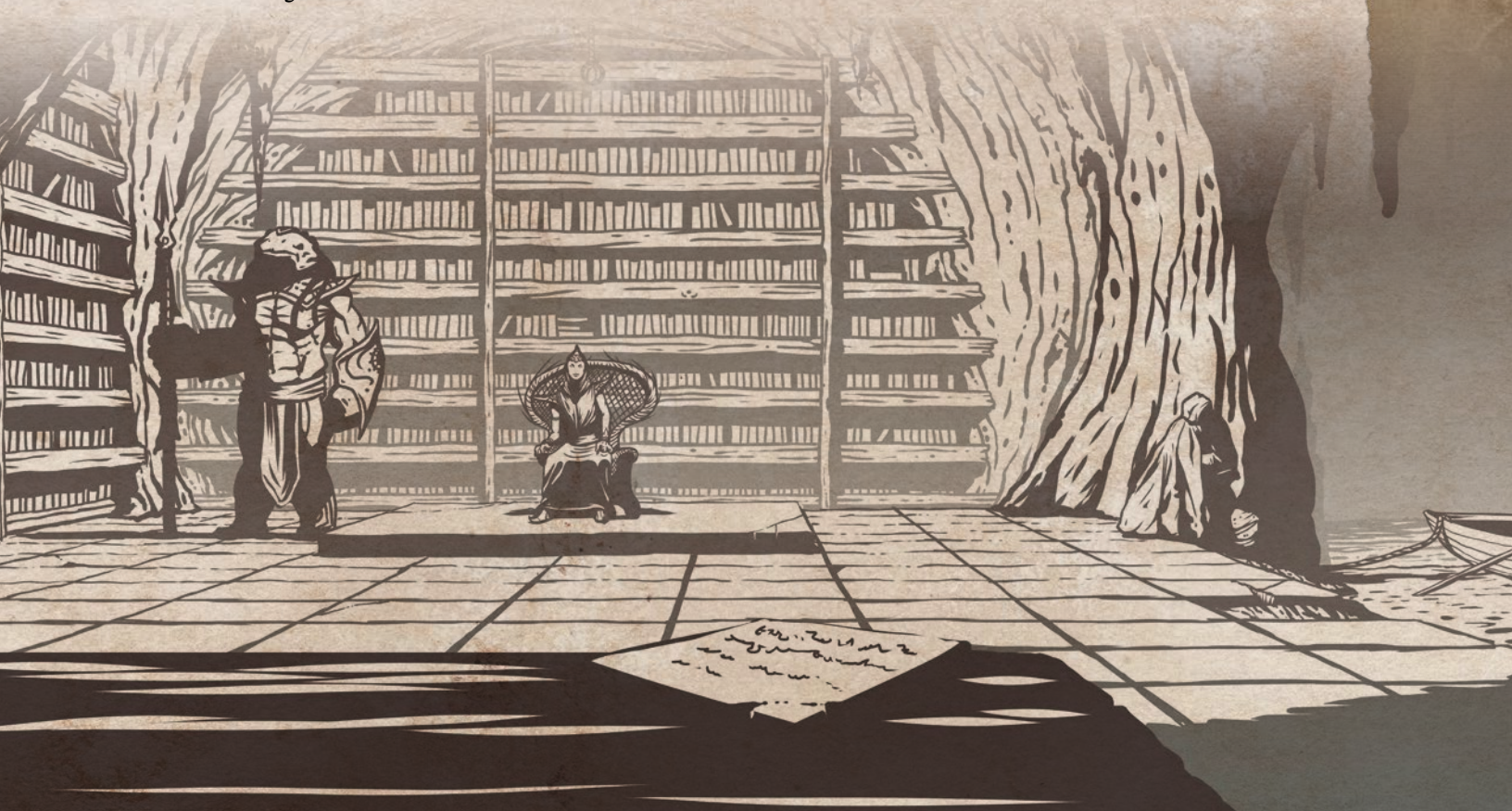
If you bring record only, present it to Hal'sujalat and return here. Waste his time and Ghal'Ar will waste yours most unpleasantly. I tire of ferrying body parts, whatever value they have in some quarters, so pay heed.

Enjoy your visit travellers." With that, he extends his hand, beckoning them to disembark toward the sizeable single room.

The Library is coterminous with a larger border world, located at the very edges of the deeper, maddening dangers of the Hollow's core Node.

The records represent past, present and future transactions, as well as secrets and knowledge borne of both real intelligence and raving lunacy. Hal'sujalat has gone slightly mad trying to discern which is which and obsesses over making a mistake of record or interpretation, so is an unusually anxious Ba'Waikh.

If the characters speak to Hal'sujalat the Ba'Waikh he will ask them what it is they have in trade, or what transactions must be recorded on behalf of his masters. If they reveal to him that they seek to take the Veiled Inscriptions, he will stand up from his chair and say "no, nobody takes from the library without instruction from the Qamsa." and likely direct Ghal'Ar to remove them forcefully from the library. Hal'sujalat knows precisely what shelf the inscriptions are on and their importance, but he will not reveal that willingly. An occult lore roll [5] would direct a character with this knowledge toward the correct tablets.



If the siblings suggest to Hal'sujalat that they have something of equal value in a trade for the tablets earns he will only scoff, and still likely motion to Ghal'Ar to remove them forcefully from this place. The search can easily be resolved if the protagonists were lucky enough to somehow subdue Hal'sujalat and have in their possession the MindNebula.

The only way of possibly fooling Hal'sujalat into handing over the tablets is if the protagonists somehow convinced him they were sent to bring the Veiled Instructions into the hands of somebody knowledgeable in the ways of the Amari: to transcribe and complete the understanding for the most potent of its ingestible forms. That they might fool him this way is unlikely, but clues as to this weakness may be learned from Phamea, as she is herself of Amari blood and understands both Hal'sujalat's need as well as her estranged family's methods. Getting her to help in such a way is unlikely, assuming she has not already died by this point in the scenario, but if she is alive and being pursued by Axayaca, the protagonists may learn of Hal'sujalat's weakness in this regard, granting them a far more likely way of escaping the library without combat.

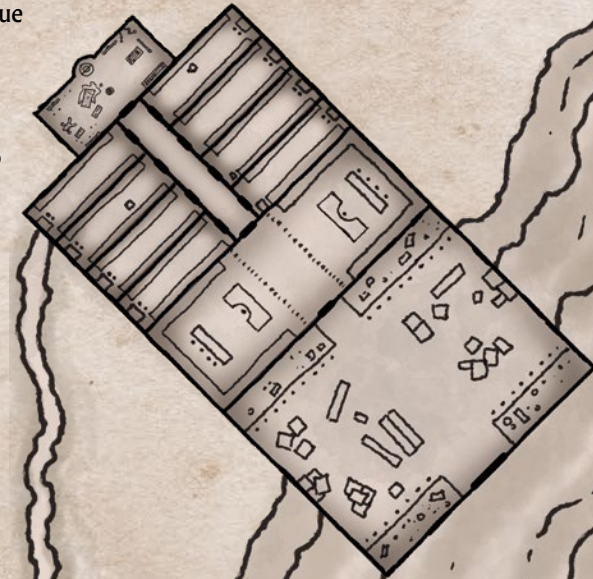
Should Hal'sujalat be swayed, manipulated or convinced by esoteric means to willingly give up the location of the inscription tablets it will require considerable convincing of Ghal'Ar for him not to intervene and stop the characters.

Anybody with the opportunity to search the cabinets may spot a section of shelves with the seal of the Amari family along its edge. An unadvised search would allow an observation, research or investigation roll [9] taking 3 minutes for each cabinet to spot tablets that may be the inscriptions. Once found, an applicable knowledge roll [5] would confirm that the tablets themselves display a seal of the Amari family, specifically that of Hunlona's grandfather Arif. However, it will take some time to correctly identify the right ones and should they be grabbed in great haste, there is a chance the wrong ones are taken.

If - at some point during the encounter - Hal'sujalat sees the siblings grab the correct tablets, he will unintentionally reveal that the tablets are the correct ones, by gloating and sneering "nobody can properly use those without the Kimiayiy Markaz cipher's secrets! And nobody can get it out of the cipher, not even the Taedhib interrogator! And you'll be dead before you can try yourself..."

Once the tablets are taken, Hal'sujalat will attempt to contact his masters and aid Ghal'Ar in attacking the group to prevent them from getting away for he fears the punishment for failing to keep the Library contents safely out of thieves' hands.

Ukbalthoo stays in the library with the skiff, as only a few visitors are allowed at a time, giving the characters an opportunity to steal the skiff and return the way they came. If he sees the characters engaging in violence, he will seek to row away to get reinforcements, stranding the characters in the Library. If he fails at that, he will use his superior strength to try to break the oars - difficulty [7] once per combat round to break one oar.



ARBITRARY ENCOUNTER: GHAL'AR CONFLICT

Adversaries: Ghal'Ar

Conditions: Void emanation effects influence the characters; no other environmental conditions are applicable.

EVENT 4:3 - ESCAPING THE LIBRARY

There is an exit leading directly from this sheltered place into the Qamsa's homeworld. As with the node in the Hidden Hollow, entering the Qamsa's realm exposes the siblings to the overpowering effect of the many Void currents eddying and weaving through it. Death would quickly follow (see scene 5). However, beyond the exit await slaves with whom Hal'sujalat can communicate without leaving the library's protection.

Once they have the tablets in hand, there is only one way to escape the library without going into the Qamsa world: to take the boat back through the rift and up the river.

If the boat has gone, the siblings must either swim through the Vortex, requiring a check against Athletics [5] likely requiring the protagonists to shed any heavy weapons or gear - or suffer related penalties. Or they can build a raft from smashed cabinets and sail down the river. In either case, unenlightened characters must overcome any aversion with a Willpower roll [7] or refuse to go through (while conscious at least).

Once past the vortex, there are exits on either side of the river through the twisting caverns leading back out to the Fungal Forest, but likely leading to an encounter with a half-mad Na'Aqh roaming around before the siblings can exit the caves.

Swimming characters must make a second Athletics check or be washed further downstream. If they then seek to make their way back from this point to the tunnel leading back up to the Al'iidara, they must succeed a navigation test [7] or lose their way in the Fungus Caverns and accidentally head towards the Hidden Hollow itself.

If he lives, Axayaca will be searching the caverns for the siblings too, as will bands of his men, though they will be spread out, encountering maybe three to six combatants with Axayaca, or similar numbers if another band is encountered.

Even if not lost the protagonists may opt to head east through the caverns to avoid opposition and into the Hidden Hollow. This is likely a mistake, but at the Qamsa's behest, Axayaca and/or his warriors will seek to lead the siblings this way.

The Qamsa's world is detailed in part III. As with the Node in the Hollow itself, only the most stubborn of adventurers will seek to pass through to it now, without protection. Any character attempting to enter the border world without the

ARBITRARY EVENT: IZDUBAR

Depending on the character's health and the player's morale the Arbiter might opt that Axayaca's band is led by the least of The Five, Izdubar (see the appendix for stats on Izdubar). It may be that Izdubar came to the library in response to Hal'sujalat's call, but only after the group fled the area, which prompted him to pursue them.



Ruyah must test Willpower [7] or roll on the Fear Effect Table (see the core rules), as well as a check against Stamina [9] or make a roll on the Void Distortion Table (Refer to Core Book). The Arbiter should issue a clear warning. If these aren't heeded, and a character enters the Qamsa world without protection, take the player to one side, briefly describe a barren landscape, distant mountains, a sky alive with writhing currents of Void energy, tall shadowy towers and startled pallid figures wearing cowed robes bound at the waist with a rope. If the player immediately states that their character tries to return to the library, the Arbiter can allow an easy roll [4] against Agility to do so before being overcome and forced to make a roll on the Fear Effect Table.

Pushing through is very likely to result in death on the Qamsa world, especially for unenlightened characters.

The Arbiter may award a point of enlightenment to characters who gazed upon the Qamsa's world and lived.

Once the characters have the tablets, are free of the subterranean world and back in the city, go to scene 5. There they find the Kimiayiy Centre, meet "The Cipher", otherwise known as Abd Alim, and retrieve the final ingredients along with some crucial information about Hunlona before facing another desperate attempt to prevent the Veiled Inscriptions from falling back into the hands of the Amari Infusers.

SCENE V: THE KIMIAYIY MARKAZ

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Now that the characters have the tablets, escaped the subterranean world and returned to the city surface, they will need to find the Kimiayiy Markaz. Here they will acquire the necessary information to completely decipher the Veiled Incriptions. Otherwise, the Ruyah product may not be pure enough to save the boy or protect them from Void effects. It was discovered that Ab'Hekim's knowledge of both tablets for the Veiled Incriptions was never totally complete, implying there may have been three generations of potency from the original.

Hal'sujalat, the Ba'Waikh of the Qamsa library, let it slip in Scene 4 that this missing information can only be explained by the Cipher of the Kimiayiy Markaz.

The Kimiayiy Markaz is where new substances are created, infused with rare substances to generate various strange powers. It lies near a thinning of the Veil of reality. Here the physical world is held tenuously together, and the scribes believe it's just enough to glean inspiration and focus from the currents of the Void. One tablet has the instruction to make the substance. But the other tablet described how this concoction might be administered for legitimate purposes; for example, suppressing Void distortion in navigators or, most importantly for this scenario, stopping transformation in one who is being affected a continuous Void distortion. Through partial decoding, the Qamsa's street version is not fully potent.

Part of The Cipher's job is to ensure only the correct assigned persons can access the centre. This will prove easier than expected, as he secretly wants to help the protagonists get the last needed ingredient, exorbitantly expensive dust called Black Samita, obtained from an inhospitable world nearly cut off from the Void. When mixed with the dust, the Ruyah purity allows those affected to visit the Qamsa's world without suffering the imminent effects of Void distortion. However, the amount Abd Alim got his hands on is only enough for a single dose. He is Void sensitive, but occasionally needs some from the Qamsa so he can make himself a variant of Ruyah that allows him to work with some of the more dangerous concoctions that have ingredients necessitating substantial Void travel.

However, Abd Alim is not an altruist or an Amari Infuser sympathiser. Once the siblings return to the surface, he expects Phamea (or one of her allies if she died) will steal both tablets and the dust from them, hiding them away for his own family.

Abd Alim is Phamea's older brother, firstborn of Hunlona from her previous marriage, and cares not for the Qamsa or the Amari family. The Cipher is also aware of something nobody else knows, but Rahaat knows; his mother Hunlona understands full well how to decipher the second tablet. She has had the real second tablet all along!

Hunlona has known all along there is a way to help her son, but trusts nobody but Rahaat, and without recovering the lost tablet with the recipe, she cannot use it. And admitting such to anybody, especially Anzor, might expose her if betrayed.

The second tablet the siblings take from the Qamsa library was a fake, planted by Hunlona's grandfather as a decoy and deliberately made indecipherable. That was part of why Hal'sujalat the Ba'Waikh was going crazy trying to figure it out for his Qamsa masters.

If the tablets are stolen from the siblings, the allies of Abd Alim and Phamea will attempt to capture Hunlona and force her to help them to understand how to create a Ruyah of greater potency. Either way, everybody will converge on the Misterimadh temple in the next and final scene.

LOCATION

DAER BITAAN; THE AROMATIC SOUQ: Situated high on a natural rock pinnacle, the Aromatic Souq is swarming with peddlers, customers and visitants coming to enjoy the sights and scents on offer.

NPC's

Abd Alim and Phamea



EVENT 5:1 - THE KIMIAYIY MARKAZ

The siblings now have the Veiled Inscriptions in their possession. They might recall that Hal'sujalat said nobody is able to use them without the knowledge of the Cipher at the Kimiayiy Markaz.

If the characters missed this information or ignore it and travel back to the Misterimadh temple, Hunlona and Rahaat know that what is needed to save the boy cannot be completed without both inscriptions and a small amount of some mysterious substance obtainable from the Kimiayiy Markaz on the edge of the Hollow in the Aromatic Souq.

Going immediately to the temple may lead many of their enemies, such as Axayaca and his warriors, directly to that secret place. Moving stealthily and exceedingly carefully in their travels can avoid them exposing the temple while pausing to spot potential followers might even reveal some of their pursuers.

If the characters follow Hal'sujalat's hint from Scene 4 in the library, they can set out to find the Kimiayiy Markaz - that place where substances are created.

They must take care when searching for this place. It is within the Hollow under the dome, found through the hidden "front door" along the spiralling path leading downward, beyond the Hollow's trading buildings. The Kimiayiy area is built in a carved-out area deep in the pinnacle rock, accessed through a set of large, double doors made of the same strange, reddish alloy as that sheathing the dome.

Going too deep, beyond the double doors on that level of the path will expose the siblings to the overpowering effect of the many Void currents eddying and weaving through it, and the characters will quickly sense the taint emanating from there and be affected by the Void node effect (see location 3:1).

The antagonists might be delayed in finding them, as most would not expect them to move directly towards the most perilous location possible; closer to the Hidden Hollow and the Black Node.

Phamea, on the other hand, will have broken from the Qamsa bands hounding the siblings, and rather try to prevent them from leaving Daer Bitaan and find some way to persuade them to go to the Kimiayiy Markaz.

She knows the Cipher, her brother Abd Alim, awaits the siblings' arrival. She intends to help him take everything away from both the Qamsa and the Amari family, and may go so far as to send a false ally or message to lure the characters back in the desired direction.

She knows too much delay and her plan could be exposed to the Qamsa, especially with Izdubar's recent appearance outside of the Hollow; time is of the essence for all concerned.

Whenever they manage to get near the Kimiayiy Markaz doors, The Cipher will see to it that they get access through the secret entrance to the elevated levels of the Hollow; into the upper circle. This is fortunate because the way is well-guarded. The siblings would otherwise have to bluff or force their way past suspicious warriors.

Read or summarise the following: "You make your way through the crowd of merchants, coin lenders and craftsmen, seeing a preponderance of sellers of exotic teas and substances inside the dome. You pass through the choking clouds of smoking herbs from peddlers with their sheeshas. Otherworldly vocals lift above contemplative pieces played on santur and ney flute.

Toward the far end of the huge dome is a single structure of decorative screens set between wooden posts, its ornately carved lintels and joists reaching toward the domed ceiling in a strangely organic, almost tree-like formation.

The symbol of the Qamsa is above a large, open, unguarded entryway; almost a pentagram, but each point twisting around to grip the other point like a fist around another's arm. You walk through the crowds seemingly without notice. After a few meters the ground seems to slope downward, and ahead you see the tents and craftsman buildings situated further apart".

The characters should know about the Hollow's Ledge, where the most exotic herbs, spices, teas and substances are sold and traded. The path to the ledge is hidden, but not so much a secret for those who seek Ruyah and other hallucinogenic or psychoactive substances.

They will not have to search hard though because the Cipher instructed his lackey Ka'Alum named Bayrdmin to lead them down the hidden path toward the Hollow's Ledge, then a further down to the next echelon where the Kimiayiy is found closer to the eddying and weaving Void currents of the Node.

EVENT 5:2 - THE KA'ALUM GUIDE

The Ka'Alum approaches them as they near the area of the hidden entrance of the souq and says "Follow me, for I am a friend of Rahaat, and The Cipher wishes to speak with you. He knows much of your lineage, and Telal had hoped you'd make it this far with the knowledge we know you hold in your hands. If we wanted you captured or dead, you'd be that by now, so follow me lest you be spotted before you receive what's needed to save Hunlona's boy from his horrible fate".

Bayrdmin leads them down to the ledge, then further down a secret path to another level, stopping briefly, before the Kimiayiy's double doors. He waves them on to follow him, opens the doors and enters.

If the protagonists follow, they will encounter Abd Alim, who is ready to give them some of the otherworldly dust needed to brew a most potent form of Ruyah and advises them to escape off the ledge, down through the jungle where he promises allies will await them. But it's a trap; Phamea awaits them with her mercenaries, ready to steal the tablets and the dust. Meanwhile, Qamsa servants are trying to find the secret temple to abduct Hunlona and

press her for the true formula from the second, authentic copy of the Veiled inscriptions.

Read or paraphrase the following: "You enter through the double doors into a large chamber filled with all manner of alchemical materials - long tables holding alembics, balances, barrels, basins, beakers, cauldrons, astrological charts lining the ways, jars, and hourglasses.

Ba'Waikh clerks are about, transferring organic materials to and fro, creating various infusions and concoctions for the substance trade. A human approaches you, holding an hourglass. He is tall and lanky, his hair thinning and hanging around his shoulders.

His eyes are grey, piercing, and intelligent. "I am Abd Alim, the Cipher of this operation. I'd hoped you'd arrive this soon. Glad to see you've met Bayrdmin, good, he has done his job. I know what it is that you hold, and how it is sought by the Qamsa. But Ab'Hekim's knowledge of both tablets for the Veiled Inscriptions was never totally complete.

I know Hunlona's son is in danger, and before the Qamsa took over the Kimiayiy Markaz, the Amari Infusers were involved in this operation.

My ties to Hunlona and your surrogate father are unknown to any but you now. The Black Samita is the key if you seek to enter the Qamsa node, but I have only enough for a single dose. This is the last favour to the Amari family, and my debt is paid if you make it out.

Take the dust, go to Hunlona, save her son, but you cannot exit the way you came. The Qamsa know what you've obtained and want to destroy you as you now threaten them. Follow Bayrdmin, he will show you the way down from the ledge".

Arbiter's Note: If Phamea is already dead, Abd Alim puts S'balya in charge of the theft, but he does not appear in Vol II personally, so have S'balya designate the Aq'jarea soldiers that work for them to confront the siblings alone.

EVENT 5:3 - ESCAPING THE SOUQ

If they distrust the Cipher and attack, Bayrdmin will attempt to grab the tablets from them, and will not call for help because it is his intention, under instruction from Abd Alim to get all of that material down to his sister in the jungles beneath The Hollow's Ledge.

If the siblings run and manage to grab the dust, he will attempt to have Bayrdmin track them and alert Phamea before the Qamsa servants discover the chaos.

If the protagonists agree, take the dust and follow Bayrdmin, he will lead them to the Hollow's Ledge, past the Inn, and down an overgrown path to a ravine where Phamea awaits with her Aq'jarea soldiers (and has since ditched Katya, if she is still alive, who is still loyal to the Qamsa).

Phamea and her soldiers will attempt to kill the siblings on sight, take the tablets and the dust and move on to find the temple and abduct Hunlona. There is a chance that Axayaca, Katya, or even Izdubar will show up and ambush all of them, creating a frantic free for all battle in the jungle, with everybody rushing to confront Rahaat and his followers within the Feeradani Enclave.

PHAMEA VIOLENT ENCOUNTER

Adversaries: Phamea and Aq'jarea soldiers.

Conditions: A steep ravine poses a natural hazard to this encounter. Combatants pushed back or losing their balance risk falling over the ledge. Low light conditions impose a -1 modifier to all combatants without night vision or equivalent.

If the protagonists decide to return to the temple of Misterimadh after surviving this scene, having the tablets and the Samita dust ingredient, and go in haste, it will give Hunlona a chance to brew a potent version of the Ruyah to save her son. Delaying increases the danger of discovery and an all-out attack by their adversaries.

However, it is inevitable that their actions will trigger the Qamsa to move to reclaim the tablets, destroy Rahaat's order and kill the siblings eventually; leading to the events of Volume III.



SCENE VI: THE BOY

SCENE SYNOPSIS

In this final scene, having the tablets and obtaining the Samita dust ingredient from Abd Alim at the Kimiayiy Markaz, the siblings go to the Temple of Misterimadh and with Hunlona's guidance attempt to cure her son. They must use the in-structions of the tablets, including the one authentic one she had hidden from everyone all along, and with the one pinch of Black Samita dust, create the more potent version needed. This formula suppresses the influence of the Void and may enduringly stop the corrupting influence in the boy.

But time is growing short, for whichever adversaries were not already defeated are closing in on the Misterimadh Temple in Sludgetown.

The Qamsa want to reclaim the tablets, destroy Rahaat's order, and kill the siblings.

At the end of this scene, the siblings are directed to go and find Rahaat, Anzor, and Telal (or Tehmeena depending on who was killed in Vol I), as they have all fled the temple in anticipation of an attack before the siblings arrive in scene 6.

Directed by whoever now possesses the Amari Veiled Inscriptions, or by a suitable ally, the protagonists seek out one learned enough in the ways of the Void to advise them on what changes to the Ruyah recipe are needed and how to ob-tain more of the special dust ingredient.

LOCATION

SLUDGETOWN: the Temple of Misterimadh, still hidden in the twisting alleyways and dimly lantern-lit streets of Sludgetown, located along the shore just outside the Feeradani enclave in the Dhaarese district. The temple's darkened entrance is found among the ramshackle buildings with gabled rooftops in an inconspicuous dreary dwelling of clay, the small room within concealing a secret entrance to the temple proper. Like the Feeradani enclave, there are pile dwellings and stilt structures on the banks of the river Margidda, docks stretching out over muddy waters obscuring ever-hungry roaming Silt sharks.

NPC's

Adnan, Anzor, Hunlona and Rahaat.
(Possible antagonists: Phamea, Axayaca and Izdubar)

SCENE VI

EVENT 6:1 - TOO LATE...

The siblings arrive back in Sludgetown and discover they are too late; the Qamsa found the Misterimadh cult, defiled the temple, and massacred the devotees.

The Arbiter may decide the players were clever or lucky enough to get ahead of their enemies, and in such a case it is likely most of their named enemies are behind, but that does not mean the Qamsa did not have other resources to launch an attack while trying to find and stop the protagonists.

Also, there are implications for this attack on the larger campaign setting, and those factors are incorporated into Vol III.

Feerada would likely feel threatened if she knows that the Qamsa's goals are detrimental to the enclave or humanity in general, but unless the Unseen Rulers already have a reason to keep an eye on the Qamsa they would likely ignore this attack on the Misterimadh cult.

Read or paraphrase: "You have travelled as inconspicuously as possible out of Daer Bitaan, away from the Aromatic Souq and the Hidden Hollow, watching out for the minions of the Qamsa all along the way.

Now you have arrived back in Sludgetown, and you know there are probably Qamsa servants searching the streets for the temple. You await that glint, the small flash of light that normally appears atop one of the gabled rooftops, but it never comes. As you head a little closer toward the hidden temple's area, you see smoke billowing up into the sky from above the rooftops".

If the siblings want to investigate, they will see there was a massacre in the streets, and the areas around the temple are burning.

It is not possible to see if the actual temple was affected by the fire unless they go directly to the shanty that conceals the entrance to the basement sanctuary. The sanctuary was indeed attacked, the devotees of Misterimadh murdered as they fled.

Anzor and Rahaat fled before the attack, receiving help from Tehmeena and/or Telal to escape. Hunlona, still desperate to save Adnan, drugged her son into submission (so he would not try to kill her in his altered and worsening state) and carried him to an abandoned home within a short distance of the temple.

EVENT 6:2 - HUNLONA'S LAST GAMBIT

"Soon after, Hunlona appears, stepping out onto the byway likely within a five-minute walk of the temple area itself, looking small and frightened, concealed in a cloak, and puts her finger to her lips. 'Do you have the tablets and the dust?' she asks, her voice desperate with fear".

Assuming that the siblings tell her, they do indeed have what is thought to be a cure for the boy, she rushes them surreptitiously into the building where her son lays.

Read or paraphrase: "Hunlona's son Adnan is on the floor, his mouth frothing, and he is still the writhing, misshapen figure of a boy you remember, only now his bulging eyes are wide open, black as midnight and without pupils, his mouth stretched open in a silent scream.

His enlarged limbs have grown considerably, wicked looking claws, his toes contorted out and growing talons. The child lurches up, as Hunlona says, 'he is fighting the influence of the paralyzing substance I was forced to give him to move his body. I tell you now, I have deciphered the second of the Veiled Inscriptions, and I know the formula.

I have all prepared here in advance' she says, "but for one bit of dust, I pray you found. I only recently learned what it was called, The Black Samita".

She turns and points toward the back of the building, where two dirty, exhausted temple guards stand on either side of a chest. "In those chests are decent quality weapons, armours and intoxicants challenging for us low-castes to get our hands on. Goods worth at least 1200 dhin. It's now yours, you've done your part, but please tell me what you know, what you can do for my son?"

The siblings know the mutations as a result of some kind of Void exposure - which they may have felt on their own bodies at the Qamsa node. As the transformation is still ongoing, they assume that there might be a chance to stop/reverse it with the now potent Black Samita Ruyah.

As soon as the characters enter the room where the boy lies tied to a bed the paralyzing substance begins to noticeably wear off. The child will become conscious after D6 minutes and the paralysis will dissipate completely after another D6 minutes.

During this the child will begin to move and moan, increasing to thrashing and screaming as he becomes more conscious. Arbiters are suggested to utilise this to increase the tension of the situation while Hunlona takes the last of the components and begin to mix the potent Ruyah.

The transformation is continuous, and the horrific sight of this poor boy turned into a raging monster is more than most can handle. As the child tears one arm free from its bonds and strikes out at the nearest target it induces a Fear roll [5] from all characters.

The claw attack is made with a +5 modifier and a hit from the warped boy's enlarged claws inflicts 1d12+1 damage and a knock-down roll [+1] which may knock the victim several metres away.

The potion is finished just as the paralysis wears off - irrespective of how long this takes - and as Adnan wrestles to free his other arm Hunlona screams to the characters to hold down the boy for her to administer the substance.

The characters may employ grappling and pinning actions to subdue Adnan, but if they fail two rounds in a row he manages to wrestle loose of his bonds and is free to rampage the small room and attack anyone in it.

If the characters manage to pin Adnan for two consecutive rounds Hunlona succeeds in forcing the Ruyah into him.

Once the Ruyah is administered Arbiters should weigh heavily whether it actually works or not, and it is advised that this is NOT left to a die roll as the consequences could be far-reaching.

THE RUYAH DOES NOT WORK!

The substance has no effect and the boy develops either a new attribute (roll randomly) or gains one point in a physical Trait (roll randomly) every D3 rounds as he rages on in a blood-crazed frenzy. The characters have no choice but to kill or permanently incapacitate him as he becomes truly monstrous.

Note that if it does not work the strength and utility of this purity of Ruyah may be thrown into question, making it unlikely that the siblings would seek with confidence for more of the Black Samita in Vol III.

If the Arbiter opts for the boy being consumed and monstrous it can be made clear somehow that it is not the fault of the information in the Veiled Inscriptions or the special dust ingredient but a failure on Hunlona's part. This will potentially mitigate doubts about the potency of the Black Samita Ruyah. Characters who are trained in alchemy or a similar relevant skill might be made aware that any failure was due to her botching it, perhaps because of the stress of the situation, another external effect or perhaps even incompetence to add a further tragic element to the story.

THE RUYAH WORKS!

Assuming that the Ruyah works, it slowly dampens the contorting effects, the metamorphosis is stopped, and the madness dissipates from the boy's eyes, replaced by heart-wrenching agony.

Arbiters can opt to drag out the effect of the Ruyah and continue the characters struggle with the poor boy for a while longer to retain tension and create a more dramatic resolution.

Whichever approach is employed the poor boy is no longer dangerous, but still very sick and in tremendous pain.

Hunlona will see to it that she and her men help the siblings escape unnoticed and lead them with her still disfigured son, along with their new goods in the chests to the Feeradani enclave or another nearby location of their choice. If they go to the enclave the characters are told that Tehmeena and/or Telal will send word of their whereabouts and summon them after they have had a chance to rest.



PART II: CONCLUSION

As the characters leave the temple with the weapons, armour or whatever items they requested from Hunlona they likely realise the full scope of the chaos they have become part of as corpses litter the street while the wounded and dying cry out for help wherever they have fallen.

If they return to the enclave they will find it buzzing with armed Rasha Galam patrols and sentries watching every entry point.

While they are still welcome a sense of trepidation bordering on panic seems to permeate the settlement.

ADVANCEMENT

Arbiters can consider the below allocations in terms of experience points, enlightenment and Wastah.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

In addition to distinct accomplishments - individual or collective - it is recommended that characters are each awarded 1-3 experience points per completed scene.

ENLIGHTENMENT

Characters may acquire enlightenment rankings from the following occurrences:

- Unenlightened characters witnessing the Void rift in the Hidden Hollow or the Node.
- Any characters entering the library vortex.

WASTAH

Throughout the scenario the most likely people for the characters to garner Wastah with are:

- Rahaat
- Hunlona

REWARDS

While Arbiters are free to let the characters pilfer and otherwise obtain valuables throughout the adventure the below guidelines can be applied as guidelines:

- The reward from Hunlona.
- Likely rewards from Rhaat (should any valuables remain in the temple).
- The library holds a variety of tablets, scrolls and potentially other valuable items that can be pilfered. Such items might be problematic to find buyers for or to convert to copper dhins unless sold on the black market or similar at very devalued prices.
- Concoctions and other substances can potentially be pilfered at the Kimiayiy Markaz.
- A variety of peddlers and traders in the Daer Bitaan district may provide opportunities for wealth accumulation.

PART 3

DUST TO DUST

By Dan Cross and Jon Creffield

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Fearing that the Hollow is now exposed, the Qamsa withdraw their operation, seeking a new locale outside the city, but the Node and Vortex Gateway remain as entry points to their dark world. However, one of the Qamsa, Gadatas, is intent on using this opportunity to gain total control. He plans to surreptitiously aid the siblings' attempt to gain entry to the Ghabar so they might destroy his rivals.

If things go awry, the other Qamsa will be unaware of his treachery, but if not, he becomes absolute in his power. Meanwhile, in Llyhn, the supply of Ruyah is disrupted, addicts across the city spiral out of control: psychotic fits, acts of violence, suicide and self-harm are seen in the streets. Whoever now has the Amari Veiled Inscriptions may seek to meet this demand. If the siblings recognise that the Qamsa will seek vengeance, they may themselves begin to investigate ways to destroy their adversaries; failing that, one or both of the following inciting incidents can begin this phase of the adventure.

A commission: Those intending to meet the demand for Ruyah seek the siblings out, offering them a share in the profits, but explain that as this will earn even greater enmity from the Qamsa, the protagonists must first find a way to defeat them. (This enterprising person might be Hunlona, Zizy or even Phamea if they survived Volume II; alternatively, a well-connected street dealer.

Of course, whoever wants to restart supply must have access to the Amari Veiled Inscriptions). Persistent attacks: The Qamsa dispatch assassins to kill the protagonists. They use their influence to stir up enmity against the protagonists too. However, thanks to Gadatas, there are warnings or weaknesses to these assaults. Gadatas' servants circulate a rumour that the siblings are responsible for the loss of supply: deranged addicts attack and pursue them. Eventually, the siblings will be forced to retaliate as assassination attempts and random attacks increase.

NOTABLE PEOPLE

Multiple notable people, places and factions from Parts I and II may reoccur - these are not noted in this overview.

AL'FARAGH: An Oord who helped Hunlona's grand father discover the secrets of Ruyah,

ANAHITA: Gnostic Mystic and leader of the Order of Laghaz. Sister of Mahtab.

DARIUSH: A human groundskeeper on Ghabar. Formerly a Voidfarer working for the Qamsa.

JAKTA: An Aquzam formerly associated with Z'truk, now imprisoned.

K'SIAD THE STALKER: A Timaniém leader hired by the Qamsa to prevent the siblings from further interfering with the plans of The Qamsa.

LFARMAS: Shirr prisoner of Z'truk.

MAHTAB: Female Gnostic Mystic keeping the rift in the mansion open. Leader of the Order of Laghaz and sister of Anahita.

OZEUIOT: Quth supplier of Samita-laced Ruyah.

REPALKAN: Aquzam shaman and tribal leader of the Consumed tribe.

S'BALYA: Ba'Waikh Alchemist working for Z'truk.

Z'TRUK: A former Voidfarer with unsurpassed knowledge, who now dwells in the dense jungles surrounding Llyhn.

MAIN LOCATIONS

CAMPS OF THE CONSUMED: A rival Aquzam camp near a water hole found in a hilly area of the jungle about an hour's trek to the east of Z'truk's camp.

GHABAR: Borderworld and home of the Qamsa.

RUINS OF THE MANSION: The remains of the opulent palace inhabited by the Mirza have been taken over by looters and others but may still be of interest.

SHIQUNRIFT: Qamsa trading post.

THE JUNGLES OUTSIDE LLYHN: Dense and dangerous jungles surrounding the Eternal City. This is home to myriad tribes of Aqzam headhunters.

THE NODE: Entry point to the borderworld Ghabar.

Z'TRUK 'S ENCAMPMENT: Jungle camp about a day's trek from the Eternal City.

GROUPS & FACTIONS

AQZAM HEADHUNTERS: Multiple tribes of diminutive bipedal pygmy headhunters infesting the jungles surrounding the Eternal City.

THE ORDER OF LAGHAZ: The Order of Laghaz is related to Llyhn's InQabal faction following the philosophical principle of Chaos at the core of things. Exploited and dominated by Izdubar and the authority of Adrahasis.

THE CONSUMED: A tribe of Aqzam, rivals to Z'truk's tribe.

THE HARITH FLOTILLA: A flotilla nation of Harith that have aligned themselves with the Qamsa.

QAMSA ASSASSINS: Timaniém warriors following the command of K'siad.

Z'TRUK'S TRIBE: A tribe worshipping Z'truk like a god and waging war on all the surrounding Aqzam tribes.

SCENE OVERVIEW

SCENE 1: RUMOURS AND LEADS

SCENE 2: THE JUNGLES OF NIGHT...

SCENE 3: Z'TRUK 'S DILEMMAS

SCENE 4: S'BALYA'S GAMBIT

SCENE 5: A RETURN

SCENE 6: DIVIDE AND FALL

CHARACTER CREATION

This scenario is designed for 2-5 characters who have a total of 75 to 95 character points each, several rankings in enlightenment and potentially a few rankings of Wastah.

Characters that have progressed from part I and II of the campaign are likely to have advanced enough to attain these characteristics and all of the protagonists with Awareness scores of three or higher should have "Void sensitivity" by the time these events unfold.

THE GRADES OF RUYAH AND THEIR EFFECTS:

Some believe that taking this addictive psychedelic drug reveals facts about the Void and might reveal the identity of the city's rulers; it has become one of the Qamsa's main sources of revenue now. Addicts take it for the visionary experiences it induces, but its original intent for Void navigation is a closely held secret. The powerful hallucinogenic drug mentioned above that is rumoured to grant fragmentary understanding of the Void and potentially of the Unseen Rulers of the city too. Hunlona believes its Void suppressing influence will help her son because she heard it can reverse the terrible effects of travelling through the Void.

All forms of Ruyah is dangerous, carving pathways of insanity throughout the brain, remedied only by another dose within a few days.

RUYAH: Drinking the street Ruyah generates a feeling of calm, and temporarily grants the ascension benefit of Void sensitivity to those who are otherwise unenlightened (or those who are enlightened but lack that benefit). The onset of the drug is very fast, usually a minute or two. There is however a chance of an adverse reaction. An unenlightened creature drinking of the street Ruyah must a Stamina roll [5] to avoid a roll on the Delirium Table (refer to Core Rules).

WASYA: The second level of potency grants the imbiber not only that sense of calm and Void Sensitivity, but also character temporarily acquires the ascension benefit of Void Drift, and can feel the currents of the Void flowing towards areas where the Viel is perforated when traversing the unreality. An unenlightened creature drinking the more powerful Ruyah must make a Stamina roll [7] to avoid a roll on the Delirium Table (refer to Core Rules).

BLACK SAMITA: The most potent form of Ruyah known to those who possess the Veiled Inscriptions, a dose of this concoction grants the imbiber calm, Void Sensitivity, Void Drift, and the character temporarily becomes a Void Erudite. This is why this version is of such importance to the Qamsa, especially Adrahasis, Tu and Izdubar as they seek to communicate and gain knowledge from the unfathomable intelligences of the deep Void. An unenlightened creature drinking the more powerful Ruyah triggers a Stamina roll [9] to avoid a roll on the Delirium Table (refer to Core Rules). The substance is also quite dangerous to the unenlightened, etching pathways of madness in the brain remedied only by another dose within a week. After that point, the creature must make a roll on the Madness Table, the effect remaining until another dose of the Samita Ruyah is ingested.

The Black Samita has one other beneficial property; it can suppress and even stop the warping effect of the Void, which could prevent the death of Hunlona's son.

The dust so crucial to this version of the drug is refined from phosphorescent sand found in a miles-wide crater on the Qamsa's border world of Ghabar. Hostile natives and very dangerous creatures ensure any visit must be brief; a lot of sand is needed for even a pinch of Black Samita. Only the navigators of the Unseen Ruler's Red Galleys know of a form of this drug that is more powerful.

SCENE 1: RUMOURS AND LEADS

SCENE SYNOPSIS

During part II the siblings became aware of a link between the cult defeated in part I - The Darkened Sun - and Rahaat's new religion.

This split, with the Darkened Sun faction representing a pitiless and self-serving understanding of similar esoteric beliefs, was caused by Rahaat's apostasy from the original group.

Either from Rahaat himself, surviving members of his order, or from tablets and inscriptions in the Order's now ruined temple (following the attack made upon it at the end of part II), the siblings will glean that the Qamsa were a potent force behind the original self-serving Darkened Sun faction.

In childhood, the siblings were prepared as Void vessels in their parents' sect, hence their markings, but the Blood inking rituals were never fully enacted because of Telal's intervention.

However, with a dose of Ruyah pure enough (like the true recipe used by the navigators in service to the Unseen Rulers), the siblings would be able to survive on the Qamsa's world.

Directed by whoever now possesses the Amari Veiled Inscriptions, or by a suitable ally, the protagonists seek out one learned enough in the ways of the Void to advise them on what changes to the Ruyah recipe are needed.

Rumours speak of Z'truk, a former Voidfarer with unsurpassed knowledge, who now dwells in the dense jungles surrounding Llyhn, (but there are whispers that he is both dangerous and insane).

Here Z'truk pacifies the violent tribal groups that inhabit the forested depths (he claims this is on behalf of the Unseen Rulers). Armed with rough directions to his abode, hidden along a black and nameless river, the siblings set off, encountering threats in the city (assassins/the mad) as they depart.

LOCATION

THE TEMPLE OF MISTERIMADH: The Temple of Misterimadh is hidden in the twisting alleyways and dimly lantern-lit streets along the shore just outside the Feeradani enclave in the Dhaarese district on the banks of the river Margidda. Its darkened entrance is found among the ramshackle buildings with gabled rooftops in an inconspicuous dreary dwelling of clay, the small room within concealing a secret entrance to the temple proper.

Like the Feeradani enclave, there are pile dwellings and stilt structures in this area, stretching out on docks along the shore, with one mooring platform accommodating a few meagre fishing skiffs. Silt sharks just beneath the river's surface await the occasional drunk fishermen falling into the muddy waters.

NPC's

Rahaat, Tehmeena (or Telal), Hunlona and Anzor.

SCENE 1

EVENT 1:1 - A TERRIBLE TURN OF EVENTS

Read to the players: "You have been called back to the Feeradani Enclave in the Dhaarese district, called in urgent secrecy across the one platform close to land, crossing over into the Sludgetown where you have been told the devotees of the ruined Temple of Misterimadh are now gathering.

As you cross the platform onto land, the familiar smell of tar, refuse and dead fish somewhat fades, but you can almost smell apprehension in the air.

The supply of Ruyah was disrupted, and addicts across the human districts of the city have spiralled out of control. The use of Ruyah in Dhaarese was prominent and has become a scene of chaos, addicts suffering psychotic fits, with acts of violence, suicide and self-harm often seen in the streets.

The Aromatic Souq of Daer Bitaan is reeling from angry addicts, and not even Khameeliyah was spared unrest. Today you walk into the heart of it, where the cult of its use originated, heading toward the nadir of its spiritual and economic genesis, the temple where Rahaat and Anzor now await your summons."

At this point, the party may be accosted by those lunatics mentioned suffering withdraw from the Ruyah. they will likely be unarmed and out of their wits, easily dispatched, but could put the siblings in danger of being noticed and followed to the temple, which must remain a secret from the Unseen Rulers.



ARBITRARY ENCOUNTER: RUYAH ADDICTS

Adversaries: Crazy addicts suffering from withdrawal
Conditions: *Varies*

A number of Ruyah addicts accost the siblings, demanding money to feed their addiction, anywhere from two to five men and women. They do not recognise the siblings and will assault anybody, even if armed. Clearly, these folks are not in their right mind and are easily subdued or driven away.

Once they move closer to the area of the temple, with or without random encounters with crazy Ruyah addicts, paraphrase or narrate the following:

"You see that expected glint, the flash of light signalling atop one of the gabled rooftops, indicating safe entry to Rahaat's domain. A short, squat, middle-aged man wearing grey robes appears in the alleyway. You recognise him as Anzor. The undulating, shimmering, tentacled MindNebula clings to his head.

"Greetings friends, the Synod beckons you now to join us", he says, then turns and guides you through the wooden door in a nearby dreary dwelling of clay."

Read or paraphrase: "You enter into a plain, once furnished rectangular room. The room looks different than when you were last here; the single cot once sitting on an old braided rug is smashed, along with the small table toppled over.

An old, dusty wooden desk and chair lay strewn about as if thrown. Anzor pushes the cot pieces aside, the braided rug long gone, revealing the trap door leading to the temple's chamber below.

You follow Anzor down the narrow, darkened staircase below. He takes a lit candle from a wall sconce and proceeds down a dark corridor until reaching a well-lit stone-flagged basement".

The siblings may want to ask Anzor questions as he descends the stairs and walks toward the meeting area. He will reply with only vagaries such as "the survivors of the temple order cannot be held responsible for the mischief abounding; the enmity of the Qamsa shall not stop their holy mission, and that the followers of Na'Aqh were the poison poured in the waters from which the blessed once drank".

More than that and he defers to the "Synod", a meeting of the priesthood of Misterimadh.

Anzor pauses before the entrance to the sanctum and intones in a pensive tone, almost in a whisper: "The truth shall be exposed now, friends, all shall be revealed and our destinies forged, here in this chamber of truth and revelation". He will not answer any questions but merely shakes his head and gestures for them to enter the room.

Narrate or paraphrase the following: "You enter the sanctum, and remember well its whitewashed walls inscribed with swirling, black, cloud-like images, but now they are awash with the blood of devotees slaughtered by their enemies.

You feel a shudder as you enter, the same twelve-rayed sun symbol tattooed on each of you emblazoned on the wall high above the alter-block.

Rahaat, your patron Ka'Alum stands before the altar, looking up at the symbol, his black and silver feathered body striking a ritualistic pose. He hears you enter the room, takes a sip from a chalice of some substance lifted from the altar, holding it in one hand, then relaxes and turns his beaked head to regard you with penetrating eyes of amber-hue.

'Thrice welcome, oh blessed ones' he squawks today Misterimadh speaks to us, fulfils us, our purpose and enlightenment'. Hunlona, the mother of the boy whose life was so tragically imperilled, stands solemnly to the side of the altar, her long brown hair still bound into a long ponytail. She wears her customary simple brown dress and shawl. Tehmeena, the elder councillor [or Telal] stands to the left of the altar, with an inscrutable expression.

Anzor steps forth and speaks directly to the lead prophet: "Beloved Rahaat, you have always said that one must traverse the dark to find the light. I have done so, and today, in this holy Synod, I bring you to a truth to which you have blinded us all.

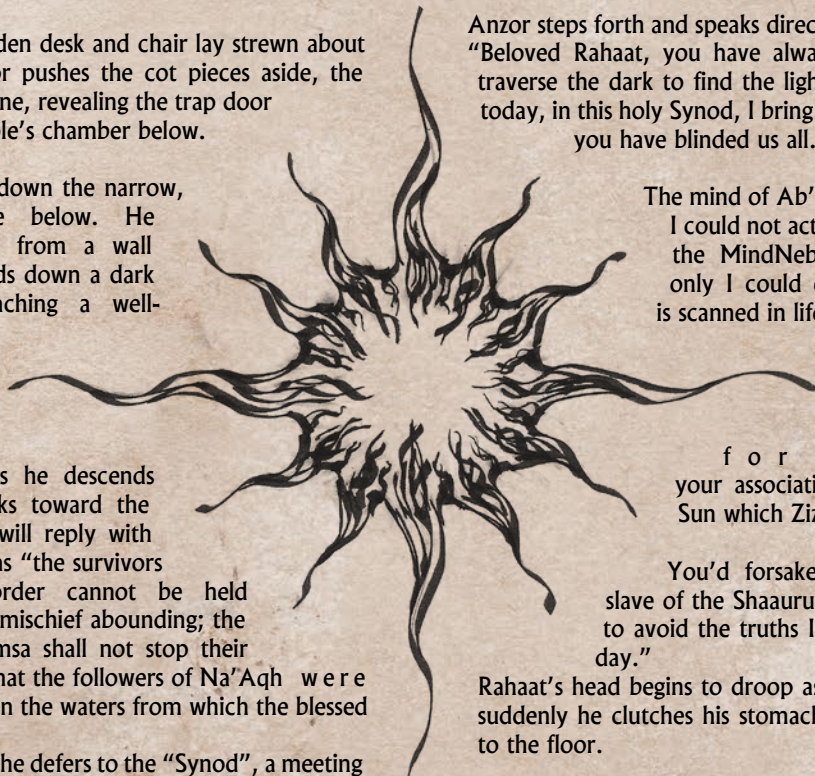
The mind of Ab'Hekim held secrets that I could not act on until now. Through the MindNebula I extracted truths only I could decipher, whether one is scanned in life or death matters not.

Either way, with the Veiled Inscriptions safely within our sanctum, it is time

for your reckoning, for your association with the Darkened Sun which Zizy warned us of.

You'd forsaken Ab'Hekim to be a slave of the Shaauru of Eankubut, I suspect to avoid the truths I am to reveal here this day."

Rahaat's head begins to droop as Anzor speaks, and he suddenly he clutches his stomach, dropping the chalice to the floor.



Tehmeena (or Telal) steps back, looking forlorn, but not surprised. She (or he) turns toward you and says, "It is for the best, for the Qamsa would use him and his misdirected faith to enslave us through their intoxicants and false teachings.

A dear friend, but no tie to the cult of sacrifice and the madness of Na'Aqh shall be permitted to survive".

Anzor continues to speak to Rahaat as the Ka'Alum falls to the floor, his eyes rolling up in his head, a green liquid dripping from his beak, his entire body beginning to convulse. The siblings may be tempted to intercede, but Tehmeena and Telal will sternly warn them to desist and plead with them to allow fate to run its course. Whether Anzor gets to finish his speech is up to the protagonists, but if they interceded, their patrons and access to aid and status would be severely imperilled.

Anzor continues: "But you risked exposure for your loyalty to the Amari family, which runs so deep you'd defend them to the death. I honour that, my beloved teacher, but it is my Oord father's heritage that guides me, not yours, it is his wisdom in my bones and blood.

Hunlona's grandfather, who wrote the Veiled Inscriptions now in our hands, knew that there was no "silver lining" of the Void, but that you'd do a good job of obscuring the real use of the Ruyah at full potency. You, a supposed enemy of the Unseen Rulers, actually supporting their ends, or the Qamsa, equally through your faith and ignorance!"

Anzor's face is flush with tears as he kneels before the dying leader of the temple. "Zizy warned, and he paid the price. I've seen now, and you shall restore the balance for the rest of us in death".

Anzor turns to the siblings and says "How ironic Rahaat stood for a god he imagined symbolised precepts of justice and vengeance. He has been sacrificed for just those ends.

The Veiled Inscriptions are truly Unveiled. I have read them. We know the Ruyah suppresses the influence of the Void, and through the extracted mind of Ab'Hekim, I learned your place, progeny of Telal.

We know now, it is a variant of an alleged more potent concoction that the Unseen Rulers use to ensure that their navigators do not suffer Void distortion.

You were prepared as Void vessels in your parents' sect, hence your markings, but the Blood inking rituals were never fully enacted because of Telal's intervention. However, with a dose of Ruyah pure enough you'll be able to survive on the Qamsa's world, called Ghabar".

Anzor continues, "The Qamsa were a potent force behind the original self-serving Darkened Sun faction, and Rahaat stood to make legitimate what was unholy, to spread the use of the drug that gave them all power to challenge the Unseen Rulers by their own means, stolen from the minds of the greatest alchemists.

All of you standing before me today understands what you must now face. You can end this cycle of violence and madness. But first, you must seek one learned enough in the ways of the Void to advise you on what changes to the Ruyah recipe are needed, because only a dose of Ruyah pure enough, like the true recipe used by the navigators in service to the Unseen Rulers will allow you to enter the Qamsa's world and confront them."

EVENT 1:2 - AL'FARAGH THE OORD

After the murder of Rahaat, the characters are left to discuss matters with Anzor, Hunlona, and either Tehmeena or Telal (whichever survived the events of part I).

Hunlona is in tears, as Rahaat was her friend, but she dares not question the wisdom of the elder enclave councillors. The elder councillor tells the siblings that the only "silver lining" of the Misterimadh's beliefs will be realized when the Qamsa are defeated, and the Amari families' rightful place in the Aromatic Souq restored.

But first Anzor informs them that one named in the Veiled Inscriptions as the one who helped Hunlona's grandfather learn the secrets of the Ruyah must be sought. This individual is an Oord two hundred years of age named AL'Faragh, his nickname bestowed upon him by the Amari family, who worked with him for generations in journeys to other worlds looking for rare components to enhance their drugs and elixirs.

Anzor, being a halfblood of Oord ancestry, knows where AL'Faragh resides, but never knew of his connection to the Amari family before the Inscriptions were recovered and deciphered. At this point in the story, it is assumed the siblings did not turn on Tehmeena or Telal, but regardless of any actions taken, Rahaat is beyond saving, his cult members decimated by the Qamsa's minions after the inscriptions were successfully stolen.

But even if they somehow defy all expectation and break away from the aegis of their patrons (no doubt with serious repercussions), the deciphered Veiled inscriptions speak of Faragh as a master Voidfarer who knew the secrets of how the Amari version of Ruyah was created.

Anzor will lead the protagonists to the Oord infuser and Void traveller to gain further knowledge, but if going it alone, the characters will in time learn of him through investigation.

It will not be easy because AL'Faragh was warned that the Qamsa were out for blood and revenge, likely looking to capture anybody involved with the Ruyah and Inscriptions creation. However, they find their way and learn of Faragh's location, and will come to his abode in the Sludgetown.

There is a run-down watering hole and place of rest called Shark's Broken Nose, a place where some outsider fisherman may stay while doing their business in the Dhaarese district.



In this place, there are many stories told concerning the chaos caused by the Ruyah. They will easily overhear such talk, such as Feerada, leader of the human enclave is intending to send soldiers into every corner of the district to stop the madness and restore some order before the Unseen rulers place the blame on the inherent unruliness of the human enclave.

Kûn Azhar and the enclave's militia is trying to weed out Qamsa servants and assassins intent on vengefully attacking all merchants in the human enclave dealing in intoxicants and hallucinogens. The Qamsa will not stop until the surviving members of the Amari family and their allies are unearthed, their aim of all knowledge and resources accelerated by reckless anger.

AL'Faragh resides in a room in the upper level of the Inn, hidden in a somewhat comfortable room by the enclave councillors.

If led by Anzor, the protagonists will be led to that room, or if alone, asking around about the Oord with enough guile, persuasion or coin will reveal his whereabouts.

But the siblings will not be the only ones searching for the Oord. The Keeper of Records in the Qamsa library knew of him, having read and deciphered the Inscriptions himself, and long ago counselled the Qamsa that he should be brought before them and interrogated to gain further knowledge to strengthen their market position.

Read or paraphrase the following when entering the Shark's broken Nose: "You enter a small, warm room of the Shark's Broken Nose. You see there is a single wooden bar used to secure the door from the inside.

A squat being sits on a bunk, wearing a violet robe, leaning forward on a short walking stick, a decorative orb affixed to its top. You see the greyish green-brown skin of his arms tattooed with iconography.

He reaches over and increases the light of the lantern sitting on a small table next to his bunk, looking at you with large slanted eyes, slit pupils making his gaze particularly piercing. His full-lipped mouth curves a bit, and you're not sure if it is a smile or an exasperated grimace."

The siblings no doubt have many questions, but his most salient comment is this: 'I know what you seek, but I cannot risk exposure, risking my family. No, and it matters not because to enter the Hollow, you'll need something not even I dared help the Amari family obtain, for it would possibly gain the attention of the Unseen Rulers.'

The siblings can ask what they wish of the situation in the city or his connection and history with the Amari family and past events, and he'll answer all, but the details matter little for giving further direction.

He says, "as a friend of Anzor' (which he assumes, especially if Anzor is there unless the players indicate otherwise) 'I'll tell you what you need to know, who I can tell you understands what it is you seek but understand I'm likely sending you to your death. I take no pleasure in that.

You must go and enlist the aid of a mad warlord named Z'truk in the jungles outside of the Eternal City. My kind are masters travelling the Void, but even I have no desire to battle through Qamsa assassins, wild beasts, difficult terrain, and weather hazards. That is your choice. I'm sure it will bring you great prestige in death, so I'll honour you now with well-wishing and my blessing. However, should you survive, I ask for only one thing in exchange, and my terms are non-negotiable.

You will help us meet the demand for the Ruyah, and you shall share in the profits, but understand this will earn even greater enmity from the Qamsa as if they don't hate you enough! Thus, you must find a way to defeat them. Z'truk will be able to guide you in that, for he is powerful and knowledgeable, but dangerous and would rather conscript you to his ends than aid anybody. Be careful, be wise. And good luck.'

From here the siblings are given instruction on generally how to find Z'truk in the jungles outside of the city. The next scene begins as they begin their journey into that dangerous place...



SCENE II: THE JUNGLES OF NIGHT

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Leaving the city and ascending into the foothills in search of Z'truk, the siblings encounter threats and challenges, including difficult terrain, weather hazards, a sudden flood etc. All of this in addition to attacks by wild beasts and Qamsa assassins.

LOCATION

THE JUNGLES OUTSIDE OF THE ETERNAL CITY: The jungle is full of palm trees of every variety, and other species such as teak, banyan, avocado and allspice trees. There are also more dangerous types of foliage, some like giant Venus fly traps that capture and eat anything that moves within reach. But the most dangerous threats are the Qamsa operatives hunting the siblings, led by K'siad The Stalker, as well as the warring native pygmy-like creatures called the Aqzam, some loyal to Z'truk, whose encampment is about a day's trek through the tropical forest to the east of the Eternal City. NPCs: K'siad The Stalker, Qamsa Assassins. Perhaps Axayaca (if not dead). The Aqzam.

NPC's

K'siad.

SCENE II

EVENT 2:1 - ENTERING THE JUNGLE

Read or paraphrase: "You have passed the somewhat protective barrier of the Barrens surrounding the city and moved the shadow of the Eternal City's edge, entering into a new realm beneath the vast, virescent canopy of the jungle.

You are forced to cut your way through the dense undergrowth, the heavy, moist air nearly suffocating. You hear the sounds of billions of insects interspersed with the sounds of a parrot or monkey as you trudge through a jungle floor of fallen leaves teeming with life."

ARBITRARY ENCOUNTER: JUNGLE BEASTS

Adversaries: Varies

Conditions: *Thick vegetation provides cover and +2 bonus to stealth and sneak attacks while high humidity induce "easily exhausted" (mild).*

The protagonists may encounter many dangerous creatures as they make their way through the jungle. The arbiter may randomly determine encounters during this trek, or choose from the table below (refer to the Beasts section of the core book):

D12 ROLL	BEAST
1-4	BEAKBOA
5-7	D6 PINCERWIGS
8-9	BARAST
10-11	SLOQ
12	D3 ADARU

The jungle terrain itself is also a source of danger, encountered as suggested below:

A) Loose scree in the foothills potentially sends the protagonists slipping and sliding down a steep slope and into a sink-hole. Make an opposed roll for each character to see how far they slip or fall [7].

Characters making the roll manage to slide down without damage but failing inflicts 1D6 falling damage. Even worse, there's a pair of mating Adarus lurking in a cave (a hollowed-out space without egress) at the bottom of the sinkhole.

B) While crossing a narrow defile, flood water suddenly rushes down its length. The siblings can try to climb out before it hits or attempt to survive being carried away. There is a huge, ferocious Adaru caught in the flow, and if deposited at the same endpoint as the siblings, the apex predator will attack.



C) Here the siblings will stumble upon a dead Aq'Jarea explorer, one who was cataloguing flora and fauna of the jungle, handy knowledge for a species originally from a desert world. Her body is bloodied, shredded as if by large claws.

Laying next to her is a winding horn made from some animal, and a few tablets containing observational writings. The tablet includes information on some things mundane, but one taking an extra moment will read information pertinent to the Aquzam.

It reads "The species is fearful of any loud, unknown noises: a shrill whistle, loud blast, or other unknown, challenging noise will make them flee". The creature that killed the explorer has moved on, but the arbiter may want to introduce the arbitrary encounter to threaten the siblings before moving on.

D) At some point, the protagonists will need to rest. The arbiter may dictate that finding their way to Z'truck's encampment cannot take less than a few days of travel, plenty of time to afflict the travellers with all manner of obstacles.

The precise location of the encampment within the jungle is therefore unimportant. Once two or more of the characters actually fall asleep, they'll discover they are being hunted by a Beakboa. The siblings are watched by a cunning, nocturnal predator waiting for them to sleep. This snake-like creature is adept at climbing trees and silencing its victims as it attacks, its method to kill several creatures in rapid, silent strikes before the others even notice the carnage.

The Beakboa hides in the low-hanging foliage and drops down on the unsuspecting characters. The snake pecks and hacks at eyes and face to blind and disorient while constricting, choking its victims to death.

EVENT 2:2 - QAMSA ASSASSINS AND K'SIAD THE STALKER

In this event, the siblings are tracked by Timaniém Qamsa assassins. The one known as K'siad, also known as The Stalker, leads her band of assassins through the jungle with cunning and intelligence unusual for a Timaniém. She was hired to prevent the siblings from further interfering with the plans of The Qamsa.

The Qamsa promised her control over her fellow jungle kin in exchange for hunting down and killing the siblings. She also works to deliver Adarus to various powerful figures in the Eternal City.

The Stalker is very familiar with the jungle and its terrain, and is the premier hunter of Adarus, bringing them back to the Eternal City alive for sale. She is an expert tracker and is difficult to evade once she finds the tracks of her quarry, humanoid or otherwise.

Another notable aspect about K'siad is her weapon, made of Green Obsidian, a green rock which is not only incredibly sharp with nasty, jagged edges but durable as well. It is considered sacred by the Timaniém who have the only source of the stone in the known Cosmos. Weapons made from this stone have the razor-sharp and shard blade property, much coveted by warriors aware of its value. Eventually, she will catch up with the siblings. Exactly when is an arbitrary decision, left up to the arbiter to decide. Capture is not the goal here, as the Qamsa wish to kill the siblings, no questions asked.

Arbiter note: All of the assassins are female since male Timaniém are sluggish fat drones that (almost) never leave their homeworld of Sharur. K'siad tends to think of males of any species as inferior.

At any given time the characters may be ambushed by these hunters, with an awareness roll to notice the danger required at a usually a challenging difficulty of 9.



The assassin band led by The Stalker has trained Adarus with them, often running ahead and attacking before the others.

The Hunters are well aware of the warring tribes of the Aquzam and have bartered with them for safe passage through the jungles as they go about their work.

Since language can be a barrier, the safe passage is secured with a token held by the leader of each band. The token is an emblem of Z'truk's face, who is regarded by the Aquzam as a deity.

These were given to The Stalker in exchange for one favour - wiping out a rival band of Aquzam and delivering their dead bodies up for cannibalistic consumption.

For K'siad it was an easy trade-off, allowing her to capture Adarus unfettered by the poison arrows of the tribal pygmies. The characters might question their foes once subdued and learn the exact purpose of this tokens (one held by the leader of each Qamsa hunting party), or if the assassins are killed, then deduce the tokens purpose using some other skill.

Negotiating with the Aquzam without such a token would likely be deadly, so the Arbiter should consider Event 2.2 a trigger for Event 2.3. Otherwise reaching Z'truk's encampment will require a far cleverer plan, the attempt likely ending in a swift death.

EVENT 2:3 - THE AQUZAM

The protagonists discover bands of hostile tribal beings, the Aquzam, primitive and violent. This encounter leads to the next major scene if the Aquzam do not kill the characters first.

Read or Paraphrase: "Eventually you come across an ebon river winding through red jungle growth. The air here is heavy with the stench of rotting fruit and flesh. After moving some distance along the bank of the river, you come across what looks like a burned-out compound.

TABLE 2.1 OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS AT RAVAGED AQUZAM COMPOUND

Examining the bodies of the dead, the characters discover the corpses are of "bipedal, humanoid forms sheathed in a green, scaly, crocodilian exoskeletons, their hair thick white locks, their yellow eyes stare up unblinkingly at the sky".

Picking through the dead reveals the belongings of the fallen - leather loincloths, belts and straps. Most wore a harness from which hung fetishes, shrunken heads, skulls, small weapons, etc. There are also bottles of dyes used to paint their skin. There are some poison-tipped arrows in crude quivers that cause D6 damage and induce a Stamina roll [5] or the target is poisoned, the target: Victims suffering a -1 penalty to all actions within D6 rounds for 2D6 minutes due to pain in addition to losing D4 Health. It may be gleaned from the various markings that this carnage is the result of warring tribes of the pygmies.

The smell of smoke and rotting flesh mingles sickeningly with the sweet jungle fragrance. The way ahead is easily cleared by blades, opening up beyond shattered wooden palisade barriers into the clearing of a village of dead pygmy bodies. The inhabitants impaled, burned or crucified."

After a short while, a number of the Aquzam loyal to Z'truk arrive, returning to the destroyed village to claim what spoils are left.

When they spot the siblings, they will not take long to size them up and are not inquisitive. Showing them the tokens symbolizing safe passage will stop them in their tracks, while blowing on the winding horn found with the dead Aq'Jarea explorer may terrify them and make them run away (a Willpower roll [8]), but they will return in greater numbers after that.

Some means of communication, whether knowledge of languages or at worst speaking Z'truk's name properly aloud and making gestures should get the idea across that they are requesting a meeting with their leader. Possession of the tokens expedites this tremendously.

Once the siblings get the message across that they desire a meeting with Z'truk, and that request is honoured (perhaps out of fear of angering Z'truk by not giving him a choice) the Aquzam lead them to the warlord's encampment.



SCENE III: Z'TRUK'S DILEMMAS

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Locating Z'truk, the siblings discover that yes, he is mad, but also, he has profound knowledge.

He claims to have been a helmsman on the Unseen Rulers' Red Galleys and to have traversed the Void. He has amassed an Aquzam following, the wild headhunting pygmy-like tribes dwelling in the jungle.

They treat him as a god. He wages war against other tribes to bring them under his sway. This campaign is carried out with great cruelty: mass killings and burnings.

He can tell the siblings what needs to be added to the Ruyah to grant them a degree of protection in the Qamsa's realm but will only do so if they aid him. He asks for the siblings' help in wiping out a strong rival faction of Aquzam by carrying a festering plague (or the like) into the enemy village.

If they opt to carry out the attack against the rival tribesfolk, they will find themselves participating in a genocidal massacre and risking their sanity.

If the siblings decide to combat him, they'll have to discover his weaknesses and use that as leverage to avoid an unfortunate death.

In any event, whether by force or negotiation, the siblings discover from Z'truk that the Ruyah needs an increased measure of dust from an inhospitable world nearly cut off from the Void.

This is one of the costliest ingredients of Ruyah and is only used in minimal doses when mixing the street version of the drug – literally a grain or two. Z'truk tells them he knows that the Void captains in the Unseen Rulers' employ take a drug like Ruyah but containing this dust, called Black Samita, in a higher quantity: it suppresses the effect of Void exposure.

The siblings will recognise this as the same substance needed to help Hunlona's son in Volume II. Now it is needed in a much higher quantity if the siblings are to travel to the Qamsa's inhospitable world.

LOCATION

Z'TRUK'S ENCAMPMENT: Deep in the dense jungle lies Z'truk's camp.

NPC'S

Z'truk, Jakta and Lfarmas.

TRIGGERED EVENT

Resolving the encounter with Z'truk triggers Lfarmas the Shirr.

SCENE III

EVENT 3:1 - Z'TRUK'S REQUEST

Read or paraphrase: The diminutive reptile men lead you all through the suffocating undergrowth, hacking away low hanging foliage with their blades.

The sound of their strange hiss-to-howl calls reverberate through the trees - a frenzy of birds, small scurrying animals, and some screaming monkeys scatter before the fast-moving, crocodilian warriors.

The sweet smell of the jungle is pushed back by the aroma of smoke and the sounds of activity rise ahead. You break through a few more teak and banyan trees to the edge a humid clearing hacked out by the followers of Z'truk.

Beyond surrounding palisades, you see a large brownish rawhide tent in the centre of the clearing, with long rectangular wooden structures built to house Aquzam rivals. You also see several wood and metal-barred cages imprisoning rival tribesmen.



There are various supplies, animal pens, and casks around. You follow the scouts through the fence, passing a tall wooden beacon tower.

This place was not built by the Aquzam, that is certain. A large, swarthy, bearded and muscular man walks out of the central tent, swatting away mosquitoes.

You're pushed forward to greet him. He is accompanied by a Shirr, sliding its bulbous form fluidly across the ground alongside him. The shirr keeps its multiple eyes looking toward the ground, its arms folded defensively.

The man holds up a fist-sized stone of Green Obsidian, as if it had some symbolic value, and speaks immediately, saying dramatically "I have beheld all creation; I have understood the architect: I know all that is seen and unseen. The architect is in everything, and everything is in the mind of the architect: he is in me, I am in him — lo, I have become the architect, and all things exist through me!"

The Aquzam drop to their knees and bow, their scaly heads low to the ground as he speaks. Then, with a rather repugnant grin revealing ragged, yellowed teeth, he beckons you to follow him into the tent, turns and disappears, the Shirr smoothly moving to follow behind him."

The siblings may follow, and once inside the tent, Z'truk drops his dramatic style, his mirthless grin falling quickly from his face. He gets down to business with an unnerving immediateness. He does not like the protagonists interrupting him and is impatient. He explains matter-of-factly, he amassed an Aquzam following, the wild head-hunting, pygmy-like tribes dwelling in the jungle.

They treat him as a god, and he assists them with waging war against other tribes to bring them under his sway. This campaign is carried out with unapologetic cruelty: mass killings and burnings.

He can tell the siblings what needs to be added to the Ruyah to grant them a degree of protection in the Qamsa's realm but will only do so if they aid him. He asks for the siblings to help in wiping out a strong rival faction of Aquzam by carrying a festering plague into the enemy village.

He keeps this disease in a terracotta jar. If they opt to carry out the attack against the rival tribe-folk, they will find themselves participating in a genocidal massacre and risking their sanity (Proceed to Event 3:2). If the siblings opt to combat him, they'll have to discover his weaknesses and use that as leverage to avoid an unfortunate death (Proceed to Event 3:3).

3:2 - GENOCIDE OR NOT...

The task he demands is their assistance in wiping out a strong tribal faction opposed to his rule. The protagonists can accept, and Z'truk will honour his side of the bargain, or they might seek to trick, coerce or in some other way gain the information they need from him, in which case, move on to Event 3.3.

Carrying a festering plague into the enemy village, the siblings are to pose as potential allies before poisoning the water supply. Z'truk's followers would be known; thus the protagonists are set the task.



There is a risk the siblings could become infected too; Z'truk has an antidote/herbal cure, but he will not give it unless the protagonists pledge loyalty and remain with him.

The rival tribe is hateful and jealous of the territory and advantage gained by Z'truk's followers. They call themselves The Consumed because they believe they were reborn as a tribe after being digested by a god and regurgitated to live in the jungle as a stronger, more advanced Aquzam tribe.

Their leader, a shamanistic pygmy named Repalkan intuited this in a dream state, relating it to and enthralling his followers. They keep Beakboas as objects of worship and awe, believing the creatures to be avatars of the entity that ritualistically swallowed them in their collective dream. Repalkan wears a crown made of snakeskin and holds a somewhat ridiculous looking sceptre made of tropical wood with a viper's head awkwardly affixed to its tip.

He is only marginally smarter than the average (Intellect 3), but much more persuasive (Persuasion [3]), which has solidified his authority.

They live near a water hole found in a hilly area of the jungle about an hour's trek to the east of Z'truk's camp. That place is their main source of water. The Consumed also keep a pit of carnivorous snakes, hundreds of them waiting at the bottom of a 15-meter drop to enjoy their next sacrificial meal. Several times a year the Aquzam faithful hurl several of their own into the pit to appease their god. Usually, this is anybody that questions the authority or visions of Repalkan.

The siblings will have to take the disease to the enemy camp, pour the substance into their watering hole, and escape before getting swamped by Aquzam who would carry them to the pit of snakes. Direction Sense and Vigilance are especially useful talents in this mission.

The disease will take effect about a day after someone drinks from the contaminated water and spreads quickly through touch.

It causes a -3 penalty to all actions on the first day of onset, causing nausea.

On the second day movement is cut in half, and on the third day the creature begins to bleed from every orifice and dies within 24 hours if not receiving the antidote.

Attempting this mission may also cause the protagonists to run afoul of the Qamsa assassins, who stay away from Z'truk's encampment, but will attack once their quarry is vulnerable.

Upon return to Z'truk's encampment, he tells the siblings he has to verify the plan worked and sends scouts out to check on the health of the rival tribe after three days. In the meantime, he will treat them as honoured guests, but without telling them any more information about what's needed.

This may lead to scepticism and distrust among the protagonists. If they decide he plans on betraying them, and want to try the tactic of coercion, skip to Event 3.3, and the results of poisoning The Consumed tribe's water may never be fully known.

If they wait it out, Z'truk will see to it that they are fed and their supplies replenished, promising them more information once confirmation of their success is had.

On one of the days of waiting, Aquzam guards spot and capture one of the Qamsa Timaniém spies. If interrogated the spy will explain who K'siad is and that the Qamsa secured the jungle for the Ojek of her tribe while enslaving a rival Timaniém tribe, forcing them to work on a new trade outpost.

The attempt to spread disease among the rival Aquzam works, but also has unintended consequences. There was a small faction of humans, originally from the Assembly enclave just outside the city gates, members of The Bonded who had established a small missionary colony in the jungle as outreach to more intelligent species outside of the city walls.

The faction believes in humility, respect and acceptance of all other species. This colony was practising outreach for many years and won the acceptance of several alien species. They even felt prosperous and secure enough to have children.

More recently, they were communicating with and learning about The Consumed tribe, hoping for more civilised trade and safer passage through the jungle. But the attempt was not going particularly well, as the leadership of that group was recently torn apart and eaten by the Aquzam.

Then bad went to worse when the siblings poison The Consumed tribe's water - for it connects to an underground river that has also the water supply for The Bonded. When Z'truk's scouts return with pallets of dead and dying bodies as proof, the reptilian pygmies are quite excited to even put all of the human dead on display, including their children.

Sanity points might be lost! Z'truk will be pleased with a successful mission and will honour his bargain, telling the siblings what they need to know to move forward in their plans (See Event 3.4).

3:3 - SUBDUE OR KILL Z'TRUK

If the siblings opt to combat him, they discover that many pygmy-like beings are held in cages awaiting execution. One is called Jakta, once in Z'truk's service. He can aid the protagonists: Jakta knows that in his madness Z'truk believes himself immortal as long as a small stone of Green Obsidian he calls the Architect's Stone remains in his possession.

He actually stole it from a Timaniém priest on their homeworld of Sharur during one of his pirating journeys into the Void.

If the protagonists could somehow steal it, they could threaten to destroy it unless Z'truk answered their questions (if they do destroy it, Z'truk will seek to flee from combat, but it has no real effect upon him). One other possibility is if the protagonists defeat K'siad in battle and take her Green Obsidian weapon, which is recognised by the Aquzam as made of the same material as Z'truk's sacred rock.

They become terrified of that weapon, thinking it magical and that the siblings are rival gods. If the siblings recognise Z'truk's Architect's Stone as Green Obsidian and know about what the Timaniém hold sacred, they might be able to negotiate a temporary truce with K'siad, who would be interested in recovering such a stone, one so sacred to her species.

She would help kill Z'truk and retrieve the rock, but then the truce would quickly end, regardless of what she might otherwise say. Such a tactic could backfire at almost any stage.

Killing Z'truk causes his followers to prostrate themselves at the siblings' feet, believing that only gods can kill a god. Failing that, Jakta knows hidden routes out of the ruins and back to the river where a boat could be stolen, however, they might be pursued by vessels full of head-hunting Aquzam.

EVENT 3:4 - Z'TRUK'S KNOWLEDGE

In any event, whether by force or negotiation, the siblings discover from Z'truk that the Ruyah needs an increased measure of dust from an inhospitable world nearly cut off from the Void.

This is one of the costliest ingredients of Ruyah and is only used in minimal doses when mixing the street version of the drug – literally a grain or two. He is aware of the Ruyah scarcity problem in the city since his operation involves collecting and selling the special dust that increases its potency.

He claims to have been a helmsman on the Unseen Rulers' ships and to have traversed the Void.

He was, in fact, the Qamsa's primary source of that, but has since learned they intend to move in on his operation and take over.

He explains his supply has run dry; "dry as dust" he quips and says that the Qamsa have aggressively barred his main trade route through a perforation found in a rocky crevice in the jungle, a place called Shiqunrift.

Z'truk tells them he knows that the Void captains in the Unseen Rulers' employ take a drug like Ruyah but containing this dust, called Black Samita, in a higher quantity: it suppresses the effect of Void exposure. More importantly, he tells them exactly how much is needed in terms of how many "knife tips" are required.

He does not know the rest of the instructions of Ruyah manufacture, but that never concerned him as he was a supplier of the dust, not an alchemist.

The siblings will recognise this as the same substance needed to help Hunlona's son in part II. Now it is needed in a much higher quantity if the siblings are to travel to the Qamsa's inhospitable world.

If questioned about the Shirr, whose name is Lfarma, Z'truk he proudly admits he enslaved him, as his Void faring knowledge is valuable.

Lfarma belonged to a guild that specialised in rare minerals. Z'truk took him captive when he stole a Void faring trading vessel, using the same alchemical substances used on the master alchemist in vol II by the Myriad.

Z'truk murdered Lfarma's entourage and stole his ship, which is now located in the new Qamsa trade outpost at Shiqunrift (see below). The Shirr has divulged much information to Z'truk under threat of torture and is forced to travel with him on missions.

EVENT 3.5 - INTEL ON SHIQUNRIFT

The protagonists have by now learned about the origin of the Black Samita dust and how much is needed for the higher potency Ruyah. Unfortunately, Z'truk had none of the dust left, his supply choked off by the Qamsa.

They might want to return to Sludgetown outside of Dhaarese to relate this information to their patron. This must be resolved before the shortage causes such chaos that the Jinassar blame the human enclave. But they still need to figure out how to make a batch of Ruyah with a sufficient quantity of Black Samita.

This is exorbitantly expensive, and now that they know Z'truk's supply routes are blocked, obtaining any amount is daunting.

The Qamsa's operation is ever growing, their grip on all manner of strange drugs getting tighter. While there are dealers in exotic ingredients within the city of Llyhn who could have access to the dust, nobody knows who they are, or how trustworthy. Navigating these suppliers without running afoul of the Qamsa who actively seek to destroy their rivals will be tricky.

Recall that the siblings were prepared as Void conduits in their parents' sect. This makes them inherently dangerous to the Qamsa, as with the right Ruyah formulation they could travel into the Hollow itself without harm.

This is one weighty reason The Qamsa will not stop until the surviving members of the Amari family and their allies are unearthed.

TRIGGERED EVENT: LFARMA THE SHIRR

Resolving the encounter with Z'truk triggers an event involving Lfarma the Shirr. It may be the siblings subdued or killed Z'truk at this point in the narrative, or they might have negotiated to kill off the rival Aquzam tribe.

Either way, Lfarma escapes his captive's clutches, but he does not move fast and has little supplies with him. The arbiter may encourage the players to consider the dangers of travelling the jungle at night, reminding them that the encampment may be an excellent place to rest.

If Z'truk is still alive and not hostile, he will let them stay there for the night. If he is dead or otherwise broken in power, his followers will not attack or interfere with the siblings for fear they are mightier than gods.

The following material assumes there is daylight.

Read or paraphrase: "Leaving Z'truk's encampment behind, you begin your trek back to the Eternal City. The clearing reveals the sky; the second of the two red suns cresting the distant peaks beyond the jungle, flooding the heavens with whitish-yellow light, hints of orange and red signalling midday. Soon you step beyond the light under the shadow of the jungle's trees. The sweltering heat and sound of jungle life engulf you..."

A successful awareness roll [5] reveals movement ahead to one or more protagonists; a creature larger and slower than most jungle creatures. A closer investigation allows them to quickly locate the Shirr hiding behind a tree. Otherwise, they are surprised when Lfarms appears.

Once seen, read: "The Shirr seen at the encampment stands by a tree, breathing laboriously. His multiple split-pupil eyes widen when spotting you, and he recoils back, moving its substantial girth defensively with a rhythmic wave of muscle on its underside. He raises one bulbous, speckled arm and points at you with a slow, hypnotic motion, his round face splitting into a heavy-lipped grimace. 'I am not your enemy' he says, 'and if you ensure my safe return to Llyhn I'll tell you what I know, what Z'truk didn't explain.'"

A character applying empathy will detect Lfarms's fear and exhaustion. He only wishes to return safely to the city, and likely has no other agenda. He knows much of the newfound rivalry between the Qamsa and all former Black Samita suppliers and volunteers the following information...

Read: "Z'truk's reconnaissance of the Qamsa's new trading post showed that it is under construction in the jungle beyond but not too far distant from the Eternal City. He actually suspected as much, because it was one of his main trade routes through The Void. It is a rocky crevice at a confluence of rivers that eventually join with the Margidda. They have enslaved one tribe of female Timaniém by holding their useless male drones hostage, as well as some of their precious eggs, promising them freedom once their grip on the most exotic components of their rarest drugs is secured. The Timaniém slaves are helping to create the Qamsa's new trading place.

Questions and Answers:

Q: If the Timaniém are slaves, why is K'siad The Stalker and her assassins working for the Qamsa?

A: "K'siad is not of that tribe, was actually a rival, and through working with the Qamsa secured the jungle for the Ojek of her own tribe, though she betrays her own kind".

Q: What was Z'truk using to cross the perforation?

A: "Z'truk stole my Dhow ship. I had the hull reinforced myself. You'll know it by its blinded cabins, and it is now anchored in the river of Shiqunrift, now claimed by the Qamsa. For a while, after they took his - actually, my ship! - he was taking us through the Void by wagon, and dangerously, I must add. Try doing that without being tethered to each other, and you'll find yourselves drifting and getting separated. Yeah, I do not recommend travelling the oblivion depths of the Black Void by wagon. Z'truk was never the greatest navigator, whatever he told his reptilian moron minions. Not without me anyway. I was the navigator that allowed his successful Void traversing".

Q: Explain more about this trade outpost. Why was it so important to Z'truk?

A: It is near a Void rift in a river-filled crevice called Shiqunrift. That place is where Z'truk used to pass through a perforation into the world where the Black Samita is found. Now it is under Qamsa control.

Q: How well guarded is Shiqunrift?

A: K'siad is sometimes there with her warriors, when not hunting for Adarus. The Qamsa have their Talath guards there, but not in substantial numbers because most of their resources are used to maintain order and strength at the Aromatic Souq in Daer Bitaan. Right now, if K'siad and her group are out in the jungle, you're more likely to run into Draught beetles than militia. The Timaniém slaves are kept in line by the threat of their male captives being slaughtered if they refuse to work and protect the Qamsa's interests. I'd bet those upright lizards would cause a dangerous revolt if they knew their male counterparts were free. Still, even if you got in there, got my ship back and sailed out of there, I do not think you're prepared for facing the world where that dust is found. We lost many on such missions. Z'truk liked bringing many Aquzam because they were fodder, shields for the horrors that exist there..."

From here the siblings have enough information to proceed in one of many directions. If they agree to help Lfarms return to the city, he will be extremely grateful, and his guild may offer thanks through information or contacts that could help them find one of the rare suppliers of Black Samita who has not yet been cut off by the Qamsa.

He may help negotiate a lower price out of gratitude for his freedom. If asked if he'd join on a mission into Shiqunrift to help them obtain the dust, he will say: "You'd need me, I reckon, but you'll need to protect yourselves. Walking into that outpost by ourselves is suicide. You may as well walk into the Qamsa's Hollow, straight through into Ghabar, waving a white flag instead. But if you have allies, protectors, soldiers, a small army? Then maybe. I'll make one trip with you there if you have such resources, but first, ensure my safe return to the city..."

Whatever is decided, these events are leading into Scene 4.

SCENE IV: S'BALYA'S GAMBIT

SCENE SYNOPSIS

In this scene, The Shirr named Lfarnas might have accompanied the characters back to Llyhn and wants to help them a batch of Ruyah with a sufficient quantity of Black Samita to enter into the Ghabar and destroy them.

Anzor wishes to choose to start dealing in the drug while the Qamsa's ability to provide it is disrupted. This leads them to one of Z'truk 's own dealers; an unusual Quth named Ozeuot, the main supplier of the Mirza, the only customer rich enough to buy such a potent version of Ruyah for her special guests.

Ozeuot requests to join forces with the siblings and offers them the services of Z'truk 's alchemist, a Ba'Waikh named S'balya. But S'balya also works for Abd Alim and his sister Phamea, who operate against the Qamsa's interests from within Kimiayiy Markaz in the Hollow of the Aromatic Souq.

Phamea, S'balya and Abd Alim plan an ambush, inviting the characters through Ozeuot's, relying on his ignorance to lure them into a meeting in a secret cavern. Then, before the ambush is little more than realized, one of The Qamsa - Gadatas - arrives with numerous Talath guards, accompanied by Katya and Axayaca (assuming both are alive at this point after the events of part II), and kills everybody opposing the protagonists.

After dispatching their rivals, he tells the protagonists that he wants them to kill all of the Qamsa but himself and his future queen, She Who Is Unnamed. It is learned that Gadatas surreptitiously tipped off Feerada and Kûn Azhar about Shiqunrift, which is about to be attacked by human forces due to the chaos caused by the Ruyah shortage.

The other Qamsa will be unaware of his treachery if the siblings agree to help him, but if not, he becomes absolute in his power.

The siblings are sent to steal doses of powerful Ruyah from the remains of the Mirza's mansion while Feerada's forces distract the Qamsa in Shiqunrift, their new trade outpost in the jungle.



LOCATION

PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT: Regardless of where they re-enter the city, the protagonists will follow clues to the Pai'Karaan District, to find the dealer selling high potency Ruyah, that once supplied by Z'truk.

The district is as busy as ever, worshippers and zealots filling the main thoroughfare lined by the temples and shrines and altars to every imaginable deity or nebulous force. The Mirza's temple-like mansion still stands behind the high polished walls, but part of it is in ruins, the bath pavilion collapsed into a massive crater.

Arbiter note (the crater was filled with water shortly after a Void entity began to escape through the rift, collapsing the grotto, but the water since drained into a crevasse that yawned open to an even deeper level).

NPC's

Anzor, Gadatas, Lfarnas, Ozeuot, Phamea (if alive) and S'balya.

SCENE IV

EVENT 4:1 - THE SHIRR AND THE QUTH

The Arbiter can make as much or as little as wanted of the journey back to the city. The Shirr named Lfarnas might have accompanied them back to Llyhn. The siblings know that to make a batch of Ruyah with a sufficient quantity of Black Samita is exorbitantly expensive.

Anzor wishes to choose to start dealing in the drug while the Qamsa's ability to provide it is disrupted. Rahaat would've wanted to prevent this as he considered it sacred, and it is one of the reasons he was murdered.

But to accomplish such a thing is far beyond merely obtaining enough to create a single batch for themselves. One dose each does allow the sibling's safer passage through the Void currents of The Hollow to confront the Qamsa, but even killing them will only create a chaotic unbalanced power vacuum.

They would need a small army to disrupt the Qamsa operations on any significant scale. Knowing this, Lfarnas advises the characters to avoid sneaking into Shiqunrift, if that option is brought up, believing it nearly suicidal (and he is correct, at this stage, it would be).

Instead, Lfarmas advises the siblings to take it one step at a time. First, find one who deals in the most expensive type of street Ruyah first, one unaffiliated with either the Amari family or the Qamsa. Note that the Shirr may have advised them to do this before they decided to just leave him in the jungle, in which case the direction is encouraged by Anzor instead.

The use of skills like Intrigue, Languages, Observation, Stealth, and Streetwise will be of use while talking to the various black market dealers while avoiding traders and vendors working directly for the Aromatic Souq.

The arbiter might have the protagonists speak with several people to find a "hot lead" on the right individual to seek.

Species encountered in this would include mostly humans, Aq'Jarea, and Ka'Alum.

The first hint leading to the dealer with had access to some Black Samita is the word on the street that the individual is of a high caste.

Lfarmas will agree that makes sense, as he knows Z'truk's primary customer was very wealthy. Use of Perfect Liar or Specious talents will surely be of help in finding this dealer, convincing contacts that they are potential allies or involved somehow in the supply chain.

Use of the Contacts or Allies backgrounds might be used to expedite the search as well, depending on the specifics of the individual character's story.

It is possible that the characters have run-ins with lunatic Ruyah users experiencing a psychic withdrawal from the substance. And all the while the Qamsa operatives are searching for them, resulting in a possible encounter at any time on the street. These operatives do steer clear of members of the Rasha Galam or any showing of Feerada's forces.

Eventually, their search leads them to one of Z'truk's own dealers, an unusual Quth named Ozeuot. He is unusual because Quth do not typically trade in goods as such.

But he also a user of Samita-laced Ruyah, and his supply of was contingent on dealing it on behalf of Z'truk. He had but one customer rich enough to get that variety: The Mirza.

The meeting place can be anywhere in private, decided by the Arbiter. Likely places to find Ozeuot would be one of many holy sites in the Pai'Karaan district, or near the House of the Maiara. People are steering clear of the Mansion of the Mirza, which is being rebuilt since part of it collapsed and many people within were slaughtered by an alien monstrosity.

Read or paraphrase when encountering Ozeuot: "A Quth approaches leisurely on six legs, looming over you at 10 cubits tall, it is eye-stalks swivelling around to fix on you. He speaks in the common Dariij tongue: "You seek Samita Ruyah," he says, taking a drag from a long pipe. "It is in short supply, and for those of your kind, seems to cause madness.

There's strife in Kimah, Dhaarese, even Daer Bitaan. The Void Captains are the ones with real access. The Unseen Rulers know. I do not recommend it, and you cannot afford it".

The siblings may tell Ozeuot that Anzor of the temple of Misterimadh wishes to bring the Amari family back to their rightful place as the source of such holy concoctions, or they make up some other story, but they must convince him to tell them who was the last buyer of the last of his stock. He is an addict of the substance himself, making him more single-minded than most Quth by an order of magnitude, and he is not interested in a monetary cut of future dealings. He explains he's only dealing the drug to keep himself from experiencing the madness of withdrawal, something Z'truk did not warn him about, but he was sustained while under employ. Therefore, he wishes only to obtain some more for himself.

Ozeuot is aware of the supply being cut off by the Qamsa, meaning the price of the Samita variety will be out of reach for him forever, and once he realises the characters are allies of the Amari family, he decides to help them break open the pathways to obtaining the dust.

Lfarmas hates Z'truk because he was forced to divulge information and had his ship stolen. Ozeuot does not want to rely on Z'truk for his personal supply, and cannot now regardless, given the circumstances. If the characters tell Ozeuot they'll bring him some of what they can steal in the meantime, he will inform them of where a small stockpile can be found in the Mirza's mansion.

Those with Intrinsic Insight may surmise Ruyah was being used by the Cult of the Darkened Sun, which makes sense given their connection with Rahaat's splinter cult. If they take a more intimidating tactic, they'll have a fight on their hands.

Normally, Ozeuot has the backing of Phamea's own warriors, a few of which are hiding nearby, watching carefully. However, in this case, Phamea wants to lure them to her, especially if accompanied by Hunlona.

Those warriors will leave Ozeuot to his fate and retreat to tell Phamea of what they have seen.

If the characters have Anzor's MindNebula, or if Anzor still lives and is with them on their mission, they may extract the information needed about the Mirza's mansion.

But the minds of Quth are so strange it would be difficult for the MindNebula to parse all of his connections, especially given his drug-induced obsession with the drug.

If treated well, Ozeuot offers the siblings the chance to take advantage of the services of Z'truk's alchemist. If they agree, he tells them that the alchemist is hoping to discover more about the border world that is the dust's source to better understand how Z'truk's formula is different from that of the Veiled Inscriptions.

Hunlona, if ever consulted in advance, warns them not to tell them they have Veiled Inscriptions.

If the meeting with Ozeuot goes badly, Phamea will send a messenger to invite the characters to meet Z'truk's one alchemist skilled enough to create high potency Ruyah.

The message, whether spoken or written, will forgive the ill dealings with the drug-addled Quth and petition them to join their efforts. If Lfarmas is with them, he also encourages maintaining an alliance with Z'truk's alchemist until they secure better avenues to obtain the dust. All of them piggyback on the success of the Qamsa for now.

EVENT 4:2 - S'BALYA PLAYS ALL SIDES

The meeting place with Ba'Waikh alchemist can be anywhere in private, decided by the Arbiter, but it likely will be where he keeps his laboratory in a small, indistinct terracotta building near one of the temples northeast of the Mirza's mansion.

Ironically, Z'truk's alchemist, operating in a secret location in Pai'Karaan, is a Ba'Waikh named S'balya, who once worked in the Kimiayiy Markaz, the very place where Ruyah of various potency is manufactured for the Qamsa. Abd Alim bought the dust from Z'truk before the Qamsa decided to take over, and it was none other than Phamea, Abd Alim's sister, who helped sneak out the other, other materials needed for use by S'balya. The Cipher, Abd Alim, allowed this, secretly taking a percentage of extra earnings. That S'balya works for Abd Alim and Phamea becomes an unfortunate fact when the protagonists encounter him.

When Ozeuot brings S'balya news of a possible alliance, the alchemist realises that the siblings are the ones who penetrated the Hollow and stole the Veiled Inscriptions. He understands this from their descriptions, and by their association with The Temple of Misterimadh. He informs Phamea (if she did not already know) and plans an ambush, thinking to steal back the Inscriptions for The Cipher of Kimiayiy Markaz. S'balya and Ozeuot set up a meeting place (or a messenger reaches the characters to invite them to a meeting place). If Ozeuot learned that Hunlona knows how to make the Samita Strength Ruyah, he'd insist S'balya can help with the process and tells them they need to bring her to the meeting.

When they finally arrive at the lab (or another secret meeting place), they see S'balya accompanied by soldiers. Phamea stands behind them, slightly intoxicated as usual (no penalties though, she is quite resistant), watching. Characters with Intrinsic Insight will instinctively make the connection between S'balya and the fact that the Kimiayiy Markaz employs Ba'Waikh alchemists. This was certainly a conflict of interests, to put it lightly.

Read the following: "A Ba'Waikh stands before you in this dimly lit room, luminescent eyes examining you from under an elaborate headdress cover his elongated skull. He's accompanied by twelve Aq'jarea soldiers wearing Qamsa insignias. 'I am S'balya' the Ba'Waikh says, 'and you are now the honorary guests of The Cipher. We thank you for stealing the Veiled Inscriptions on our behalf, and for the knowledge, you will now pass to us.'"

If Hunlona is with them, they will move to capture her and seek to kill the others, knowing she is the only one left of the Amari family who is a true alchemist. If she is not with them, they intend to torture and interrogate the siblings and companions until they reveal her whereabouts. The characters should feel outnumbered, possibly outmanoeuvred. Let the fight bring them to as close to a nervous close call as possible, but just before defeat or running, one of the Qamsa arrives and changes everything...



EVENT 4:3 - GADATAS TURNS THE TABLES

Then suddenly everything changes. Lfarnas, Ozeuot, and S'balya and Phamea are all attacked before they can effectively ambush the siblings. Gadatas, one of The Qamsa, was closely following. He arrives with numerous Talath guards, accompanied by Katya and Axayaca (assuming both are alive at this point after the events of Vol II), and kills everybody opposing the protagonists, but blocks the siblings and their allies from leaving with mystic power. At first, it may seem strange Gadatas and his Talath guards do not attack any of the Amari or Temple members who may be accompanying them.

Gadatas' motivation may be surprising: He actually wants the siblings to steal whatever is left of the dust bought by the Mirza, whose mansion is in chaos after the events of Vol I when Na'Aqh's ritual went terribly wrong. He also wants them to close the rift, so there's only one way to get to the border world of Ghabar, where the Black Samita is found.

After dispatching their enemies in several devastating moments, Gadatas explains (read or paraphrase): "We've come full circle, my friends. I know you seek enough of the Black Samita to kill my brothers and sister and take over the Ruyah trade for the Amari family.

But I want you to kill all of the Qamsa, save myself and my future queen. Adrahasis is a fool whose knowledge takes him too far adrift from temporal needs. Tu was in part responsible for starting the Cult of the Darkened Sun, introducing Na'Aqh to summon a god-like destructive entity that supports the Qamsa.

Tu hoped Na'Aqh would bring it forth in The Eternal City itself, believing regeneration follows devastation.

But I would rather rule a city than a ruin, and was angry about the existence of the cult, as it distracted from my higher learning. Izdubar is going mad by gathering knowledge for Adrahasis and the rest by communicating with the god-thing Tu would summon. I don't believe they are communicating with a true Void entity, but they think that they are. That makes all of them fools, except She that is Unnamed, my future Queen.

I wish to rid the world of the others and marry her. Together we envision a new religion for mankind in which the greatest of the Qamsa are gods, and the weakest are no more. I am impressed with your strength and resoluteness, and I offer that you be a part of that new order. We the Qamsa were once human, the same blood that runs in your veins. The rift found in the caverns beneath the Mirza's mansion leads to the same world as the one in Shiqunrift, our homeworld of Ghabar. The same place where Na'Aqh worshipped and tried to apprehend the secrets of the Void to disastrous results, as you well know".

He continues, "Black Samita is refined from phosphorescent sand found in a miles-wide crater. Hostile natives and very dangerous creatures ensure any visit must be brief; a lot of sand is needed for even a pinch of Black Samita.

I can tell you how to gain entry to our world, the same as were the dust originates so that we might destroy my rivals. If you believe that the Black Samita laced Ruyah is the key to travelling through our world, you're right.

You are to steal the stockpile of dust from the Mirza's ruined mansion. I have surreptitiously tipped off Feerada and Kûn Azhar about Shiqunrift, which is about to be attacked by human forces due to the chaos caused by the Ruyah shortage. If you agree, I'll teach you how to ritualistically galvanise those tattoos you possess, those marks being the destiny your father Telal wished you to avoid, but granting you advantage against my kind in our world".

If the siblings agree, he lets them go after teaching them the ritual allowing activation of their mystical tattoos, which offer protection against the properties of the Void and the power of Mysticism.

If the siblings refuse to agree, he will say "very well" and let them go anyway, unless they have the MindNebula. If they possess that creature, he demands they give it up to him, and if they refuse, he will attack to subdue them and take the creature for his own use before letting them go. Either way, he intends to let them go so they may continue their mission to destroy the Qamsa's power.



SCENE V: A RETURN

SCENE SYNOPSIS

In this scene, the siblings return to the mansion of the Mirza to steal the small quantity of the high-grade doses of Ruyah she purchased from Z'truk. She also possesses a larger quantity of street Ruyah and a few doses of "Wasya grade", which is of higher potency but without the dust. Gadatas is intent on using this opportunity of the sibling's heritage (of which they are still not entirely aware) to gain total control, and collapse the unstable rift, foiling the plans of both Tu and Adrahasis. He plans to surreptitiously aid the siblings' attempt to gain entry to the Qamsa's world so they might destroy his rivals. If things go awry, the other Qamsa will be unaware of his treachery, but if not, he becomes absolute in his power.

When first entering the mansion area, the characters discover a site of carnage and chaos. Once they get to the gate of the mansion, they are met by a powerful Gnostic named Anahita, an ally of the Qamsa who arrived with another of her order to stop the ongoing damage to the Qamsa's operations caused by Na'Aqh's disastrous attempt to find his way to Earth. She is accompanied by Raiders who survived the carnage of Na'Aqh's calamity. The raiders and cultists reformed under the leadership of one named Feroze, the most powerful of the surviving raiders. He used a grafting blood rite to transfer a limb or body part taken from a powerful fallen Talath guard and has devolved some frightening powers. The orange-robed and yellow-veiled zealots who followed Na'Aqh and stayed anywhere near the mansion are dead and dismembered.

After getting past the Gnostic at the gate, they find the mansion grounds destroyed by looters, and the Mirza's menagerie unleashed. Most of the gaudy decorations were stolen and sculptures toppled by angry escaping slaves. The Mirza's slaves and guards are killed. The Raiders dug out some of the collapsed caverns to get to the rift; thus, the once hidden tunnel in the grove is accessible now, the bamboo and other undergrowth felled.

Once they locate that tunnel, they descend to find the Ruyah supply. They find that it is being used by the second of the two mystics, a woman named Mahtab, whose goal is to prevent the total collapse of the rift. The Qamsa member Tu commanded the Gnostics to prevent the rift from collapsing, as he shared Na'Aqh's interest in learning through the Void a way back to Earth, which is also his ultimate aim. Adrahasis consulted with him and surmised that the entity that came was as much a surprise to Na'Aqh as to anyone else. Tu, on the other hand, would like to tap into the power of the deep world and the entity Na'Aqh accidentally summoned, to bring that power forth in The

Eternal City fully, believing regeneration only follows devastation.

The only thing keeping the rift open is Mahtab, the mystic actively keeping it so. The siblings discover they can only defeat the Gnostic working so near to the Void emanations by imbibing some of the prepared doses of at least Wasya grade Ruyah. The scene ends with the characters killing or removing the Gnostic, causing the rupture to finally close, and the characters escape with enough Samita to take on the Qamsa in their border world.

LOCATION

PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT: The siblings return to the Pai'Karaan District of the Eternal City. They'll remember the small temples and shrines, the smell of incense, and the many alien worshippers about. The scene takes them back to the palatial complex of the Mirza's mansion where they encounter the formidable Gnostics working with The Qamsa as well as a reformed sect of raiders and cultists in their service.

NPC'S

Anahita, Mahtab, Feroze, Sayu Mah and Behzad (if both are alive).

SCENE V

EVENT 5:1 - MYSTIC AT THE GATE

Read or paraphrase the following to the characters when they return to the Pai'Karaan District: "You've returned to the grand boulevard of the Pai'Karaan district, walking along the turquoise and emerald-hued street passing the sandstone and terracotta buildings and colourful shrines. The bustle of pilgrims, worshippers, Akopi-drawn leisure chariots, and peddlers of the sacred engulf you. The temple-like mansion of the Mirza looks sinister now, many of the spikes crowning the wall grotesquely displaying limp, impaled bodies. The once barred wrought iron gate is open, and what was a lush garden now blackened by fire beyond the wall. The alien worshippers, ordinarily oblivious to their surroundings in their reverie, are fewer in number the closer you get to the mansion. A sacrificial temple near the mansion looks to have been the scene of a recent bloodbath, the door was torn off its hinges, blood stains on the street. You hear the familiar clamour of chants and sermons from the basin area

and the dock beyond, but there's far more of the faithful wandering near the basins than the last time you were here, crowding the sacred waters. This leaves the mansion gate almost eerily quiet in comparison..."

The main abode with an attached satellite pavilion is damaged but still stands, but the smaller private abode including a bathing house as well as a secondary pavilion was destroyed by the collapsed grotto. The shallow canal leading from the river into a basement opening in the mansion remains blocked by a portcullis at the entry point. The waterway is still obscured from viewers in the garden by tall reeds covering the banks but is no longer patrolled. Once the characters see the mansion narrate the following: "Constructed on a platform base covered in bas-relief the entire mansion floor is elevated roughly two metres above the ground. Columned galleries and walkways surround the structure of the mansion while statues and sculptured panels make up most of the extravagant inside structure supporting the massive roof. Rising in graded peaks, mirroring the effect of a mountain range the roof has curved shikhara spires soaring above the main halls and smaller spires topping the various side pavilions and balconies. At regular intervals flights of steps grant access to the mansion from the garden via entrance porches leading into the adjacent galleries and terraces."

TABLE 5.1 OBSERVATIONS OF PAI'KARAAN BOULEVARD

- The Mansion gates are open with two Ba'Waikh guards dead on the ground outside. The garrison building remains visible just inside the gate, but whether there are guards in there alive is questionable.
- The streets surrounding the mansion are not as busy as they were, so there are fewer discreet spaces for observing the mansion gates without drawing attention.
- There are no more porters and slaves arriving through the main gates.
- The servant's entrance in the back is left unguarded.
- Word on the street is that The Jinassar played a quick and heavy hand in quelling street violence and terror after the entity was nearly released from the Void, but then abruptly left the area. They have no "dead body custodian crew" to follow up, and nobody knows if they will soon return.

The Mansion Gates: The front massive wrought iron gate is unlocked, open, and no longer heavily guarded. The gates are thirteen cubits wide and seven cubits high at the apex, providing easy entry for all sorts of conveyances. The guard quarters nearby are empty, the gong once hanging inside the gate ripped down and stolen. Most people were directed to use the servant's gate to enter the mansion grounds, but there's nobody here to direct. That secondary gate is made of reinforced wood, big enough for a pulled cart. A small hatch in the door at that gate allows a view of a small courtyard beyond, between the servant's quarters, the stables and the storehouse.

As the characters approach near the mansion's front gate, read or paraphrase: "The shops and parlours closest to the mansion are open, but you see an increased showing of armed guards around their doors. It is obvious the recent collapse of part of the mansion and the recent event had an impact on the denizens here. The air once thick with incense and scented candles from the shrines and alters along the streets is now carrying the stink of death. The Aristocrat was right to worry about her fortunes in the wake of the Cult of the Darkened Sun's terror, as the chaos and commotion she feared are now evident. However, the House of Maiara across the boulevard seems unaffected judging by the traffic. The polished tiled mansion walls loom ahead, the exquisitely patterned wrought metal gate standing open, now unguarded by the Mirza's Ba'Waikh warriors. But there is a person standing at the gate, looking directly at you. A woman, tall and thin, wearing a ceremonial white robe, her long, straight black hair flowing down to her mid-back, stands in the centre of the gate. You do a double take because she seems to have materialised there from nowhere. Her gaze is so intense it cuts through the distance, a piercing presence felt like rippling pressure in the air."

It is Anahita of the Order of Laghaz standing at the gate.

THE ORDER OF LAGHAZ

The Order of Laghaz: The Order of Laghaz is related to Llyhn's InQabal faction, both adhering to a general ideological bent toward acting largely on impulse rather than any orderliness. But while the InQabal are typically found at the lowest levels of Llyhn society, The Order of Laghaz is usually of the Shahrvah caste as petitioners to the order, and led by those of the Muati caste, their mystic teachings fronted by dealing in esoteric tablets and ancient knowledge, and they have one dedicated temple in the district, dedicated to "Laghaz", a word which stands for the philosophical principle of Chaos at the core of things. This worship was introduced into the ranks of the InQabal first, through the use of street Ruyah distributed through the shrine, shaping the hallucinogenic experience to manipulate and generate followers (and new addicts).

The leaders of the order are, unsurprisingly, the Gnostic sisters Anahita and Mahtab. Their powers and methods of hooking their followers on the Qamsa's drugs intrigued the Qamsa. Izdubar arrived, accosted and possessed them both, dominated them in fear. He directed their actions and words to redirect their follows allegiance from the principle of Laghaz in general to the specific authority of Adrahasis. That is why the back of her robe now displays an embroidered, five-hand Qamsa symbol. As Anahita became Voidmarked by Izdubar's attack she now possesses the esoteric trait Mesmerise. It enables her to stir or dampen the emotions of nearby sentient beings. As the core rules state, "it is a subtle ability as it affects others indirectly and not by the character performing specific actions - although it may enhance the desired effect of activities such as intimidation" (see Core Rules, Chapter 1).

Regardless of whether the sibling's approach or delay, Anahita walks confidently past the gate toward them, stepping over the fallen Ba'Waikh guards. Her presence is so intimidating that any creature nearby retreats into the surrounding buildings, leaving the street empty, as if expecting a confrontation in the street.

The protagonists will see additional movement beyond the gate as she approaches; humanoids, silhouetted by the position of the suns and nearby walls. Members of the reformed Raiders and cultists who've pledged their faith in the Qamsa are organizing in response to Anahita's telepathic summons, their might reinforced by Sayu Mah (if alive), the Talath Overseer who swore fealty along with the Raiders and cultists to the Order of Laghaz.

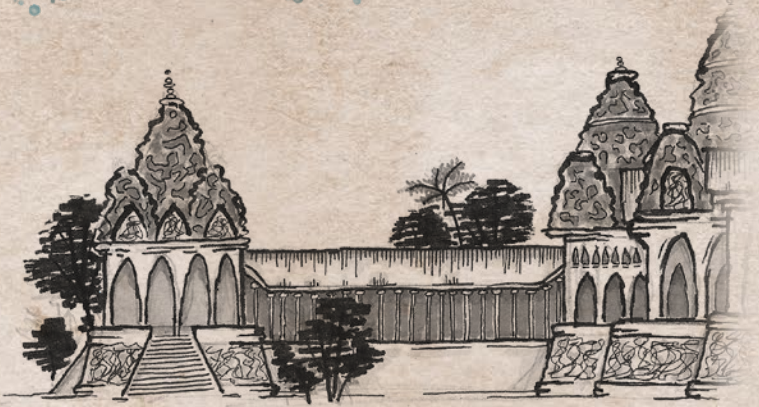
If the characters do not attack right away, she stops and speaks: "I am Anahita of the Order of Laghaz. You, the adopted of Telal. It is enlightenment you seek, so allow The Qamsa to teach you. Stop this counterproductive push for the wrong side of humanity. Go to The Hollow, beg their forgiveness for the theft of the Veiled Inscriptions. You don't understand your purpose, and you are blind to your fate.

The Amari family were invited to join the ascension of humanity through the power and insight of the Qamsa, but their refusal and subsequent battle for the lesser goal of Ruyah distribution proved them dangerously myopic. It is not too late to be saved through the grace of our master of all knowledge, Adrahasis! He too serves the principle of Laghaz, which teaches the dominion of personal choice overruling systems".

She will pause, wait for a reaction, fully expecting a less than open attitude to her suggestion. She will telepathically command the raiders to position themselves for an attack on the siblings.

If they refuse but do not immediately attack, she will try again to avoid direct conflict, saying: "The Mirza, obsessed with using humans as slaves to add to her collection... that is just the sort of fate you can expect if you fight us. The Mirza is hardly the only being in this city that treats us like mongrels. Feerada tried to stop her, yes, but hindering human slave markets is like digging out a sand pit, forever refilling. The Ruyah shows our kind visions of a better place, a higher realm, where eventually we can learn to go. Join us, bring your secrets to help our species reach our true purpose and understand the mystery of this Cosmos!"

If they respond that they'll surrender to the Qamsa, they'll be surrounded by raiders and led down to meet her Gnostic sister, Mahtab, but stripped of their weapons (if the characters do not change their mind at that point). In that case, skip to Event 5.3 since they will not be wandering the garden beyond the gate.



EVENT 5.2 - BEYOND THE GATE

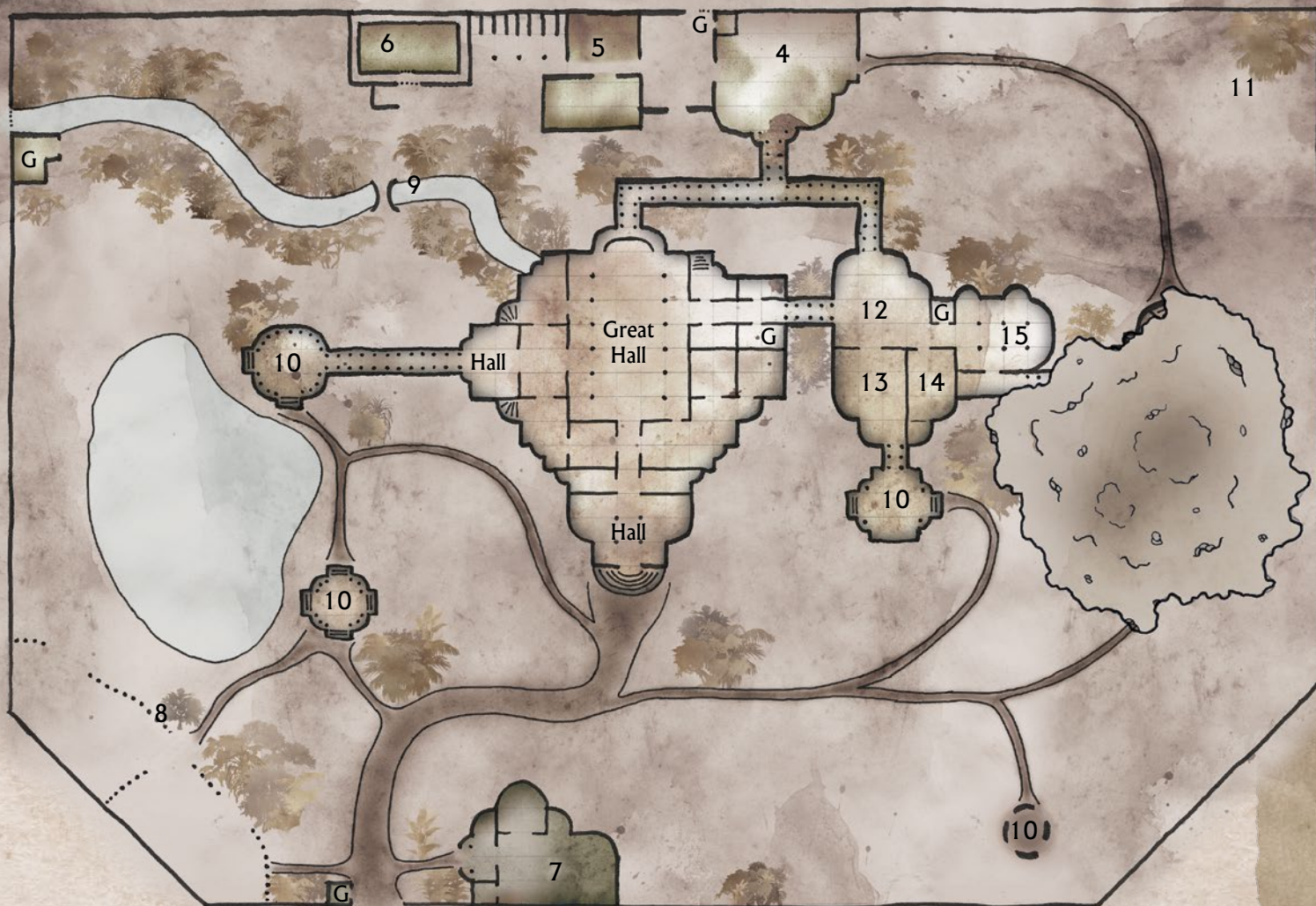
Some of the extravagant and gaudy decorations and sculptures remain on the grounds. What was a debauched sense of aesthetics without purpose is now mixed with an air of death and dread. A wide gravel path leads from the main gate to the central building of the complex, winding through exotic trees and trees. The smaller pathways branch off, leading to pavilions and looted teahouses, some harbouring dangerous animals once captive. If the characters fight their way past Anahita and her raider guards, they will not be met as liberators by a throng of grateful slaves.

Those slaves who would be liberated are for the most part already dead. Encounters with the occupants of the mansion are quite unlike the first visit, which required inconspicuousness or great persuasion to avoid trouble. Once beautiful, scantily dressed human slaves are strewn about the bloodied grounds, some piled after being used for blood rituals.

Any creature with tattoos branding them as the property of the Mirza was executed as inherently tainted, worthless to the plans of the order. There is a fire pit set up to burn bodily remains, which fills the gardens with acrid, choking smoke smelling of decay and burnt flesh. There are no more patrolling guards in service of the Mirza, but a few of the Talath overseers were converted (at least on the surface) by The Order of Laghaz.

Searching for the Mirza anywhere in the mansion leads to random encounters with insane cultists, their minds warped by the entity and rift Void emanations. Reveals that she has fled to regroup and take back her mansion. Nobody else is home. The protagonists may encounter a wounded Im'zu who knows about the Ruyah stash. He tells them it was kept in the mansion basement, but one of the two Gnostics took the supply and moved it to the dug-out cavern. If searching for the Mirza in her abode, the Im'zu tells them she has fled to regroup and implore the Jinassar to help clear the mansion of her enemies.

If the characters approach any Raiders beyond the gate (assume D6 milling around the grounds at any given time) to gain knowledge about the mansion, they are met with intense distrust even if they try to convince them of specious stories to secure safe passage. The Specious or Perfect Liar traits would be quite advantageous, as would the skills of subterfuge or intimidation.



EVENT 5:3 - THE BEASTS UNLEASHED

The grounds surrounding the mansion remain abundant, but much of the greenery caught fire from the piles of burning human slaves set too near. The menagerie of the Mirza was found in two massive enclosures, and each contained a specimen of the savage Adaru.

Once kept for display, they were let loose by the slaves during the chaos of Na'Aqh's calamity. The Raiders' leader, Feroze, used blood rites to augment his Animal Handling skills and has gained an enhanced ability to train the Adaru (refer to the Beasts section of the core book), preventing them from attacking anyone wearing the Darkened Sun or Qamsa insignia or tattoos. They were therefore set free to roam the gardens, sometimes resting in one of the pavilions or tea-houses around the garden.

The siblings may want to plunder the guard posts (map location G), which are smaller guardrooms holding spare weapons and supplies. There's several to be found; at the main gate, waterway portcullis, the servants' entrance, and inside the mansion.

The grove (map location 11) is not impenetrable any more, though the tall trees and a good deal of foliage remains. The massive bamboo bush in the centre was cleared to reveal the tunnel entrance leading to the underground cavern beneath the mansion.

EVENT 5:4 - TU'S BANE

The protagonists will find that the entrance to the grotto through the mansion is blocked from the collapse, filled with all of the chunks of rock and dirt that plummeted the collapsed ceiling.

Once they enter through the once-secret tunnel (Area 16 on Caverns map and area 11 on the mansion map), they will descend to an area dug out by the raiders with the help of some turncoat Talath overseers and some Ba'Waikh guards that would rather help than get possessed or used for blood rites (Area 13).

The western end of the grotto is cut off by rock and debris (Note that Area 10, including both staircases leading to the preparation chamber, is completely cut off). The stairway closest to the tunnel is accessible, leading up to the cavities (Area 15), but the stairwell on the southern side is blocked by the fallen ceiling.

Regardless of whether they are led there by Anahita and the raiders (and possibly Sayu Mah if alive), or if they defeated those enemies above ground and entered on their own, they'll encounter the raider leader Feroze, Mahtab (the Gnostic sister of The Order of Laghaz), and much to their surprise if he lives still, none other than Behzad.



Read or paraphrase the following: "You've entered the clammy and cold grotto of the rift, most of it collapsed, the excavated area beyond the egress alight with oil lamps as well as a shaft of light from a ragged hole in the high ceiling. A deeper recess is visible in the centre, where there was once a canvas stretched across to avoid peering directly into the Void.

The water from the hidden aqueduct nearly filled the grotto but is now slowly flowing down into the ground's additional recess. Looking to your left, you immediately see a massive humanoid, Talath in form, standing in the shadows at the bottom of a rough-hewn staircase.

Six Ba'Waikh guards, all wearing Qamsa five-fist insignias, are kneeling near the rift, looking weak and disoriented.

You feel a slight, chilling breeze flowing from out of the rift, and nearby is a tall, robed woman with long dark hair, her hands outstretched, standing stock still, her eyes closed, chanting a mantra in a melodious, oddly soothing voice: 'Aihfaz Babkama Naql Anaku!'

Standing beside her is a large, bearded, Voidmarked man, wearing chain armour, one of his arms grotesquely huge, a grafted Talath arm, gripping a wicked glaive.

A sacrificial wooden platform stands near him, a mutilated cultist body lying limply over its surface. A wooden box sits on the uneven ground beside her, holding a dozen glass vials".

It is the Gnostic Mahtab who stands near the rifting chanting, resisting the terror of the rift through a Ruyah induced trance. She aims to shift the rifts currents toward the Qamsa's outpost at Shiqunrift (whether that's possible is another matter entirely).

The prior collapse of the grotto did block both the rift and the emerging Void entity, but the Qamsa had an interest in keeping it open.

Their aim now is to control its flow through their border world. Izdubar led the Gnostics here, avoiding the Jinassar when they swept briefly through the mansion area to quell general unrest in the streets, and helped them to identify and take the Mirza's Ruyah stock for use in performing the ceremony to prevent the rift's imminent, final implosion.

The man standing beside the Gnostic Mahtab is Feroze, who swore allegiance to The Order of Laghaz. He was sacrificing cultists to aid in empowering with stabilizing the rift. The humanoid at the bottom of the stairs is one of the Talath overseers, or Sayu Mah himself if alive.

Behzad - if a survivor of earlier events - is recovering from insanity, laying down in the crevice at the top of the steps. The arbiter may assume it is his Wastah that prevented him from being murdered by the new order established after Na'Aqh' failure.



All unenlightened characters must make a Fear roll [9] against the eldritch emanations of the rift. Those possessing knowledge of lore or rituals are able to recognise the litany, a variation of the one used by Behzad before the Void entity surprised the cultists in the last encounter here: "Retain the gate for me so I can redirect here." The box of vials should be instantly recognised as doses of Ruyah by any characters who've gotten this far in the scenario.

The reaction of Sayu Mah (or the Talath overseer, whichever) and Feroze to seeing the siblings enter depends on whether they were led there by Anahita and her raider followers. In that case, they'll assume she has them under control. Their instructions should the "Children of Telal" should arrive, is to force them to imbibe the Samita grade Ruyah and shove them through the rift directly into the Qamsa's domain to face them unprepared. However, the intent of this event is the same even if the siblings arrive alone. Either way, this scene is likely to end in violence.

Witnessing the scene, and hearing Mahtab's chanting triggers a memory. In childhood, the siblings were prepared as Void vessels in their parents' sect, hence their markings, but the rituals were never fully enacted because of Telal's intervention. Their vision will be a flash, not inhibiting action, and feel like *Déjà vu*. They'll have a sense of being born, as if babies, then seeing with a sudden shift through the eyes of childhood; the leering face of Izdubar, then a screaming face of agony, that of Hunlona upon seeing her firstborn possessed and taken by the Qamsa.

The Talath and Feroze will try to capture the siblings and force them to drink the Ruyah and shove them in the rift, commanding the Ba'Waikh guards to aid them, but the guards will fail to assist if they fail a Fear roll [10], the difficulty higher because they are already nearing delirium. If Anahita and D6 raiders are with them, the fight will be much harder, and if the protagonists kill several of them, they'll abandon their aim of capture and try to kill them outright. Mahtab must remain in a trance, because if disturbed by an attack or some other major distraction, the rift will collapse with a thunderous vacuum sound, killing her instantly. In that event, Feroze and will flee, knowing full well that Izdubar will sense their failure and be arriving soon in a rage.

If the siblings defeat their enemies and the rift collapses for good, they'll immediately sense the approach of Izdubar, to whom they now understand has a connection to them through a botched ritual long ago. If they decide to stay, everybody else will flee the grotto, and Izdubar will arrive in a rage, without first consulting the other Qamsa, abandoning his aims at using them as Void conduits.

Now he seeks only to tear them limb from limb. If the players have drunk of the Samita grade Ruyah and stay to confront Izdubar, they will learn they are invisible to him, so long as they remain under the influence of the Ruyah unless they - in any way - directly attack or otherwise make their presence known to him, allowing them to escape. Izdubar is aware of this property of the Samita grade Ruyah, and seeks to collapse the grotto once again, and thereby crush them all, whether he can see them or not.



SCENE VI: DIVIDE AND FALL

SCENE SYNOPSIS

In this final scene, the siblings visit the Qamsa's world and attempt to destroy them. They will need an enhanced version of Ruyah that includes a much higher measure of Black Samita to do this. The Qamsa, once mortal Babylonians, were forever changed by their exposure to the Void and alien entities following the cataclysmic events on Earth. Their quest for power was sparked by outrage at mankind's mistreatment and a desire to find Earth once more. Yet while they still pay lip service to this intent, other priorities have emerged.

The Qamsa are attempting to close the entrance to their world via the Node and Vortex Gateway. Overconfident in their abilities, they are ignorantly trying to manipulate Void currents so that direct and swift transit can be achieved at their new outpost in the jungle. Gadatas wanted the siblings to use what Ruyah they have stolen from the Mirza's mansion to confront and defeat the other Qamsa. Through this action, he would completely control the only known way to get to the border world where the Black Samita is found, controlling all supply of Samita and after already cutting off Z'truk. Meanwhile, attempting to keep the rift open at the Mirza's mansion while expanding the scope and direction of the perforation at Shiquinrift leaves the Qamsa vulnerable and weakened, thus allowing a possibility of victory for the siblings.

Whatever route they take to the Qamsa's world, the siblings find themselves in a black, bleak and deadly place where Void exposure, even if mitigated by the enhanced Ruyah, takes a heavy toll. The protagonists are against the clock; the Ruyah will wear off; they need to locate and defeat the Qamsa and then escape before it does.

In their lightless palace, accessible directly via the node, Adrahasis, Tu and She that Is Unnamed lie in a state of hypnotic repose as they combine and concentrate their energies. Killing one will shock and weaken all, a fact of which Gadatas is unaware, and this will change his reaction significantly once his kindred are harmed. He has retreated to Shiquinrift hoping for the death of the others, unaware that their death will only ensure his own demise. Meanwhile, Izdubar travels between worlds in search of the siblings, bent on killing them before they succeed in destroying all of the Qamsa's collective aims. The siblings can gain an advantage over all of their enemies if they move quickly.

In an ultimate battle, the siblings' heritage might allow them greater strength here than ordinary mortals commonly possess. Their tattoos are actually blood inking that has not been galvanised to "awaken" their powers. When galvanised

they would gain a +1 to resist Void distortion as well as Mystic possession or domination. Activating the tattoos lasts for one hour before the short somatic ritual (1 round) can be performed again.

Gadatas might have taught them the necessary ritual, and if not, the Arbiter may utilise the Fisherman and Uiguyyrthyi to provide the information. If they have acted with intelligence and guile, the protagonists can achieve victory and return to the Eternal City (with suggestions for the Arbiter as to what direction future adventures might take).

LOCATION

THE BORDER WORLD OF GHABAR: Homeworld of the Qamsa. A barren landscape, with distant mountains, a sky alive with writhing currents of Void energy.

This shadowy world of tooth-like crags is uninviting and alien, the foliage black and carnivorous. A red sun hangs in the sky, itself weary and dreadful, and the air is cold. A river runs through the blackened soil, its waters cutting a murky, roiling path through the land. The river passes out of nearby craggy peaks and cliffs, into vast barren plains.

NPC's

Adrahasis, Tu, Izdubar, Gadatas, Kûn Azhar and Feerada.

SCENE VI

EVENT 6:1 - INTO THE BLACK NODE

The protagonists have left The Pai'Karaan District with enough Samita grade Ruyah to survive on the Qamsa's border world. Most antagonists still alive and capable of hunting down the siblings were instructed to do so, the Qamsa knowing full well they are at risk. However, several of them, like Axayaca, may yet be swayed to take sides against their masters with enough persuasion (see Vol II, Scene III).

K'siad The Stalker would remain in the jungle at the site of Shiquinrift with her Timaniém Assassins. Feroze of the reformed raiders is seeking retribution if he escaped, hoping to redeem himself and The Order of Laghaz before Izdubar rips him apart.



Meanwhile, Abd Alim (The Cipher of The Kimiayiy Markaz), sensing the Qamsa's weakness joins his sister Phamea and her Aq'jarea soldiers in a surprise ransacking and looting of The Kimiayiy Markaz, destroying the Qamsa manufacturing capability temporarily.

Sometime between the events of Scene 4 and now Feerada and Kûn Azhar of the Feeradani Enclave made a surprise attack on Shiqunrift, taking advantage of the absence of K'siad when she attacked what remained of Z'truk's henchmen in the jungle. K'siad returned to the outpost in turmoil and vulnerable to the operation being completely disrupted.

The siblings should have attained several ranks of enlightenment by now, which will help them navigate through The Void as they seek to complete their mission. They may take advantage of the chaos and gain entry to the Qamsa's world via one of the following routes:

A) Through the Vortex Gateway - this leads directly to the semi-protected meeting place/library on the Qamsa's world; they are expecting an attack from this direction - it is heavily guarded by Talath and Ba'Waikh guards. If Ukbalthoo is alive, he'll refuse to offer transport, and this time he'll have armed guards with him. The characters will need to defeat those who stand in their way, steal the boat, or find some other way into the library and beyond. If the siblings manage to make it into the library, they'll need to drink the Samita before approaching the Vortex. All unenlightened characters must make a Fear roll [5], modified by Willpower to pass through, but the potent Ruyah bypasses the need for such a roll. This perforation is not as strong in Void currents as the one at the Hidden Hollow, but if each character has a drought of Samita Ruyah, it will not make any difference.

B) Via the Black Node in the Hidden Hollow; the fatal nature of the Void currents and energies here can be overcome by the siblings if they have the enhanced Ruyah. No attack was anticipated from this route by the Qamsa but their efforts to close it are causing the node to fluctuate in and out of existence, and the surprise attack of The Cipher, Phamea and her Aq'jarea on The Kimiayiy Markaz leaves the guards of that area far less vigilant than usual.

The siblings must bluff or force their way past the guards, but this time it will be easier when everybody in the Aromatic Souq is distracted by the activities of The Cipher.

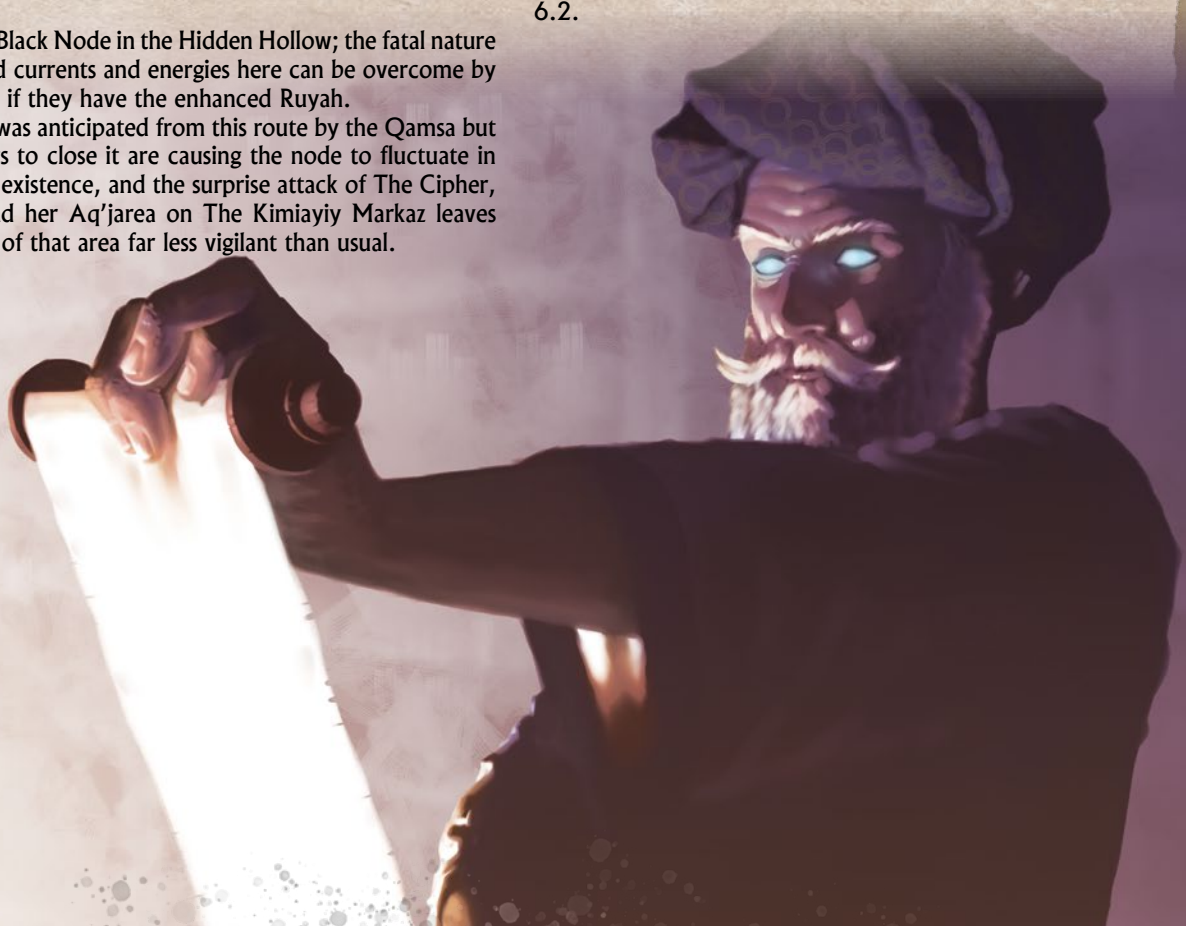
The protagonists can descend the corkscrew path down to the Hidden Hollow itself, perhaps sneaking past the confusion caused by The Cipher ransacking the Qamsa's alchemy centre, escaping with secrets and supplies. At the Hollow's lowest point, beneath the overhanging ledge that supports the inn and trading establishments, lies that pit of utter blackness, The Node, the Void rift leading directly to the Qamsa's shadowy world.

Any character attempting to enter the border world without the Black Samita must succeed in a check against Stamina (9) or make a roll on the Void Distortion Table (Refer to Core Book).

Every hour the Black Node becomes unstable, in which case the characters will truly benefit from some Ascension benefits such as Void Drift, Float, Faring, and so on, or else get lost.

C) Via a rupture at Shiqunrift, the Qamsa trading post under construction in the jungle. The siblings may need the help of a navigator here if lacking the necessary Ascension benefits to steer a ship through the Void perforation, assuming that they can steal Lfarma's old ship and know how to sail it. Entering the rift under the cliffs is otherwise dangerous. Failing to escape the river rapids using athletics [10] might require a roll the crippling injuries list. The node at the Hollow may collapse during their exploits while dealing with the Qamsa in their own world, leaving the only escape back to Llyhn and surrounding areas through the Void perforation in the cliff of Shiqunrift where the river runs through the precipices.

Once they enter at any of these points, move on to Event 6.2.



EVENT 6:2 - INTO THE QAMSA'S WORLD

Once on the other side of the rift, regardless of which route taken, read or paraphrase the following: "You have stepped out into a barren landscape, with distant mountains, a sky alive with writhing currents of Void energy. This shadowy world of tooth-like crags is uninviting and alien, the foliage black and carnivorous. A red sun hangs in the sky, itself weary and dreadful, and the air is cold. A river runs through the blackened soil, its waters cutting a murky, roiling path through the land. The river passes out of nearby craggy peaks and cliffs, into the barren plain stretching out before you, winding past what looks like a palace in the distance".

Whether entering through the Library Vortex, the Hidden Hollow, or Shiqunrift (less likely), the Qamsa's realm exposes the siblings to the overpowering effect of the many Void currents eddying and weaving through it. Any character attempting to enter the border world without the Ruyah must test Willpower [6] or roll on the Fear Effect Table (see the core rules), as well as a check against Stamina (9) or make a roll on the Void Distortion Table (Refer to Core Book).

The palace is the home of the Qamsa. All of the rifts noted in this scenario lead to this spot, just outside of the mountainous area, near the river. The perforation leading

back to Shiqunrift can be traversed along the river, through a natural arch in the cliff. Returning to Llyhn's Aromatic Souq and the Hidden Hollow, or the vortex in the Library near the Fungus Caverns, is possible only from within the palace itself. It is a dark representation of Babylon's hanging gardens, and seeing the building triggers a vague memory of such a place, whispers of a time long forgotten but recreated through human ambition to reclaim the power of the past.

The Qamsa have secured an alliance with a group of Harith (see species description in the Core rule book), allowing them passage through Shiqunrift with their flotillas, as well as granting them a portion of exotic minerals in trade, in exchange for protection against the dangerous creatures of the Cosmos that might threaten the Qamsa palace.

The Harith, about one hundred in number here, are not indentured to the Qamsa. They utilize a large force of Naqasti, slaves of the Qamsa, to mine the dust and minerals from the earth of this land. It is unclear why they are unaffected by this border world's Void properties. The Harith flotilla can sometimes be seen transporting goods through the river rift in the mountains. It should be easy enough to avoid detection by any Harith, but such is left up to the arbiter in reaction to the character's decisions.



TABLE 6.1 ARBITRARY ENCOUNTERS ON THE BORDERWORLD GHABAR

To increase the tension and sense of hostility on Ghabar Arbiters can introduce encounters with a variety of beasts:

- Aigioma, set loose by the Harith if threatened.
- Mardkhora (near the mines and mountainous areas).
- Sloq (near boulders and mines).

TRIGGERED EVENT: DARIUSH

Once the protagonists approach the palace, an event is triggered involving one of the Qamsa slaves. He is a human groundskeeper named Dariush and was once a Voidfarer.

He was used as an advisor on Void faring early on in the Qamsa planning, and is now always under the influence of Samita Ruyah, and going mad as a result. Gadatas primed him to await the coming of "liberators", those with the tattoo of the Darkened Sun, who is destined to place Gadatas and She Who Is Unnamed in control of the future of humanity.

He is instructed to tell the siblings that Izdubar is near madness following repeated visits via his mutated children to the alien entity that advises and supports the Qamsa. He reveals that Izdubar is the dupe of the other Qamsa; he expects his power to be increased, but they merely use him, knowing that for Izdubar only madness and dissipation awaits. If informed of this, Izdubar might be persuaded to turn against his brethren, thus giving even more significant advantage to the siblings.

EVENT 6:3 - THE QAMSA'S RITUAL INTERRUPTED

The palace features high stone terraces and a few towers sloping upward to a height of 43 cubits, planted with many types of large trees and flowers. There are stairs to reach the various levels, all built on pillars and lined with bricks and reeds. It might be aesthetically pleasing with hanging vegetation and high walls providing shade under an Earth-like sun, but in this place the shadows are deep, and the plants coloured by the reddish light of a dying sun. On one high wall is a fresco depicting a building much like this one, the Hanging Gardens near the Euphrates river in ancient Babylon. The steep terraces make irrigation easier, drawing water in from the river. Characters unusually interested in architecture could find a complex set of mechanics that draw water up from the river to water the gardens.

Shadowy non-human slaves of several species, near drained of life, serve the Qamsa within the palace. If any of them are stopped and asked, they let the siblings know that their overlords are performing a prolonged ritual in an attempt to control the Void currents.

Arbiter's Note: The Qamsa cannot really do that except by making the ruptures smaller, thereby suppressing the flow towards it, and are unaware just how much their overconfidence destabilizes their control.

The many rooms of the palace are furnished, with the slaves attending to keep things in order, but an attack is never suspected here, and so the characters may wander the grounds and rooms getting looks of surprise from the slaves, but nobody sounds an alarm. In fact, the slaves are quite willing to point the siblings in the right direction of the Qamsa's main chamber.

This is in stark contrast to how things are guarded in the core world where they operate in Llyhn, but the arrival of the protagonists here in the Qamsa's meeting chamber is wholly unexpected, as the Qamsa are overconfident in their power. The last thing they would expect is for the disciples of Telal to make it to their very doorstep. Thus Adrahasis, Tu and She Who Is Unnamed are taken by complete surprise when the siblings arrive through the servant's antechamber and stride right into the meeting and meditation chamber of the palace.

Read or paraphrase the following: "You walk through the open doors of the servant's antechamber directly into the main chamber where the Qamsa reside. You see before you three pale figures. Each of them looks human, two men and one woman, appearing no older than in their late 30s by earth years, but they are clearly extraordinary, each of them Voidmarked, their pupilless eyes glowing an azure blue. Both men are of average build, wearing dark beards standing out against their ghostly skin, their countenances expressive of wicked intelligence. One of the men wears a blueish turban and is standing, chanting words read from a long scroll pinned up to an ornate stand placed in the centre of a strange chalk diagram on the stone floor.

The stand is gold with several arms ending in a clip to hold scrolls, and another with a platform holding a glass flask filled with a dark liquid. The other man wears black robes, bearded face partly hidden under a cowl. He sits on a cushioned wooden stool beside a short, marble column with a metal spout protruding at its mid-height. He is using it to dispense a liquid that has the same colouration of Ruyah, filling a large glass flask. The woman is wearing a qaftan and sits in an unusual chair built with a meditative incline in the backrest. Her gaze is affixed to the ceiling, arms and hands on her lap, her slippered feet planted on the floor. The ceiling is painted with an intricate design resembling The Qamsa-hand symbol of the Qamsa, but more intricate in design, like a mandala with symbols known only to the ancient magi of the earth. She looks beautiful serene despite the intense preternatural glow of her blue eyes. All seem so deeply involved in their ritual or meditation that they don't notice you at all".

If the characters try to talk to Adrahasis, Tu and She That Is Unnamed, their voices will be met by startled shock as the Qamsa are jolted out of their reverie. They know they are weakened from their efforts at manipulating the Void currents and controlling unseen things from afar. Still, confident in their power, they do not fear; Tu and Adrahasis attack with ferocity if the siblings fail to press the element of surprise and take the advantage. She Who Is Unnamed

will snap out of her meditation and watch the scene unfold, but without surprise, as Gadatas had forewarned her of the siblings' imminent arrival.

A malevolent smile spreads across the woman's face as she sits upright and leans forward in the chair, using mystic power to shield herself. What the others do not know is that she was not helping with Adrahasis and Tu's ritual but was actually in telepathic communication with Gadatas. She believes that with the death of Adrahasis, Tu, and Izdubar, she and Gadatas will herald in a new age for mankind, themselves ascended as gods. She and Gadatas do not care so much about the money and power resources afforded them by the drug trade and do not care one way or the other if the Black Node and Library Vortex both collapse. Gadatas cares nothing now for man, the Qamsa or anything other than his own power, though he placates She that is Unnamed because he lusts for her and wishes to make her his queen. For him, personal domination is the goal. Gadatas wants to gain total control.

What she does not know is that the Qamsa power and Daimonic powers are all connected to each other to the level of their essence, a connection so deep that wounding one in their homeworld will harm all of them simultaneously. But as soon as one of the siblings makes a successful wounding attack on one of them, she will soon learn through pain and shock that such is the case.

The arbiter will conduct the battle in the expected order, but as soon as one of their targets is hit, they all take equal damage, and She that is Unnamed screams with a voice like a banshee, a sound so dreadful the very rocks crack and eardrums might burst. Realising what has been happening, she will try to communicate to Gadatas to help them stop the siblings.

EVENT 6.4 - GADATAS IN A PANIC

Gadatas was busy in the background while the siblings were trying to find a way to the Qamsa borderworld. If Anzor was both still alive and possessed the MindNebula, Gadatas and his Talath guard tracked him down and murdered him, stealing the MindNebula and attuning himself to it.

The protagonists will learn of this later (probably told by Feerada after this final scene). Gadatas was shadowing the siblings' arrival and had in the intervening time taken an enraged and shocked Izdubar captive, torturing him with the aid of another summoned Taedhib, and using the MindNebula to extract all that Izdubar had ever learned in his communication with the Void entity.

If the siblings left the cavern grotto after the collapse of that rift, they might never encounter Izdubar, because Gadatas will have captured and murdered him after extracting knowledge by both torture and use of the MindNebula if he managed to acquire the beast.

The reason he was able to do this without harm to himself was that neither he nor Izdubar was in their own border world. Thus he is doubly surprised and confused when he arrives on his border world and finds wounds opening on him as his fellow Qamsa are attacked.

If Gadatas makes it to the palace at all during the fight, he will have as many Health points lost as his brethren in the intervening time and may well drop dead at the door. She That is Unnamed will desperately try to escape to Llyhn, jumping or mystically transporting herself through the unstable node located in a room adjacent to the meeting room, thinking whatever curse has them all connected in death will not follow her there, but she is mistaken. When Adrahasis and Tu fall, she falls too, wherever she is.

When the Qamsa die, the rift at the Hidden Hollow becomes completely destabilized, and the Vortex at their library destabilizes and sucks everything in the caverns into it, even sucking up all of the cavern's water, temporarily leaving a dry riverbed. The characters will find the safest way back to the area of Llyhn through the mountainous arch away from the palace, leading to Shiqunrift, although it is possible, they could escape through the other rifts in the palace, hoping not to get lost in the Void.





PART III: CONCLUSION

As the characters leave Ghabar after killing the Qamsa they are probably quite surprised that the Qamsa are connected so in death when one is hurt on their homeworld. Gadatas did not realize that connection if he had the opportunity to kill Izdubar in the city of Llyhn.

With the Qamsa dead and their outpost taken by Feerada's forces, the siblings will arrive in a secured Shiqunrift likely to the elation and celebration of their fellow enclave members.

It is probable that Axayaca, the soldier of the Qamsa, either turned against his masters at the end of part II or was slain; if not, he stood guard over the jungle outpost when the outpost was attacked by Kûn Azhar and Feerada's forces. The arbiter may decide he escaped and becomes a recurring villain in the future, or that he was killed in the fight with the Rasha Galam.

The Amari family, if any still live, place themselves back in charge of The Kimiayiy Markaz, and briefly take over the trade of Ruyah, but a Hohr'loh'kin intervenes and removes the inscriptions, forcing the Amari's to scramble for their lives.

The Unseen Rulers do not take kindly to dissidence or encroachment in any shape or form!

ADVANCEMENT

Arbiters can consider the below allocations in terms of experience points, enlightenment and Wastah.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

In addition to specific accomplishments by the characters it is recommended that they are each awarded 1-3 experience points per completed scene.

ENLIGHTENMENT

The Arbiter should award a point of enlightenment to all characters who have travelled to the Qamsa's world and lived.

WASTAH

As instrumental in helping ridding the Feeradani enclave of the problem of the masters of the Aromatic Souq, whose drugs were creating such problems for the enclave, the siblings are eligible to obtain another Wastah ranking with Feerada and/or Kûn Azhar.

REWARDS

While Arbiters are free to let the characters pilfer and otherwise obtain valuables throughout the adventure the below guidelines can be applied as guidelines:

- The Qamsa palace more than likely holds a variety items, weapons and other valuables that can be pilfered.

ANTAGONISTS & NPC'S

Abd Alim (Amari)

Abd Alim is Phamea's older brother, first born of Hunlona from her previous marriage. He is known as The Cipher.

APPEARANCE: This olive-skinned man has a frightening feel about him. He has an oval face, a hooked nose, and small lips. His blue eyes are slanted and he has thin eyebrows. His black hair is short and straight.

GOALS: Abd Alim is an alchemist working on creating Ruyah of high potency.

GARB: Ordinary clothing.

ALLIES/HELPERS: His sister Phamea and Bayrdmin.

DOMAIN: Abd is overseeing the Qamsa alchemy lab called the Kimiayiy Markaz in the The Aromatic Souq.

QUIRKS: Twitches when nervous.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Abd is not keen on violence and will fight with desperation if forced into combat.

Abd Alim (Amari) - Infuser			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	23
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	24
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	4	WEAPON	Dagger
PERSUASION	3	ATT MOD	+2
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	D4
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR1
TALENTS	Quick learner		
FLAWS	Emaciated (mild)		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Commerce[3], Cryptography [4], Herbalism [4], Trade (alchemy) [5].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Small blades [1]		
POWERS	Enlightened [3]		
OTHER	Void sensitive		
EQUIPMENT	Cloth armour, superior dagger, various components.		

Ab'Hekim

A master infuser who is a slave to the Shaauru in their underwater colony Eankabut. Formerly the most experienced merchant and infuser of the Amari Infusers.

APPEARANCE: Elderly and weak man.

GOALS: Abd Alim is an alchemist working on creating Ruyah of high potency.

GARB: Once expensive garb, now tattered and torn.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The Amari Infusers.

DOMAIN: A slave in Eankabut.

QUIRKS: Repeats his own words to himself.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Ab'hekim is not able to utilize many tactics other than to keep himself from falling over given his health.

Ab'Hekim - Infuser			
AGILITY	1	HEALTH	9
AWARENESS	2	SANITY	17
STAMINA	1	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	2	MOVE	3
INTELLECT	5	WEAPON	None
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	-5
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	-2
WILLPOWER	2	DMG	D3 -1
		DV	5
		PROTECTION	DR0
TALENTS	Eidetic memory		
FLAWS	Frail		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Herbalism [6], Trade (alchemy) [6].		
COMBAT SKILLS	None		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	None		
EQUIPMENT	Rags and implements for his concoctions.		



Adnan Amari

The son of Hunlona. The poor boy has been possessed and exploited by the Qamsa.

APPEARANCE: Contorting and mutating as a result of Void distortion. His Attributes and abilities change.

GOALS: Adnan is not cognisant.

GARB: Rags.

ALLIES/HELPERS: His mother, Hunlona.

DOMAIN: Chained to a bed.

QUIRKS: Fits of frenzied rage.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Adnan is affected by the delirium effect: Frenzy.

Adnan Amari - BOY			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	16
AWARENESS	2	SANITY	3
STAMINA	2	SIZE	Small
STRENGTH	5	MOVE	7
INTELLECT	0	WEAPON	Claws
PERSUASION	0	ATT MOD	Varies
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	Varies
WILLPOWER	1	DMG	Varies
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR2
TALENTS	None		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	None		
COMBAT SKILLS	Unarmed [?]		
POWERS	Involuntary changeling		
OTHER	Void conduit and thick skin		
EQUIPMENT	Rags		

Adrahasis

He was once part of the priesthood in Babylon, one of the Magi and a scholar. His lover was named Yasmine, though she later lost the right to speak her real name before him. Izdubar was his first disciple. Tu was named the temple's master of astrology, and instructor in the ways of the mysteries of the Cosmos. Gadatas was his protector and chief guard. When the Void took humanity, Adrahasis beseeched the gods to guide them into the next world. Seemingly something heard his plea, and he was touched by the Void, became ageless and grew powerful on the borderworld of Ghabar.

APPEARANCE: Adrahasis is tall and looks to be about 50.

GOALS: He seeks the knowledge to return to Earth.

GARB: He wears a long priestly robe.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The Qamsa and all their minions.

DOMAIN: Ghabar, the Node, the library, the Hidden Hollow and Shiqunrift.

QUIRKS: Adrahasis gets so lost in his studies making him easy to surprise when immersed in studies.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Adrahasis utilises defensive stance, miscellaneous manoeuvres, feints and his powers.

Adrahasis - Qamsa LEADER			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	40
AWARENESS	7	SANITY	50
STAMINA	5	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	10	WEAPON	Staff
PERSUASION	6	ATT MOD	+2
PRESENCE	8	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	7	DMG	D6
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR1
TALENTS	Eidetic memory and quick thinker		
FLAWS	Indecisive		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Enquiry [5], Lore-Occult [9], Lore-Scholastic [5], Trade (Alchemy) [8].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Clubs [2]		
POWERS	Mystic-Gnostic [8], Sphere of Mind [5]		
OTHER	Ageless, Daimonic sense and True sight.		
EQUIPMENT	Staff, cloth armour and priestly robes.		

AL'FARAGH

A 200 years old Oord and a master Voidfarer. He knows the secrets of how the Amari version of Ruyah was created as he helped Hunlona's grand-father learn the secrets of the Ruyah.

APPEARANCE: Squat with short arms, flattened fingertips and double-jointed legs and a curiously capering gait. His skin is a shade of greyish green-brown which is heavily tattooed with iconography.

GOALS: To avoid capture by the Qamsa.

GARB: Travelling clothes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The Amari Infusers

DOMAIN: Shark's Broken Nose Inn in Sludgetown.

QUIRKS: Afraid of fire.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Al'faragh is not versed in combat.

AL'FARAGH - OORD			
AGILITY	2	HEALTH	20
AWARENESS	9	SIZE	Small
STAMINA	3	MOVE	3
STRENGTH	2	WEAPON	None
INTELLECT	5	REACH	None
PERSUASION	4	ATT MOD	-4
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	-1
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	D3 -1
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR 0
TALENTS	Direction sense		
FLAWS	Sluggish (mild)		
ATTRIBUTES	Short legs and Void entity [3]		
POWERS	Enlightenment [7] Gnostic Mysticism [5] Sphere of Mind [4] Sphere of Void [5]		
SPECIAL	Comprehends all languages Innate Void navigator		
EQUIPMENT	Travelling garb, walking stick and assorted trinkets.		

ANAHITA

Anahita is a Voidmarked human, a Gnostic Mystic and leader of the Order of Laghaz.

APPEARANCE: A middle-aged woman.

GOALS: Anahita is being manipulated by Izdubar and the Qamsa.

GARB: Robes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Her sister Mahtab and the order of Laghaz.

DOMAIN: The Mirza's ruined mansion.

QUIRKS: Gets easily offended.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Anahita uses her mystic powers first and foremost.

ANAHITA - GNOSTIC MYSTIC			
AGILITY	4	HEALTH	28
AWARENESS	5	SANITY	35
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	4	WEAPON	Dagger
PERSUASION	4	ATT MOD	+4
PRESENCE	4	ATT SPEED	+1
WILLPOWER	5	DMG	D4
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR1
TALENTS	Alertness		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Expression [8], Lore-Occult [6], Rituals [5].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Small blades [3]		
POWERS	Gnostic Mysticism [4] Signature phenomenon [3] Sphere of Mind [1] Sphere of Forces [2]		
OTHER	Voidmarked and mesmerise		
EQUIPMENT	Dagger, cloth armour and ordinary equipment.		

Anzor

Anzor is a halfblood (human-Oord) practitioner of mysticism. He is a member of Rahaat's order and owner of the MindNebula.

APPEARANCE: A Squat somewhat froggish-looking man with an undulating, shimmering, tentacled MindNebula clinging to his head.

GOALS: Anzor is loyal to the cause of Misterimadh.

GARB: Utilitarian garb.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The devotees of Misterimadh.

DOMAIN: The temple of Misterimadh.

QUIRKS: Mispronounces words due to his Oord nature.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Anzor generally avoids combat, but when forced into combat he typically likes to employ tactics like swift strike, dodge, and defensive stance.

Anzor - Halfblood (Oord)			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	23
AWARENESS	5	SANITY	20
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Small
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	4
INTELLECT	8	WEAPON	Short sword
PERSUASION	6	ATT MOD	+3
PRESENCE	5	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	D6
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR4
TALENTS	Eidetic Memory		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Cryptography [3], commerce [3], cryptography [2], languages [1], lore-common [1], lore-occult [2]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Bladed weapons [3]		
POWERS	Gnostic Mysticism [2] Sphere of Mind [1]		
OTHER	The MindNebula (see the core rule book for details)		
EQUIPMENT	Short sword, leather armour and ordinary equipment.		

Aruk Tudh

Aruk Tudh is a guard at the Al'iidara and loyal to the Qamsa. He occasionally ventures into the jungles of Llyhn to capture and train Adarus to sell to wealthy people in need of such exotic and intimidating protection.

APPEARANCE: A huge brawny Talath pronounced fangs in his upper jaw.

GOALS: Aruk Tudh is loyal to the Qamsa.

GARB: Utilitarian warrior's armour and clothes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The followers and soldiers of the Qamsa.

DOMAIN: the Al'iidara.

QUIRKS: Never washes, causing a distinct smell around him.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Combat manoeuvres include Called attack, Counterattack and Knockdown.

Aruk Tudh - Talath Guardian			
AGILITY	4	HEALTH	43
AWARENESS	3	SANITY	23
STAMINA	6	SIZE	Large
STRENGTH	8	MOVE	7
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Great Mace
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+5
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	+1
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	2D12 + 5
		DV	9
		PROTECTION	DR5
TALENTS	Unyielding		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Common lore [1], Survival [2], Animal handling [4]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Blunt weapons [4], Blade weapons [2], Defense [2]		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Tough hide and digitigrade legs.		
EQUIPMENT	Great mace and laminated armor (torso).		

Qxayaga

The principal soldier and servant of the Qamsa. Deceived to destroy the possessed children without knowing they were in fact the Qamsa's own creation.

APPEARANCE: A huge burly Talath with multiple battle scars.

GOALS: To serve the Qamsa, but may be swayed to change allegiance.

GARB: Warrior's garb and armour.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The followers and soldiers of the Qamsa.

DOMAIN: The Hidden Hollow.

QUIRKS: Prideful and bad tempered.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Combat manoeuvres include furious charge, All-out attack, Block, called attack, Counterattack and Knockdown. (He has the blind-fighting specialisation)

Qxayaga - Talath Warrior			
AGILITY	5	HEALTH	43
AWARENESS	3	SANITY	23
STAMINA	6	SIZE	Large
STRENGTH	9	MOVE	7
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Great sword
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+7
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	+3
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	2D12 +6
		DV	11
		PROTECTION	DR5
TALENTS	High Pain Threshold and Explosive Force		
FLAWS	Bad Temper		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Animal handling [3], Observation [2].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Axes [3], Blade weapons [5], Bows [3], Unarmed [4], Defense [3].		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Tough hide and digitigrade legs. Blind-fighting.		
EQUIPMENT	Great Sword and laminated armor (torso).		

Badu & Naru

Two brothers serving together in the Rasha Galam. Working both as scouts and guardsmen in the Rasha Galam, the brothers are born and raised in the enclave and know everything worth knowing - and a lot of things not worth knowing - about the enclave. In game mechanics the brothers have the same characteristics.

QUIRKS: They finish each other's sentences and seem to always be near where the action is.

APPEARANCE: Young muscly men with large beards and a jovial glint in their eyes.

GOALS: Should the Arbiter ever need named members of the enclave constabulary - these two can easily fit the bill.

GARB: Regular Rasha Galam uniform, armour and reinforced turbans.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Kún Azhar and the Rasha Galam.

DOMAIN: The Feeradani enclave

QUIRKS: Jovial but temperamental.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Trained by Kún they employ formation fighting and work well as a team.

Badu & Naru - Rasha Galam			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	24
AWARENESS	3	SANITY	21
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Glaive
PERSUASION	3	ATT MOD	+3
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	D12
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR3
TALENTS	None		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Common lore [1]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Polearms [3], Blade weapons [1] and Bows [1]		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Formation fighting		
EQUIPMENT	Lamellar armour, glaive, sabre and personal items.		

Bayrdmin

A Ka'Alum servant of Abd Alim.

APPEARANCE: Resembling a large flightless bird, Bayrdmin stands four cubits tall with a flexible neck and a small head with a long curved beak. He is covered in short purplish downy fur.

GOALS: As a servant to Abd Alim his goals are his masters.

GARB: Utilitarian garb of good weave.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Abd Alim and his cronies.

DOMAIN: The Qamsa alchemy lab, the Kimiayiy Markaz.

QUIRKS: Has an arrogant streak to his demeanour.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Bayrdmin is not a keen combatant, but will fight with vigour and tenacity if forced.

Bayrdmin - Ka'Alum			
AGILITY	4	HEALTH	35
AWARENESS	5	SIZE	Large
STAMINA	4	MOVE	8
STRENGTH	3	WEAPON	Short sword
INTELLECT	6	ATT MOD	+2
PERSUASION	5	ATT SPEED	+1
PRESENCE	3	DMG	D6
WILLPOWER	4	DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR2
TALENTS	Quick thinker		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Common lore [1], commerce [1]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Blade weapons [1]		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Long digitigrade legs, peripheral vision, small claws and tail		
EQUIPMENT	Good clothes, reinforced cloth armour and short sword.		

Behzad

The councillor is a young and very ambitious man. He has colluded with Na'Aqh to remove a key adversary (Tehmeena) within the enclave council, but realises that his ambitions have gotten the better of him and that he is in over his head as Na'Aqh drags him into its occult practices. This has had a profound effect on him, making him nervous and jittery, but he has no choice but to comply lest his involvement in the abduction becomes exposed.

APPEARANCE: A young and well-groomed man.

GOALS: He is very ambitious and wants to further his position in the enclave (for the good of the people naturally).

GARB: Loose and leisurely robes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: His hired henchmen.

DOMAIN: An abode in the Feeradani enclave.

QUIRKS: He begins most sentences with "One thinks..." and tends to speak fast and with a slight stammer during conversations.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Behzad abhors physical violence. Preferred manoeuvres are disengage, dodge and flee.

Behzad - Enclave Councillor			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	16
AWARENESS	3	SANITY	23
STAMINA	2	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	2	MOVE	4
INTELLECT	4	WEAPON	Cane
PERSUASION	4	ATT MOD	0
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	D3
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR0
TALENTS	Specious		
FLAWS	Bleeder		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Enquiry [0], expression [2], intrigue [3], subterfuge [1]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Polearms [0], dodge [1]		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	None		
EQUIPMENT	Cane, robes and personal items.		



BULTAZAAR

This deranged Daimonic Taedhib likes to cause fear and taunt. It loves dialogue, so it can be delayed in its tortures that way unless its victim is tied up, in which case it shows interest in detailed descriptions of the level of pain one is in. Often, it will set up a mirror so that the victim can watch. That why it rarely performs tortures involving the removal of the tongue or damage to the mouth, eyes, or ears .

APPEARANCE: A changeling Daimon of terrible aspect.

GOALS: Taedhib live for the pleasure of pain.

ALLIES/HELPERS: None dare associate with this Daimon.

DOMAIN: The torture chamber in the Al'iidara.

QUIRKS: Cruelty in everything it does.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Not versed in combat Bultazaar fights instinctively rather than with any skill. If facing a single opponent it will attempt to grapple, pin and incapacitate, but if facing several, it will try to subdue one at a time, occasionally using its shard-whip. Its Silhouetted power allows it to appear as if it is a shadow, regardless of the

BULTAZAAR - TAEDHIB DAIMON

AGILITY	9	HEALTH	40
AWARENESS	6	SANITY	63
STAMINA	4	SIZE	Large
STRENGTH	4	MOVE	13
INTELLECT	5	WEAPON	Claws
PERSUASION	8	ATT MOD	+4
PRESENCE	10	ATT SPEED	+7
WILLPOWER	10	DMG	D4*
		DV	12 (13)
		PROTECTION	DR3

TALENTS Focused, High Pain Threshold, Vigilant.

FLAWS (Obedient)

PRIMARY SKILLS Lore-occult [5], Trade (torture) [6], enquiry (interrogation) [4]

COMBAT SKILLS None

POWERS Inherent Mystic (Forces) [3], Silhouetted, Fear aura [5], Void changeling, Veil Rupture, Void Suppression and Void Sight.

OTHER EQUIPMENT Environment manipulation, Shard-whip, daggers and torture instruments.

lighting behind it, although it remains corporal and can still be wounded. This state grants perceptual distortion, granting it +1 to its Defence Score. This takes an action to manifest which lasts while it is not attacking or using other abilities such as Mysticism. It can manipulate the surrounding environment and control temperature and the movement of air to a minor degree to create confusion and discomfort, giving a -1 to attacks against it until its opponents adjust in 1 round.

DARIUSH

He is a human groundskeeper named Dariush and was once a Voidfarer. He was used as an advisor on Void faring early on in the Qamsa planning, and is now always under the influence of Samita Ruyah, and going mad as a result.

APPEARANCE: Dark skinned human with few distinct features.

GOALS: Serving Gadata, he follows directions to get the Ruyah he craves.

GARB: Ordinary clothes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: None

DOMAIN: Ghabar, the borderworld.

QUIRKS: Sycophantic and mad.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Dariush will flee at the prospect of violence.

FEERADA

Feerada is an elderly human woman who founded and is the undisputed matriarch of the Feeradani enclave. She founded the commune in her youth and has since struggled to retain and expand her dominion, giving humanity a haven in a hostile Cosmos.

APPEARANCE: Her face is furrowed and sombre with old pains while her dark and intense eyes carry great authority. Her left arm is missing at the shoulder from a past encounter.

GOALS: She is well aware that the odds are stacked against her, but she will fight till her dying breath, ruling with absolute authority and suffering no opposition.

GARB: Qaftan or robes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: She is supported by capable individuals such as Kûn Azhar, the Rasha Galam and the entire Feeradani enclave.

DOMAIN: The Feeradani enclave.

QUIRKS: She is used to obedience and expects it.

COMBAT: Feerada is too old to fight and will surrender.

GADATAS

Once the personal protector of Adrahasis in a Babylonian temple on Earth, proficient with a wide range of weapons. He has continued with that role but has no care to return to Earth, caring not at all for mankind. He feels that being ageless and more powerful than most humans have elevated him above mere mortals.

APPEARANCE: Gadatas was a large, bearded, muscular and intimidating man in his 30s, even before becoming Void-touched. He stands about four cubits tall and wields a wicked glaive.

GOALS: His loyalty to the hierarchy of the Qamsa is entirely self-serving.

GARB: Warrior's garb, a superior glaive and fitted plate armour.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The followers and soldiers of the Qamsa.

DOMAIN: Ghabar, the Node, the library, the Hidden Hollow and Shiqunrift.

QUIRKS: Gadatas has the habit of constantly mumbling under his breath.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Gadatas is fearless and powerful. His preferred manoeuvres include all-out attack, crushing blow, and knockdown.

Gadatas - Qamsa			
AGILITY	10	HEALTH	67
AWARENESS	5	SANITY	48
STAMINA	10	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	11	MOVE	8
INTELLECT	8	WEAPON	Glaive
PERSUASION	4	ATT MOD	+10
PRESENCE	8	ATT SPEED	+7
WILLPOWER	7	DMG	2D6 +8
		DV	14
		PROTECTION	DR5
TALENTS	Flexible Power		
FLAWS	(Gullibility)		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Animal Handling [3], Intimidation [5], Languages [2]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Polearms [3], Bows [3]		
POWERS	Furore Mystic [4], Sphere of Forces [4]		
OTHER	Ageless		
EQUIPMENT	Glaive and plate armour.		

FEROZE

Aligned with the order of Laghaz, Feroze is a leader among the raiders having taken control over the Mirza's mansion.

APPEARANCE: Feroze is battered and scarred from countless fights and instead of his own right arm he has had a massive Talath arm grafted on.

GOALS: His loyalty is to the order of Laghaz, and he simultaneously fears and wants to impress the Qamsa who have taken command of the order.

GARB: Warrior's garb with old and worn leather armour.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The raiders.

DOMAIN: The Mirza's ruined mansion.

QUIRKS: Feroze likes to show bravado, somewhat needlessly overdoing everything.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: A veteran warrior, Feroze when and how to strike, utilising a combination of Calculated strikes, disarming manoeuvres, stunning attacks and parry to defeat his opponents.

FEROZE - RAIDER LEADER			
AGILITY	4	HEALTH	24
AWARENESS	3	SANITY	27
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	7/4	MOVE	6
INTELLECT	4	WEAPON	Short sword
PERSUASION	3	ATT MOD	+5
PRESENCE	4	ATT SPEED	+1
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	D6 +4
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR4
TALENTS	Vigorous		
FLAWS	Fanatic		
PRIMARY SKILLS	animal handling [1], athletics [2], intimidation [3], lore-occult,		
COMBAT SKILLS	Blade weapons [4]		
POWERS	Bloodletting [3], Sacrificial divination [1].		
OTHER	Grafted Talath arm (Str 7) and Void cognisance.		
EQUIPMENT	Short sword and leather armour.		

GHAL'AR

An imposing Talath, who stands guard over the Qamsa library, stationed beside Hal'sujalat, the Ba'Waikh keeper of records.

APPEARANCE: A monstrous Talath.

GOALS: To protect the library and Hal'sujalat from intruders.

GARB: Armour and utilitarian garments.

ALLIES/HELPERS: None

DOMAIN: The library in the Hidden Hollow.

QUIRKS: Perpetually suspicious.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Combat manoeuvres include furious charge, all-out attack, block, called attack, Counterattack, Knockdown.

GHAL'AR - TALATH SENTRY			
AGILITY	5	HEALTH	43
AWARENESS	3	SANITY	23
STAMINA	6	SIZE	Large
STRENGTH	10	MOVE	7
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Great axe
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+5
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	+2
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	2D12 +7
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR5
TALENTS	High Pain Threshold		
FLAWS	Blunt		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Observation [2]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Axes [5], Blade weapons [4], Unarmed [5].		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Tough hide and digitigrade legs.		
EQUIPMENT	Great Axe and laminated armor (torso).		



HAL'SUJALAT

This learned Ba'Waikh is "Keeper of Records" in the Qamsa Library, and one of the few cognizant of the importance of the Veiled Inscriptions.

APPEARANCE: Diminutive Ba'Waikh clerk with a mean staring eye.

GOALS: To service the Qamsa and their library needs.

GARB: Clerks qaftan and modest garb.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Ghal'Ar, the Talath sentry.

DOMAIN: The library in the Hidden Hollow.

QUIRKS: Bad mannered and aloof.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Hal'sujalat habitually leaves the fighting to Ghal'Ar but will resort to the following manoeuvres if engaged in combat: Defensive stance, dodge, disarm, and Calculated Strike. [Use standard Ba'Waikh characteristics: Core rule book 325]

PRIMARY SKILLS: Lore-Scholastic [5], Cryptography [4], Dodge [3] Languages [4] and Lore-Occult [5].

HUNLONA AMARI

Current head of the Amari Infusers. Hunlona is the mother of Adnan, the poor boy slowly turning into a monster. She previously lost another child this way and is determined to save her son.

APPEARANCE: An attractive but weary woman in her middle years.

GOALS: To rescue her son and to reestablish the family business as founded by her grand-father.

GARB: Modest dress.

ALLIES/HELPERS: She has allied herself with Rahaat a religious Ka'Alum leader.

DOMAIN: The Misterimadh temple and her family holdings.

QUIRKS: Determined and authoritative in her demeanour.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Hunlona does not fight and have no combat skills.

PRIMARY SKILLS: Trade-Alchemy [8], Observation [5], Stealth [5], Streetwise [4].

EQUIPMENT: Tablet and writing implements.

IZDUBAR

Izdubar was a disciple not only of Adrahasis but of the occult in general. He was obsessed with transcending the mortal realm, but the coming of the cataclysm was something for which he was unprepared. The journey made him go mad and changed his physical appearance.

APPEARANCE: Izdubar is a bit over three-and-a-half cubits tall, clean-shaven, thin and wiry, and looks human except for his clawed hands and azure glowing eyes. His face is normally hidden under a cowl, only his glowing eyes noticeable.

GOALS: He gathers knowledge still, seeking full enlightenment. He is particularly interested in the Void entity that Tu would summon.

GARB: Ordinary robes and a rather large turban.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The followers and soldiers of the Qamsa.

DOMAIN: Ghabar, the Node, the library, the Hidden Hollow and Shiqunrift.

QUIRKS: Izdubar has nightmares and is prone to waking with ear-piercing screams. He also is claustrophobic and often sleeps in open spaces, sometimes outside or even in alleyways when not in the Qamsa mansion.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Combat manoeuvres include Calculated strike, dodge, feint, flurry, sneak attack, swift strike, and called attacks.

IZDUBAR - Qamsa

AGILITY	8	HEALTH	50
AWARENESS	6	SANITY	8
STAMINA	7	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	8	MOVE	10
INTELLECT	9	WEAPON	Claws
PERSUASION	8	ATT MOD	+10
PRESENCE	10	ATT SPEED	+5
WILLPOWER	6	DMG	2D6 +5
		DV	12
		PROTECTION	DR1

TALENTS	Fleet of Foot, Graceful and Veiled Communication.
FLAWS	Lack of Situational Awareness (Moderate)
PRIMARY SKILLS	Acrobatics [7], Intimidation [4], Navigation [5], Stealth [8], Streetwise [4], Survival [2].
COMBAT SKILLS	Unarmed [3]
POWERS	Furore Mystic [5], Sphere of Life [3], Sphere of Void [4], Signature phenomenon
OTHER	Aerial, Domination, Night Vision, Possession and Ageless.
EQUIPMENT	None



KATYA

Katya is a human Pit Slave liaison, adept at capturing various races for the Qamsa to press into slavery.

APPEARANCE: A young human woman with long dark hair and a cold stare in her eyes.

GOALS: She simply serves the Qamsa.

GARB: Katya wears a mix between a hunter's and warrior's outfit; made for durability and utility.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Katya works with Phamea on occasion.

DOMAIN: None.

QUIRKS: Katya has a tendency to mumble dark-humoured quips while fighting and working.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Preferred combat manoeuvres include Improvised Attack, Sneak attack, Swift Strike, and Unsheathing attack.

KATYA			
AGILITY	5	HEALTH	30
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	28
STAMINA	4	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Short sword
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+7
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	+2
WILLPOWER	4	DMG	D6
		DV	9
		PROTECTION	DR3
TALENTS	Ambidexterity		
FLAWS	Bad Reputation		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Acrobatics [3], Dodge [4], Languages [3], Stealth [5], Streetwise [4], Observation [3].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Bows [5], Small Blade Weapons [5]		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Dirty fighting specialisation.		
EQUIPMENT	Short sword, bow and hardened leather armour.		

K'SIAD

A Timaniém leader hired by the Qamsa to prevent the siblings from further interfering with the plans of The Qamsa.

APPEARANCE: A limber and graceful Timaniém female.

GOALS: K'siad lives for the hunt!

GARB: K'siad wears the traditional scant huntress garb of her species.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Her pride of hunters.

DOMAIN: None.

QUIRKS: K'siad is ultimately a hunter, not a people person.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Combat manoeuvres include Calculated strike, dodge, feint, flurry, sneak attack, swift strike, and called attacks. Her weapons are green obsidian.

K'SIAD - TIMANIÉM STALKER			
AGILITY	7	HEALTH	46
AWARENESS	6	SANITY	40
STAMINA	5	SIZE	Large
STRENGTH	5	MOVE	7
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Bow/sword
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+11 / +9
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	+4
WILLPOWER	6	DMG	D6
		DV	12
		PROTECTION	DR1
TALENTS	Alertness, Fast Reflexes, Tough, Unyielding, Quick Learner.		
FLAWS	Bad Temper		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Acrobatics [7], Navigation [5], Survival [6].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Bow [7], Blade Weapons [5], Defence [2].		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Alternate vision, cold-blooded, long-limbed, prehensile feet and digitigrade legs.		
EQUIPMENT	Bow, sword, dagger and pauldrons		

Kûn Azhar

Kûn Azhar is a human male in his early forties. He is the founder and spearhead of the partisan wing of the Feeradani enclave in ShallowWater.

[See full profile for Kûn Azhar in the core book page 308]

Lfarmas

Lfarmas is a Shirr who was taken prisoner by Z'truk and robbed of his Void vessel. He is being held in Z'truk's encampment.

APPEARANCE: Large and bulbous, Lfarmas is easily discernible by his bulk, dark grey-brown skin and multiple slit-pupil eyes.

GOALS: To get away from Z'truk.

GARB: Former rich clothing has become rags.

ALLIES/HELPERS: None

DOMAIN: Captive in Z'truk's encampment.

QUIRKS: Lfarmas is a collector, picking up bits and bobs wherever he goes.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Lfarmas prefers to avoid violence and will resort to disarm, knock-down, stun and defensive stance if assaulted. [Use standard Shirr characteristics: Core rule book 344]

PRIMARY SKILLS: Commerce [5], Streetwise [1], Observation [2], Navigation [6].

Mahtab

Female Gnostic Mystic keeping the rift in the mansion open. Leader of the Order of Laghaz and sister of Anahita.

APPEARANCE: Ordinary of build and stature Mahtab's eyes have a haunted quality to them, as if she has seen terrible things.

GOALS: Along with her sister Mahtab is being manipulated by Izdubar and the Qamsa.

GARB: Practical clothes obscuring her features.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The order of Laghaz.

DOMAIN: The Mirza's ruined mansion.

QUIRKS: Tends to react overly dramatically.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Mahtab uses her mystic powers first and foremost.

Mahtab - Gnostic Mystic

AGILITY	4	HEALTH	20
AWARENESS	6	SANITY	38
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	5	WEAPON	Dagger
PERSUASION	3	ATT MOD	+3
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	+1
WILLPOWER	6	DMG	D4
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR1

TALENTS Collected, Focused.

FLAWS None

PRIMARY SKILLS Lore-scholastic [3], Lore-Occult [6], Rituals [5].

COMBAT SKILLS Small blades [2]

POWERS Gnostic Mysticism [4]
Signature phenomenon [3]
Sphere of Mind [2]
Sphere of Forces [1]

OTHER Adaptive pigment.

EQUIPMENT Dagger, cloth armour and ordinary equipment.



Maiara

An elderly female Je'ehl Pariah Maiara is the proprietor of a Sheesha and Opium den known as House of Maiara, located in Pai'Karaan. Her establishment is premium and has an extensive and influential customer base. Her two sons function as guards and caretakers of the place while she conducts all business. She has a strong and authoritative presence.

APPEARANCE: Regal in posture and with the typical cold stare of her four golden Je'ehl eyes.

GOALS: To mind and grow her business.

GARB: Long flowing dress robes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Her sons and staff.

DOMAIN: The House of Maiara.

QUIRKS: Acts quickly, decisively and sometimes rashly.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Maiara usually lets her sons deal with any violence, and will seek to utilise her dodge (+6) until reinforcements arrive. If caught alone she will not hesitate to plunge her thin stiletto blade into any offender.

Maiara - JE'EHL MATRON			
AGILITY	5	HEALTH	20
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	34
STAMINA	2	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	2	MOVE	4
INTELLECT	4	WEAPON	Stiletto
PERSUASION	5	ATT MOD	+3
PRESENCE	4	ATT SPEED	+2
WILLPOWER	6	DMG	D4 [1]
		DV	9
		PROTECTION	DR0
TALENTS	None		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Expression [3], Streetwise [3] and observation [4].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Small blades [1]		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	Horns and multiple eyes.		
EQUIPMENT	Expensive dress and stiletto [piercing 1].		

Na'Aqh

Na'Aqh is a youngling triplet Aml'Nāqru with a single consciousness controlling separate bodies.

Outside their homeworld these beings are suspended inside light blue liquid gaseous bubbles of their native environment in order to survive. Na'Aqh is seemingly a loyal servant of the Aristocrat while having a distinct agenda of its own. With the capture of Telal and the subsequent abduction of Tehmeena Na'Aqh intensifies his endeavour to beckon the mindless abominations and bring about his ascension.

APPEARANCE: An almost silvery floating serpent with several flipper-like appendages down the side.

GOALS: It wants to become Bel Ade U Mamit and seeks to summon the mindless abominations of the Void. It serves the Mirza under false pretence and exploits her obsession with humans to buy and abduct humans to be used as sacrifices for its atrocious summoning rites.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The cult of the Darkened Sun, Behzad and Saya Mah.

DOMAIN: The Mirza's mansion and the caverns beneath.

QUIRKS: Aml'Nāqru are blind and while they can only feel sound waves they are not able to actually hear anything. They rely on pressure differences and mystic abilities to sense their surroundings but are limited in this capacity in atmosphere foreign to their own.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Na'Aqh avoids direct confrontation using its cultists and followers as shields if threatened. It will use its Mystic powers on an adversary to support its defenders and if faced directly it will attempt to dominate an opponent and as a last resort use its lashing tail as a weapon.



Nā'NaqH - Nml'NaqRU TRIPLET

AGILITY	5	HEALTH	28
AWARENESS	5	SANITY	35
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Large
STRENGTH	4	MOVE	6 (fly)
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Tail
PERSUASION	3	ATT MOD	+2
PRESENCE	4	ATT SPEED	+2
WILLPOWER	5	DMG	D6 + 1
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR1

TALENTS	Alertness
FLAWS	None
PRIMARY SKILLS	Expression [8], Lore-Occult [6], Rituals [5].
COMBAT SKILLS	Small blades [3]
POWERS	Furore Mysticism [4] Known phenomena [2] Sphere of Mind [4] Sphere of Void [2]
OTHER	Aerial, Alternative sense, prehensile tail and tough skin.

DOMINATE (Known Mind phenomenon)

CHANNELLING TIME:	3 seconds (1 rd)
RANGE:	9 metres
DURATION:	9 seconds
AREA:	1 Individual
EFFECT:	Affected [10]
DESCRIPTION:	Upon a successful manifestation the target must make a Willpower resistance roll [10] or act in accordance with the Mystic's instructions for nine seconds (3 combat rounds).
DIFFICULTY:	10 (+ Will mod)

ILLUSORY PAIN (Known Mind phenomenon)

CHANNELLING TIME:	3 seconds (1 rd)
RANGE:	15 metres
DURATION:	9 seconds
AREA:	1 Individual
EFFECT:	Plausible
DESCRIPTION:	The target thinks she experiences a vicious burst of pain unrelated to any physical cause. If susceptible to the effect the target suffers a -3 penalty to actions.
DIFFICULTY:	11 (+ Int mod)

OZEUT

Ozeut is a Quth supplier of Samita-laced Ruyah. [Use standard Quth characteristics: Core rule book 341]

PHOMER (NARI)

The disowned daughter of Hunlona and learned in Mysticism.

APPEARANCE: A beautiful woman, clearly resembling Hunlona in her facial features.

GOALS: Somewhat driven by an urge for revenge she has aligned herself with the Qamsa.

GARB: Practical clothes for travelling and fighting.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Her brother Abd Alim, Katya and the Qamsa forces.

DOMAIN: None

QUIRKS: Quick to righteous fury.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Often intoxicated her preferred manoeuvres are Stun, Unsheathing attack and Wild Swing.

PHOMER (NARI)

AGILITY	5	HEALTH	24
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	39
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	4	MOVE	6
INTELLECT	5	WEAPON	Sabre
PERSUASION	4	ATT MOD	+7
PRESENCE	4	ATT SPEED	+2
WILLPOWER	6	DMG	D12 + 1
		DV	11
		PROTECTION	DR2

TALENTS	Alertness, Beautiful, Fast reflexes and Fearless
FLAWS	Addicted (alcoholic)
PRIMARY SKILLS	Intrigue [5], Observation [5], Stealth [5], Streetwise [7], Survival [4]
COMBAT SKILLS	Dodge [4], Defence [2], Blades [5] and Bows [5]
POWERS	None
OTHER	Quick Draw and Sidestep
EQUIPMENT	Sword, Studded Leather.

Rahaat

A Ka'Alum, founder and devotee of the Misterimadh temple. He was friends with Hunlona's grandfather and once used the intoxicant to gain visions, which instigated the origin of the cult. He considers the concoction to be sacred and is appalled that it is now being sold as a common intoxicant. He both wants to help Hunlona track down the source and regain the tablets so the substance can only be used for "holy" purposes.

APPEARANCE: Large Ka'Alum who carries himself with the distinct authority of someone who has seen the light and knows the truth of things.

GOALS: To preach the Silver lining of the Void.

GARB: Dark robes with the twelve-spiked sun emblem.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The devotees of Misterimadh.

DOMAIN: The temple in Sludgetown

QUIRKS: There is a zealous, single minded aura about him, one that holds no room for doubt - or reason maybe?

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Rahaat is a philosopher and priest, not a fighter. [Use standard Ka'Alum characteristics: Core rule book 334]

PRIMARY SKILLS: Expression [6], Intrigue [3], Lore-Common [5], Lore-Occult [6], Observation [3], Rituals [5], Streetwise [5], Subterfuge [3], Trade Skill-Alchemy [5].



Repalkan

An Aquzam tribal leader and shaman. Ruling over the Consumed tribe in the jungles of Llyhn.

[Use standard Aquzam characteristics: Core rule book 323]



Sayu Mah

This massive Talath is an overseer of the guard at the Mirza's mansion in Pai'Karaan. Sayu Mah leads the raiders in the abduction of Tehmeena at the enclave.

APPEARANCE: Huge and musclar. One of his eyes is clouded and sightless due to an old combat injury giving him a blind angle on his right side.

GOALS: He is secretly aiding Na'Aqh in its endeavours, while retaining the facade of overseer at the mansion.

GARB: Guardsman uniform, armour and weaponry.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The mansion guard.

DOMAIN: The Mirza's mansion.

QUIRKS: Sayu Mah is surprisingly flamboyant for a Talath.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Sayu is a veteran warrior who fights strategically, utilising any advantage he gets. His preferred tactic is to begin defensively (defensive stance) biding his time and utilising his disarming specialisation (disarm) to releave an opponent of his or her weapon before gutting them with a called attack to their weakest point.

Because of his disarm specialisation Saya Mah does not suffer the regular -3 penalty to disarming manoeuvres when fighting with his battle axe.

Onahita - Gnostic Mystic

AGILITY	3	HEALTH	49
AWARENESS	2	SANITY	31
STAMINA	6	SIZE	Large
STRENGTH	6	MOVE	11
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Battle axe
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+5
PRESENCE	4	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	4	DMG	2D6 +3
		DV	6
		PROTECTION	DR7

TALENTS	Strong legs
FLAWS	(blind angle)
PRIMARY SKILLS	Intimidate [3]
COMBAT SKILLS	Axe [4], blades [2]
POWERS	None
OTHER	Disarm specialisation.
EQUIPMENT	Superiour battle axe, short sword, laminated armour, pauldrons, greaves and helmet.

S'BALYA

Z'truk 's alchemist, a Ba'Waikh named S'balya. But S'balya also works for Abd Alim and his sister Phamea, who operate against the Qamsa's interests from within Kimiayiy Markaz in the Hollow of the Aromatic Souq. S'balya plays all sides to gain the upper hand himself.

[Use standard Ba'Waikh characteristics: Core rule book 325]

SHE THAT IS UNNAMED

Once a beautiful princess called Yasmine, She that is unnamed was betrothed to Adrahasis but admitted an affair. In a rage, Adrahasis declared she could never again use her real name, for it was forever shamed, and their love desecrated. What she did not tell him was that her other lover was none other than Gadatas, who still intends to marry her and rid themselves of Adrahasis' influence.

APPEARANCE: Strangely beautiful still, with glowing blue eyes.

GOALS: She shares in Adrahasis's desire to return to earth so that she and Gadatas can establish themselves a new religion for mankind in which the Qamsa are gods.

GARB: Flimsy and flamboyant dresses, befitting a princess.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The collective Qamsa forces.

DOMAIN: Ghabar, the Node, the library, the Hidden Hollow and Shiquunrift.

QUIRKS: Albeit no longer a princess her haughty manner and distanced demeanour does not make this apparent.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: She that is unnamed utilises Defensive stance, parry, dodge, disarm, and calculated strike if needed.

SHE THAT IS UNNAMED - Qamsa

AGILITY	3	HEALTH	19
AWARENESS	10	SANITY	32
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	9	WEAPON	Dagger
PERSUASION	3	ATT MOD	+3
PRESENCE	8	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	5	DMG	D4
		DV	9
		PROTECTION	DR3
TALENTS	Beautiful, Eloquent, Resolve		
FLAWS	None		
PRIMARY SKILLS	ELanguages [3], Streetwise [3], Trade Skill-Alchemy [5]		
COMBAT SKILLS	Defence [2] Small Bladed Weapons [3].		
POWERS	Daimonic Whispers. Reincarnation.		
OTHER	Voidmarked and mesmerise		
EQUIPMENT	Short Sword, Short Bow, Lamellar armour.		

Tahmtan

This Im'Zu chatter broker habitually sojourns in a semi-private booth in the House of Maiara establishment in Pai'Karaan. Here he can receive clients without drawing undue attention to himself or his dealings, for a small fee paid to the proprietor Maiara. Tahmtan is never without his loyal bodyguard Oqq, a massive specimen of the common Talath race. Tahmtan is extraordinarily good at what he does, which is gleaning information out of anybody he speaks to or observes and then selling it on to anyone who is interested. Tahmtan does not concern himself with the motives of his clients or the use of the information provided. His prices are based on the rarity of the information he has and the client need, the more desperate the client or rare the chatter the higher the price. Although unconcerned with the usage of his sold information he will never knowingly sell false information.

APPEARANCE: As a typical Im'zu is rather small and unremarkable in physical appearance.

GOALS: To line his pockets with copper dhins.

GARB: Robes of an indistinct make.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Oqq, a Talath bodyguard.

DOMAIN: A booth in the House of Maiara.

QUIRKS: There is a sneaky jealousy about Tahmtan, but he never lies.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Tahmtan lets Oqq do the fighting. [Use standard Im'zu characteristics: Core rule book 330]

PRIMARY SKILLS: Socialise [3], commerce [2], enquiry [3] and observation [3].

Tehmeena

Tehmeena is an elderly councillor in the Feeradani enclave. Friend of Telal and a staunch believer in patience and peaceful resolutions, she is a counterbalance to the somewhat rash views of Kún Azhar and Behzad. Tehmeena is involved in the investigations of Telal and knows about the past doings of cult of the Darkened Sun.

APPEARANCE: Tehmeena is an old frail lady with bunned-up white locks and a walking stick supporting her as she wanders about the enclave.

GOALS: Tehmeena seeks what is best for the enclave and has dedicated her entire life to the betterment of others.

GARB: Old and well-worn robes don her small frame.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Telal and Feerada are her closest confidants.

DOMAIN: A small abode in the Feeradani enclave.

QUIRKS: Despite her age there is a glint in her eyes and a fire in her spirit.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Tehmeena is unable to fight.

PRIMARY SKILLS: Socialise [3], common lore [2], occult lore [1].

Telal

Foster father to the protagonists. Telal has a dark and hidden past that he seeks to keep from his progenies. He is not an enclave member but is a confidant of Tehmeena and respected by Feerada.

APPEARANCE: An old man, but still physically strong and able to pursue his goals.

GOALS: He thought he had managed to eradicate the cult of the Darkened Sun those many years ago when he helped assassinate a great deal of its members. Recent events have made him realise that the cult was perhaps only dormant, but not dead, so he has gone to investigate...

GARB: Utilitarian travelling clothes.

ALLIES/HELPERS: Tehmeena and his fostered children.

DOMAIN: A small hovel in Dhaarese.

QUIRKS: Telal seems to evade talking about himself and his past and will quickly change the subject if it is brought up.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Telal is too old to put up much of a fight with anyone.

PRIMARY SKILLS: Enquiry [3], cryptography [2], occult lore [4] and rituals [2].



The MindNebula

This peculiar entity has connection with Anzor and will assist him with drawing knowledge and information from others.

[Use standard MindNebula characteristics: Core rule book 388]

THE MIRZA

A Harith aristocrat, the Mirza is very wealthy, but seemingly scorned by other Harith. She sits surrounded by hordes of sycophants and flatterers holding pantomime court in her vast mansion in Pai'Karaan.

The Mirza has a sickly demented fascination with mankind and owns numerous human slaves. These are treated as unwitting pets or trophies intended only to please and pleasure her. She "loves" them and they, in turn, must earn her love. Any slave who displeases her is seen as a disobedient child that must be disciplined. These chastisements are often harsh and always performed in front of the household and even visitors. The mangled slaves are then treated as broken toys, packed away so as to not offend the mistress with their blemishes.

APPEARANCE: the Mirza's facial features somewhat resemble those of an exotic blue whale with multiple compound eyes and a very large mouth. Her bloated body is supported by emaciated tentacles that seem to have withered as she spends most of her time lounging on softly cushioned divans or palanquins. Her multiple arms are wide and flattened, much like elongated wings of a ray, ending in short claw-like digits.

GOALS: The ambitions of her deranged mind are quite unfathomable, but she does enjoy expanding her human menagerie.

GARB: Her arms are covered in chains and other jewellery of precious metals giving off a soft jingle whenever she moves and on her head rests an odd horned diadem.

ALLIES/HELPERS: An army of sycophants and her household guard consisting of Talath and Ba'Waikh.

DOMAIN: An opulent mansion in Pai'Karaan.

QUIRKS: She enjoys playing mind games with the slaves setting impossible challenges or promising them rewards, which are never given. Quotes: "Am I not merciful?"

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: The Mirza is too obese and weakened from years of hedonistic debauchery to be any good in a fight. [Use standard Harith characteristics: Core rule book 328]

PRIMARY SKILLS: Socialise [3] intrigue [4] and commerce [5].



THE MYRIAD

This Shaauru is the leader of the Shaauru underwater colony found on the bottom of the Margidda river.

APPEARANCE: Otherwise indistinguishable from the other Shaauru, the Myriad is larger than a regular specimen.

GOALS: The alien mind of the Shaauru is unknowable.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The Eankabut colony.

DOMAIN: The Eankabut colony.

QUIRKS: The alien mind of the Shaauru is unknowable.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Shaauru react with extreme aggression if threatened and agitated.

[Use standard female Shaauru characteristics (Intellect 3): Core rule book 342]



Tu

Tu is the second oldest of the Qamsa, but now ageless like the others. He was an astrologer and priest, instructor to Adrahasis of Mysticism, and he was somehow forewarned about the impending doom of Earth. He was a master alchemist and expert with poisons and drugs, responsible for the death of many high ranking officials who dared oppose their priesthood. His knowledge helped his group establish themselves as a force in the Aromatic Souq. Still, with aspirations far beyond black market commerce...

APPEARANCE: His bearded face is always focused. Although shorter than the others there is a savage intensity about him, showing through his body language.

GOALS: Tu wishes to summon a godlike entity who he calls the Qamsa, the being for whom their group is named in awe-stricken reverence.

GARB: Priestly robes and hallowed garments.

ALLIES/HELPERS: The collective Qamsa forces.

DOMAIN: Ghabar, the Node, the library, the Hidden Hollow and Shiqunrift.

QUIRKS: Tu has clipped, arrogant and impatient speech, often interrupting conversations.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Tu is afraid to get hurt and tends to engage in violence only at range using glass orbs filled with acid, and where he himself is out of harms way. Should he get caught in close combat he will employ Defensive stance and dodging until reinforcement arrive or an opportunity of escape presents itself.

Tu - Qamsa

AGILITY	3	HEALTH	20
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	41
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	5
INTELLECT	9	WEAPON	Glass orbs
PERSUASION	3	ATT MOD	+4
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	6	DMG	2D6 (acid)
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DRO
TALENTS		Quick Learner	
FLAWS		Easily exhausted.	
PRIMARY SKILLS		Intrigue [3], Lore-Common [5], Lore-Occult [7], Observation [3], Rituals [4], Subterfuge [2], Trade Skill-Alchemy [8].	
COMBAT SKILLS		Thrown Weapons [3].	
POWERS		Gnostic Mysticism [6] Sphere of Forces [5]	
OTHER		Ageless.	
EQUIPMENT		Glass orbs and robes.	



UBELE

This Variin follower of Misterimadh is well-acquainted with the Shaauru colony in the Margidda river and as a fellow devotee offers to help Rahaat in his efforts.

[Use standard Variin characteristics: Core rule book 362]

UKBALTHOO

A curious dwarf-like being whose purpose is to ferry invited visitors down the river safely through the Vortex into the Library.

APPEARANCE: Dwarf-like with a tilted head so his eyes and mouth on opposite sides of his face

GOALS: Ukbalthoo writes poetry and ferries people to the library.

GARB: Loose garments.

DOMAIN: The river in the hidden hollow.

QUIRKS: Ukbalthoo has a poetic streak to him.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Ukbalthoo will seek only to defende himself using defensive stance.

UKBALTHOO - THE FERRYMAN			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	23
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	34
STAMINA	3	SIZE	Small
STRENGTH	4	MOVE	4
INTELLECT	4	WEAPON	Unarmed
PERSUASION	1	ATT MOD	+3
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	5	DMG	D3 +1
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR1
TALENTS	Composed		
FLAWS	Disfigured		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Languages [7], Commerce [1], Enquiry [3], Navigation [3].		
COMBAT SKILLS	Unarmed [3].		
POWERS	True sight Voidfaring		
EQUIPMENT	Tablet and writing implements.		



ZIZY

A heretic and excommunicated member of Rahaat's Mystical order, whose espionage is the reason the Qamsa servants are able to follow the siblings' trail with such precision and speed.

APPEARANCE: An ordinary-looking man of about thirty years of age and with a shaved head.

GOALS: Zizy is determined to stop Rahaat from claiming the Amari Veiled Inscriptions. He fears madness and death for the misguided souls of the Eternal City if Rahaat's religion spreads.

GARB: Simple grey robes worn over a pair of black leather trousers.

QUIRKS: Zizy means to do what is right.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Zizy's combat skills are slightly erratic and desperate with his preferred manoeuvres being Dodge and Wild Swing.

ZIZY - THE HERETIC			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	33
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	36
STAMINA	5	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	3	MOVE	6
INTELLECT	5	WEAPON	Hand axe
PERSUASION	4	ATT MOD	+2
PRESENCE	2	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	4	DMG	D6
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR0
TALENTS	Adaptability, High Pain Threshold, Intrinsic Insight, Resolve.		
FLAWS	Outspoken		
PRIMARY SKILLS	Animal Handling [2], Commerce [3], Lore-Occult [4], Observation [3], Lore-Common [2], Streetwise [2],		
COMBAT SKILLS	Axes [2], Small blade weapons [3], Unarmed [1].		
POWERS	None		
OTHER	None		
EQUIPMENT	Hand Axe.		

Z'TRUK

A former warlord who now dwells in the dense jungles surrounding Llyhn. He is knowledgeable about Ruyah and which components are needed to make it potent.

APPEARANCE: Z'truk is past his prime, but is still a big strong man who inspires respect.

GOALS: What the mad mind of this old warlord desires is for him only to know.

GARB: Warrior garb, armour and weapons

ALLIES/HELPERS: The Aquzam tribe

DOMAIN: A jungle encampment, surrounded by pallisades.

QUIRKS: Z'truk seems to shift personality as it fits him, leaving one unsure about who is the real Z'truk, if he even still exists.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Preferred manoeuvres include All-out attack, Block, Brawling, Disarm, Feinting, Knockdown and Push back.

Z'TRUK - OLD MAD WARLORD

AGILITY	5	HEALTH	35
AWARENESS	4	SANITY	30
STAMINA	5	SIZE	Medium
STRENGTH	6	MOVE	8
INTELLECT	3	WEAPON	Sabre
PERSUASION	4	ATT MOD	+7
PRESENCE	5	ATT SPEED	+2
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	D12 +3
		DV	13
		PROTECTION	DR3

TALENTS Direction Sense, Specious and Born performer.

FLAWS Compulsive Liar

PRIMARY SKILLS Expression [2], Intimidation [3] and Intrigue [4]

COMBAT SKILLS Blade Weapons [6], Defence [3], Dual-wielding [2], Shields [1]

POWERS None

OTHER Blade master specialisation

EQUIPMENT Sabre, leather armour, shield and helmet.

GROUPS & FACTIONS

CULT RAIDERS

These raiders are warrior initiates of the cult established by Na'Aqh. They wear raggedy garments covering their faces and are armed with wave bladed short swords. They are fanatics who - in their zealous lunacy - have agreed to remove their tongues and lips to prevent divulging any information about the cult to outsiders. The gruesome wounds have been smeared with a sweet-reeking herbal concoction to quell the pain and inebriate the raiders for the raid. In their fanatical inebriation they fervently follow the instructions of Sayu Mah, are inept at independent decision-making and prefer martyrdom to capture. Each raider has a tattoo of the darkened sun on their wrist. Most tattoos have only one ray, while a few have two; denoting seniority within the cult.

CULT RAIDER			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	15
AWARENESS	3	SIZE	Medium
STAMINA	2	MOVE	5
STRENGTH	3	WEAPON	Short sword
INTELLECT	2	REACH	Close
PERSUASION	0	ATT MOD	+1
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	1	DMG	D6
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR 0
TALENTS	None		
FLAWS	Fanatic		
ATTRIBUTES	None		
SPECIAL	Wave blades (+1 to parry)		
EQUIPMENT	Wave-bladed dagger, orange robes and yellow veils.		

CONCOCTION: The herbal concoction smeared on their wounds grant the IGNORE PAIN property. Ignore modifiers when "hurt" and only suffer -1 to actions when "injured". If subject to torture or other maltreatment the character applies +1 to all attempts to resist giving in to the anguish.

EQUIPMENT: Cloth armour rags, head and torso (DR -1), Wave blade short sword (+1 to parry)

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: The cultist raiders are somewhat capable fighters, but during the raid they are not expecting any genuine opposition and act confused and disorganised if confronted.

CULT ZEALOTS

The orange-robed and yellow veiled zealots are aspirants following Na'Aqh without realising the terror they are about to unleash on themselves. The zealots are a mix of humanoid species, primarily Ba'Waikh. A few zealots are members of the Mirza's guard slowly swayed by Na'Aqh's promises of fortune and glory while others are genuine fanatics. As long as Na'Aqh is in control the zealots are affected by the Fanatic flaw, which includes fighting to the death. Once they realise the gravity of what they are doing and that Na'Aqh has no control over the situation, not the mention the Void entities, they abandon the cult.



CULT ZEALOTS			
AGILITY	2	HEALTH	14
AWARENESS	2	SIZE	Medium
STAMINA	2	MOVE	5
STRENGTH	3	WEAPON	Wave-bladed dagger
INTELLECT	2	REACH	Close
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	-1
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	-1
WILLPOWER	2	DMG	D4
		DV	6
		PROTECTION	DR 0
TALENTS	None		
FLAWS	Fanatic		
ATTRIBUTES	None		
SPECIAL	+1 to parry		
EQUIPMENT	Wave-bladed dagger, orange robes and yellow veils.		

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Zealots are cult-members untrained and unprepared for physical confrontation but fanatical enough to defend their leader unless faced with overwhelming adversity.

Mansion Guards

The Mirza has 30 Ba'Waikh guards serving under her four Talath overseers. They all have a past as soldiers or mercenaries and are used to fighting. They are armed with Halberds and carry short swords as a secondary weapon or for close quarter fighting. They wear large turbans functioning as helmets, while tunics and lamellar armour protect their bodies. All guards have a small flute they can use to signal for aid in case of emergency.

Ba'Waikh are slender and short humanoids with pale yellow greenish skin-tones. Their faces are dominated by unusually light-sensitive and large eyes that they tend to squint when away from the dusky conditions of their homeworld. Males have five distinctive feathery protrusions from their face in place of eyebrows, moustache and goatee.

Both genders have an alien and childish cast with no noticeable nose-structure making them look innocent and peculiar to human eyes.

Mansion Guards			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	19
AWARENESS	3	SIZE	Medium
STAMINA	2	MOVE	4
STRENGTH	2	WEAPON	Various
INTELLECT	3	REACH	As weapon
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+2
PRESENCE	4	ATT SPEED	0
WILLPOWER	2	DMG	As weapon -1
		DV	7
		PROTECTION	DR 4
TALENTS		Night vision	
FLAWS		Light sensitivity	
ATTRIBUTES		Nimble fingers	
SPECIAL		Fast reflexes and formation fighting	
EQUIPMENT		Standard clothing, hardened leather armour, personal items and wealth, preference for short bows, short swords and polearms.	

FAST REFLEXES: The guards are trained to react rapidly and has almost instant movement in response to stimulus, receiving +1 to all surprise, initiative and dodge rolls.

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Halberd	0	+2	D12 (+1/P1)
Short sword	0	+1	D6

SKILLS: Polearms (2), blade weapons (1)

EQUIPMENT: Turban (DR1), torso lamellar armour (DR3), halberd (either dmg +1 or piercing [1]), short sword, alarm flute.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Ba'Waikh guards will engage while calling for support if they perceive a significant threat. Preferred manoeuvres are standard attack and push back. The guards can fight coordinated utilising halberds and short swords, but are not trained to do so.

Mudir

The Murdir guards do not know much about what's going on in the bookkeeping areas beyond the coin lenders area. they have been told that if they allow anybody walking through that door to the Al'iidara to re-emerge without capture, they will be held accountable. They will attempt to subdue, using Brawling, kicking, punching, head butting and wrestling, causing 1-3 points of damage. they will only use their swords if one of their own gets seriously wounded or dies.



MUDIRS			
AGILITY	4	HEALTH	10
AWARENESS	3	SIZE	Small
STAMINA	3	MOVE	5
STRENGTH	3	WEAPON	Short sword
INTELLECT	2	REACH	Adjacent
PERSUASION	1	ATT MOD	+1
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	+1
WILLPOWER	2	DMG	D6
		DV	8
		PROTECTION	DR 2
TALENTS	None		
FLAWS	(low morale)		
ATTRIBUTES	None		
SPECIAL	(Swarming attack)		
EQUIPMENT	Standard clothing, leather armour and short swords.		



TALATH OVERSEER			
AGILITY	3	HEALTH	43
AWARENESS	2	SIZE	Large
STAMINA	5	MOVE	7
STRENGTH	7	WEAPON	Great weapons
INTELLECT	2	REACH	Near (4)
PERSUASION	2	ATT MOD	+5
PRESENCE	3	ATT SPEED	+1
WILLPOWER	3	DMG	As weapon +5
		DV	6
		PROTECTION	DR 6
TALENTS	Explosive force		
FLAWS	Primitive and bad temper (both moderate)		
ATTRIBUTES	Tough hide and digitigrade legs		
SPECIAL	Innate formation fighting		
EQUIPMENT	Any combination of armour, a great weapon, multiple extra weapons and looted goods.		

TALATH OVERSEERS

Four Talath have been handpicked by the Mirza to serve as overseers for the guards. Their responsibilities are mostly to look imposing keeping the guards in line and deterring any would-be assailants from attacking the Mirza. Their leader is a massive specimen, Sayu Mah. One of the overseers is also assigned to train and handle the Urcats, who obey his commands.

This species is well known across many worlds for its brutish ways, often acting as enforcers or guards for well-paying aristocracy in need of brawn. The skin of Talath is a brownish red occasionally with sparse patches of fur.

Their faces have pronounced cheekbones and massive jaws with wide-set pale eyes providing extensive peripheral vision. Their large furrowed mouths are filled with short pointed teeth giving them a menacing grin.

Two small nostrils sit almost centred in the face with little noticeable nose protrusion. As Talath age their skin thickens and spots of scale-like membranes appear across their body. Their arms are brawny with exaggerated forearms ending in stubby paddle-like hands with thick conical fingers. Their digitigrade legs are thick with flat flexible feet and broad wrinkled toes providing great stability as well as momentum.

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Glaive	0	+3	D12
Curved sword	0	+3	D12

SKILLS: Polearms (5) and bladed weapons (3)

EQUIPMENT: Glaive, torso splint metal armour (DR4), Greaves (DR1), Pauldrons (DR1) and sword.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: The overseers are retired war veterans looking for an easy life in their old age, but the lust for battle is easily stirred in them, given the opportunity. If engaged they will direct the Ba-Waikh guards strategically while utilising their own significant combat prowess to deal with the threat. Preferred combat manoeuvres include all-out attack, charge, wild swing and standard attacks.

MEMORY FLASHBACKS

During part I there are five (5) instances where characters may experience a memory flashback.

When a memory is triggered in the scenario the Game Master gives each player a memory hand-out in accordance.

Three versions of each memory are available for each occurrence. Each version can be handed out as seen fit by the Arbiter as no version is specifically for any one character.

If more than three characters participate duplicates may be handed out.

The memories are meant to give the players a sense of something hidden in their past and that they are somehow tied to current events, not specific clues or knowledge.

MEMORY	TRIGGER
1	Raider tattoo
2	Telal's hovel
3	Cylinder seal
4	Bas-reliefs
5	The ritual



The raider tattoos

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY RAIDER TATTOO

Everything around you turn dark as if you have fainted, and only sounds, touch and smells permeate your senses. You feel closely surrounded, an acrid smell of incense in the air and vague chanting voices in the background as if caught in a crowd of celebrants. You struggle to open your eyes and feel a slight edge of panic as you cannot. Briefly an icon of curved and twisted lines emanating from a central point appear in your mind and your eyes snap open!

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY RAIDER TATTOO

Everything around you turn pitch black as if you have passed out. Only sounds, touch and smells permeate your senses. You feel enclosed, a pungent smell of incense in the air and unclear chanting voices in the background as if caught in a crowd of celebrants. You struggle to open your eyes and feel a slight panic as you cannot. Briefly an icon of curved and twisted lines springing from a central point appear in your mind and your eyes snap open!

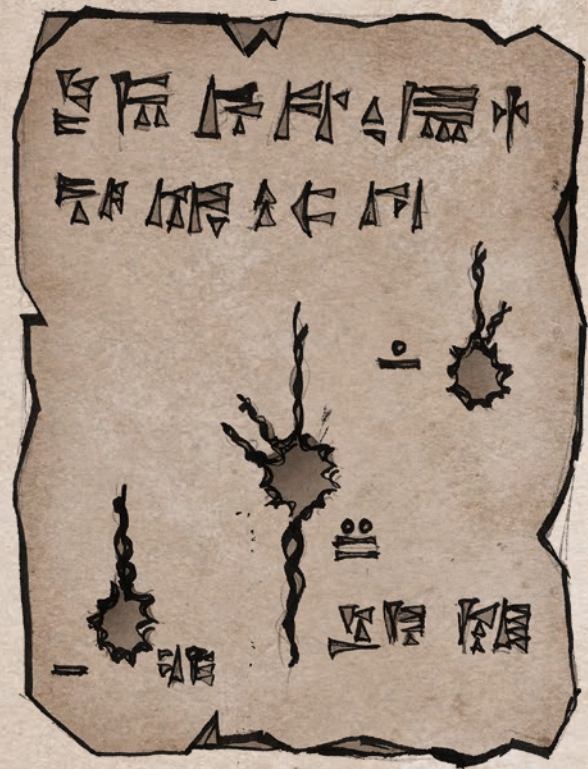
MEMORY TRIGGERED BY RAIDER TATTOO

Everything goes dark as if you have fallen unconscious, with only sounds, touch and smells filling your senses. You feel beleaguered, an unpleasant stench of incense in the air and low chanting in the background as if you are caught in a crowd of celebrants. You fight to open your eyes and feel panic as you cannot. Fleeting an icon of curved and twisted lines emanating from a central point appear in your mind and your eyes snap open!

MEMORY TRIGGERED AT TELAL'S HOVEL

Suddenly you are a child again; playing on the dirt floor. You rummage around looking for your toys as your hand grasps a clay tablet. You look at it and although you do not understand the image upon it you feel a sense of trepidation. You look closer, trying to make sense of it, but you feel uneasy. As tears begin to well up in your eyes you are still drawn into the image, inescapably... Suddenly the clay tablet is torn from your grasp and you stare into a familiar face.

The clay tablet



MEMORY TRIGGERED AT TELAL'S HOVEL

Suddenly you are a youngling again; playing on the floor. You search, looking for your toys as your hand unexpectedly grasps a clay tablet. You stare at it and do not understand but feel a sense of dread from the imagery. You look closer, attempting to make sense of it, but you feel anxious. As tears begin to well up in your eyes you are inevitably drawn closer into the image... Suddenly the clay tablet is torn from your grasp and you stare into a familiar face.



The sun icon tattoo

MEMORY TRIGGERED AT TELAL'S HOVEL

Abruptly you are a toddler again; playing on the dirt floor. You scour around looking for your toys and come upon a clay tablet. You gaze at it and though you do not understand what you are looking at you feel a sense of fear. You look closer, straining to make sense of it, but you become scared. You cannot draw away from the image as tears begin to well up in your eyes... Suddenly the clay tablet is torn from your grasp and you stare into a familiar face.

The cylinder seal



MEMORY TRIGGERED BY CYLINDER SEAL

As you stare at the cylinder seal, a sense of recognition come over you - as if you have seen this before, but without being able to place it.

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY CYLINDER SEAL

As you gaze at the seal, a sense of recollection seems to manifest in the back of your mind - as if you have seen it before, but you cannot place it.

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY CYLINDER SEAL

As you look at the cylinder seal, a sense of remembering fills you — like you have seen this scene somewhere, but you cannot remember where or when.

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY BAS-RELIEFS IN THE CAVERN ANTECHAMBER

As you take in the spiralling patterns around you, you begin to feel strangely light-headed as if a suppressed memory is re-surfacing. As your vision begins to blur weird unseen patterns emerge, somehow hidden in the formless mesh... patterns of twelve-rayed suns!

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY BAS-RELIEFS IN THE CAVERN ANTECHAMBER

As you view the spiralling shapes around you, a sense of unease fills you, as if you somehow know these odd forms. Your vision begins to blur, and unseen patterns emerge from the formless mesh... patterns of twelve-rayed suns!

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY BAS-RELIEFS IN THE CAVERN ANTECHAMBER

As you look at the spiralling designs around you, an involuntary haze obscures your vision as unseen patterns appear among the otherwise formless mesh... patterns of twelve-rayed suns!

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY THE RITUAL

As you overlook the congregation your mind is abruptly overflowing with hazy apparitions of a past you have no recollection about (is it even yours?). Spiralling patterns on torn robes, screams of hysteria and hands pulling you away from something indiscernible... and then you sink into sweet darkness... And as your eyes snap open you are back in the grotto.

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY THE RITUAL

As you gaze at the vista below, your mind's eye drift away blurred by visions of a past you have no remembrance about (is it even yours?). Spiralling forms, a sense of fright and fleeing headlong into sweet embracing darkness... And as your eyes snap open you are back in the grotto.

MEMORY TRIGGERED BY THE RITUAL

As you survey the view in the grotto your mind wanders and blurry images of a past you have no reminiscence of surface (is it even your past?). Spiralling shapes on writhing and bloody bodies, screams of anguish and behind you a menacing presence... you tear lose and run, into the sweet darkness of oblivion... And as your eyes snap open you are back in the grotto.



FEERADANI ENCLAVE



PAI'KARAN DISTRICT

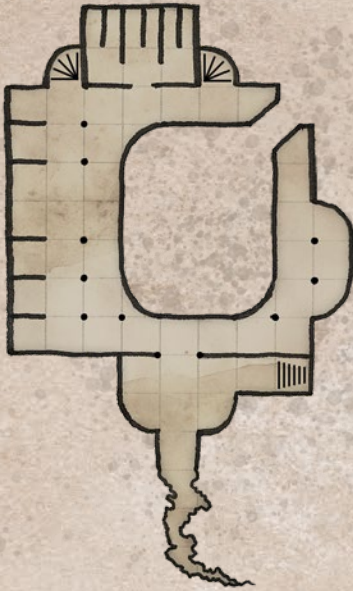


THE MIRZA'S MANSION

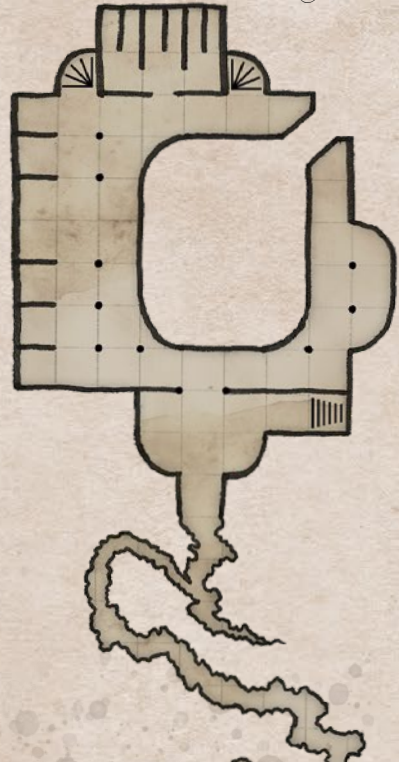


MANSION BASEMENT & CAVERN

the basement



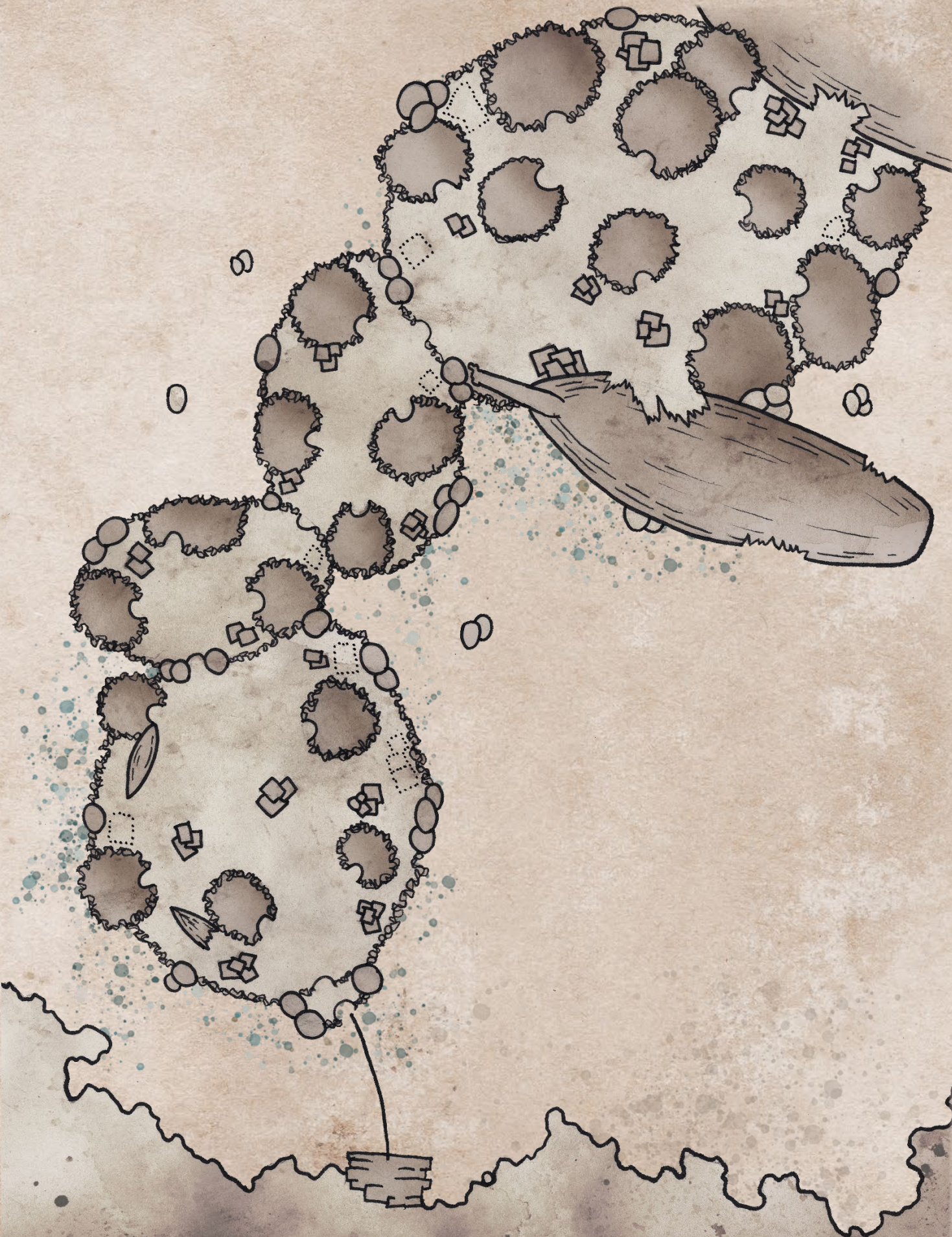
the basement & cavern complex



the collapsed cavern



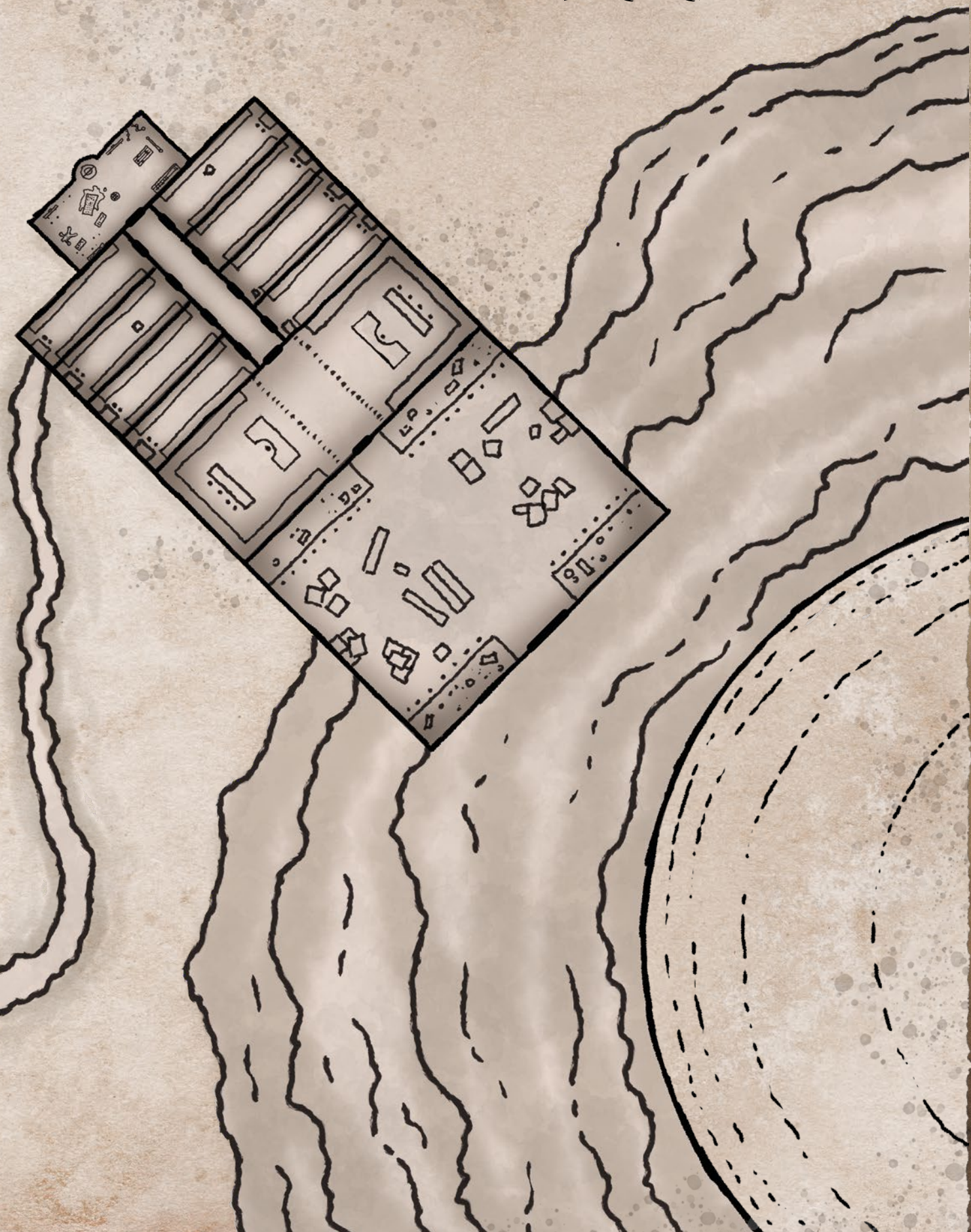
ENKABUT COLONY



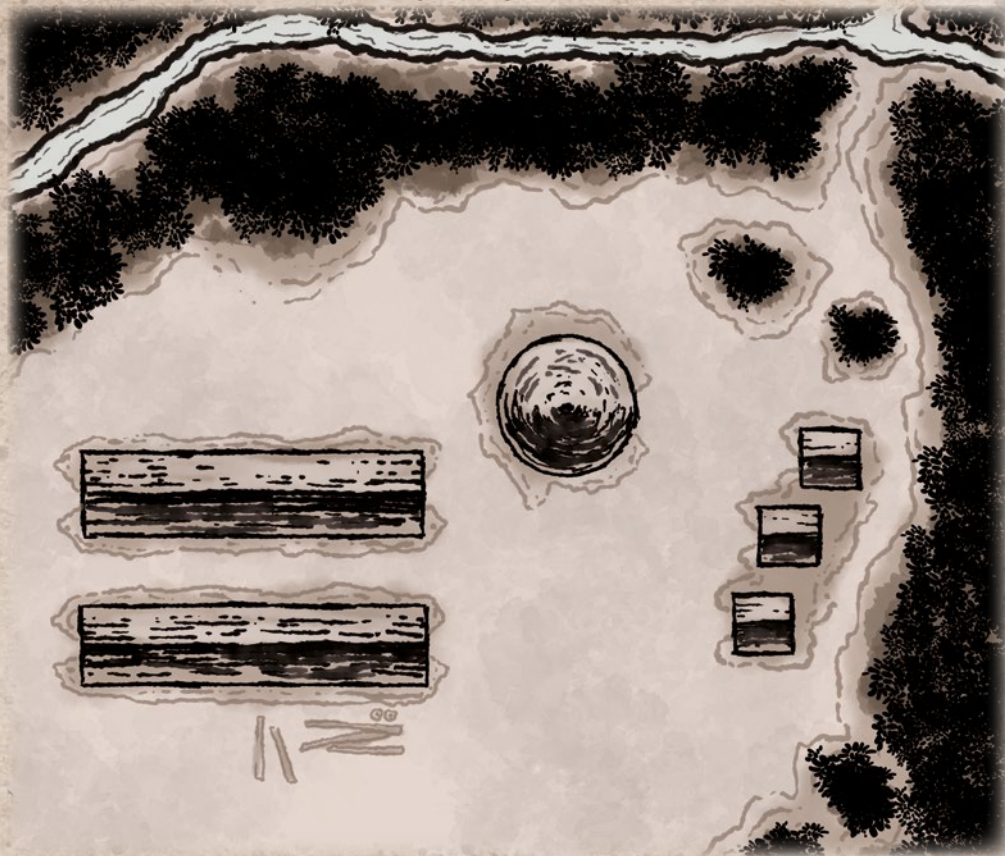
THE HIDDEN HOLLOW



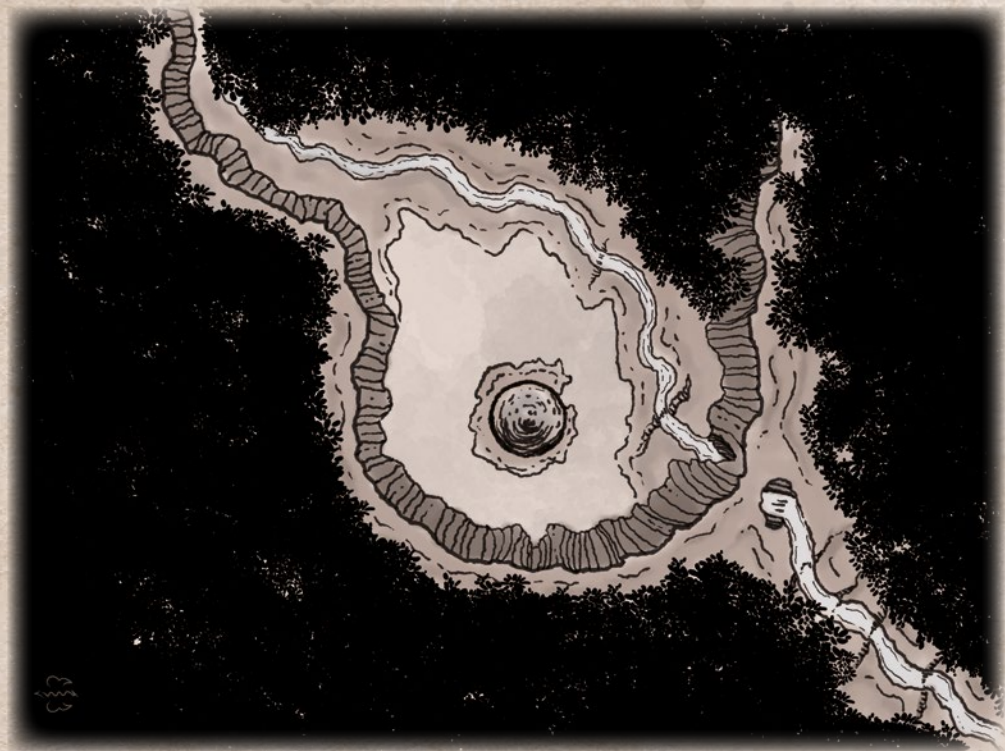
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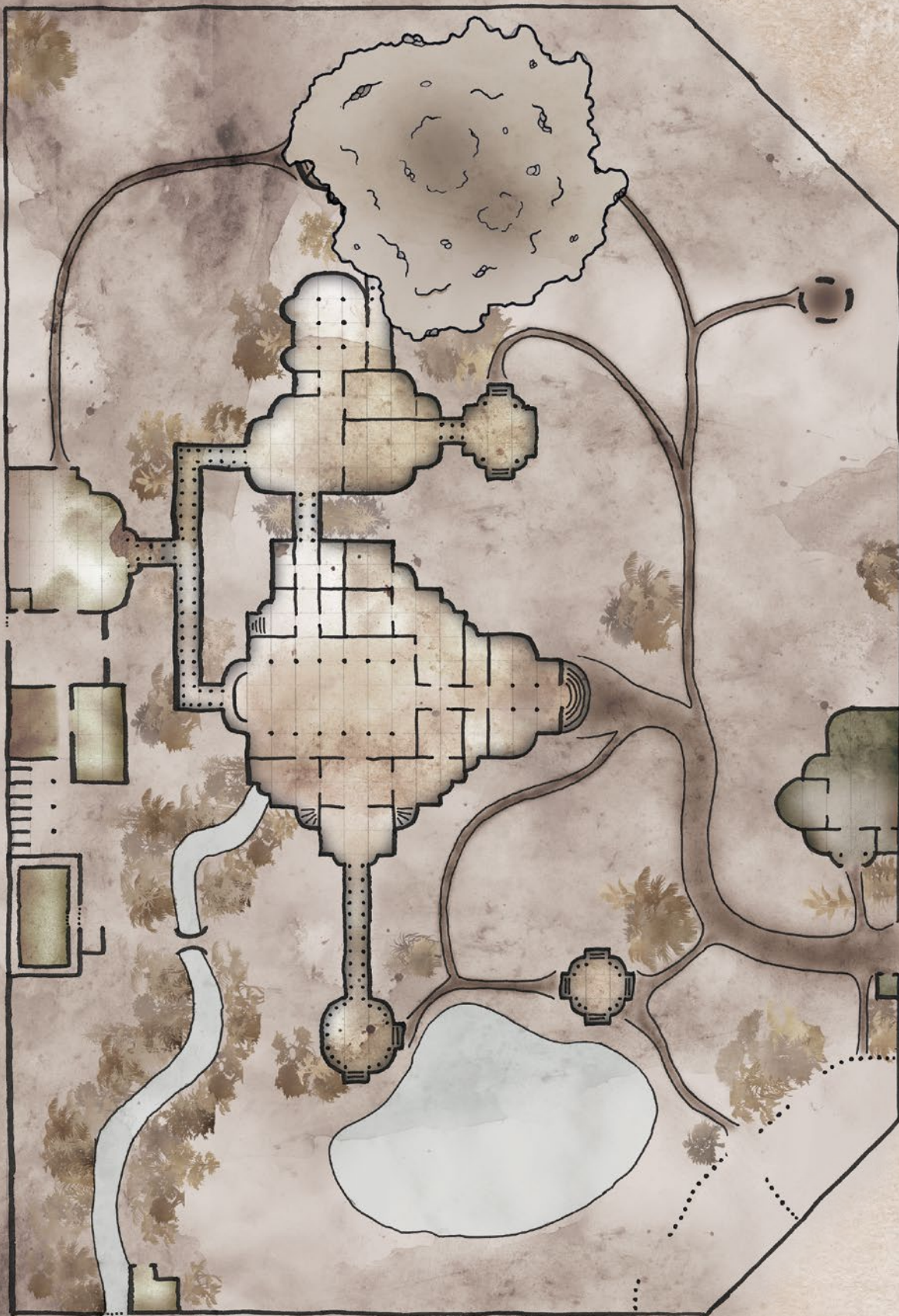
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CORE RULE BOOK

AN ESOTERIC ROLE-PLAYING GAME

In the days when Babylon was the greatest city on Earth, mankind lived in placid ignorance of the grandeur, vastness and horror of the Cosmos. Following cataclysmic events on Earth the fragile Veil between reality and the Void was shattered and the truth of existence was revealed. As mankind cried to their Gods for salvation, they were torn from Earth by Void torrents and the surviving peoples were scattered among the stars. Countless were lost and mankind seemed all but perished.

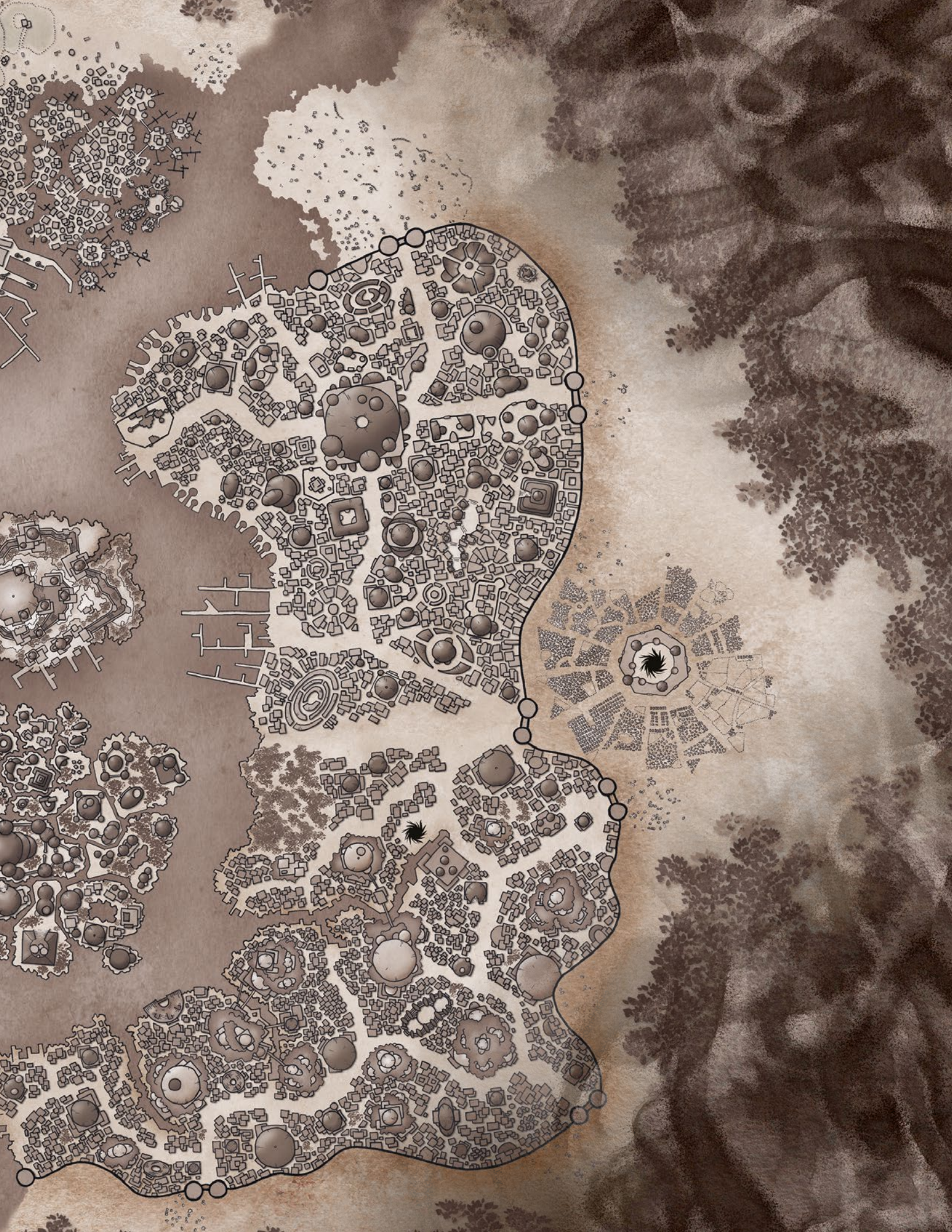
Over the decades the lone survivors, stragglers and ragged remnants of mankind's tribes struggled for survival across countless uncaring worlds. However, a few managed to go beyond mere subsistence and travelled the Void currents to find fabled Llyhn, epicentre of the Cosmos. The survivors congregated and created enclaves within the Eternal City - small communities where mankind could survive and start to rebuild all which was lost.

You are descendants of the survivors from Earth, the lost cradle of humanity. Llyhn is your home now. Swarming with outlandish life forms, eccentric Daimons and fickle demigods; it is a swelling cosmopolis of intrigue, wonder, treachery, corruption, beauty, decadence and eldritch menace.

Behind you lie the smouldering ruins of a once great species trying to reclaim former glory, before you the mysteries of Llyhn and a vast treacherous Cosmos...!

The core book contains all rules and content needed to play and run the dark esoteric role-playing game BLACK VOID.

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THOSE WHO WOULD BE GODS

A BLACK VOID RPG campaign

The Qamsa, once mortal Babylonians, were forever changed by their exposure to the Void and otherworldly entities following the cataclysmic events on Earth. Their quest for power was sparked by outrage at mankind's mistreatment and a desire to find Earth once more.

The abduction of an enclave elder sparks a chain of events that reveal dark furtive ties to the past, rattle the tenuous stability of the Feeradani enclave and threatens all of mankind.

The central themes, species and locations of the Black Void setting are showcased throughout the campaign to introduce new players to the overall spirit of the game as it takes the protagonists on a harrowing journey through multiple districts of the Eternal city, into the dark and deadly jungles of Llyhn and across the Void to an ominous borderworld where those who would be Gods dwell.

The THOSE WHO WOULD BE GODS campaign is presented in three parts. The plot has linear milestones for characters to achieve, with numerous hooks for the protagonists to follow and sub-plots to further explore if desired. Each part is playable on its own, but truly come to life when played as a continuing story. The campaign is made for newly created characters but can be adapted to fit characters that have advanced.

Written by Christoffer Sevaldsen, Dan Cross (Eldritch RPG and others) and Jon Creffield (Troll lord games, The slayers guides, and others).

This campaign is an adventure module for the BLACK VOID RPG and requires the BLACK VOID core rulebook to be played.

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ISBN 978-87-93781-03-0

BVG003D / MUH051839