

BLACK VOID™



WHEN DARKNESS FALLS

A BLACK VOID RPG ADVENTURE BY
CHRISTOFFER SEVALDSEN

WHEN DARKNESS FALLS...

AN INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE TO THE BLACK VOID RPG

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This scenario is designed for new characters in the Black Void setting.

The scenario has a fairly linear plot and is tailored to introduce a number of central themes, notable people, species and locations of the Black Void setting.

The plot line revolves around the abduction of an enclave elder, 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.

SCENARIO SETUP

If you are unfamiliar with running scenarios this section clarifies the various elements and explain what-is-what and how it all works. A scenario is a storyline much like the plot in a book, but with the distinct difference that the story is not fixed as 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). 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 information about a particular 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 [].

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: A 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.

Throughout the 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.

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 concoctions 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 rescue 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.

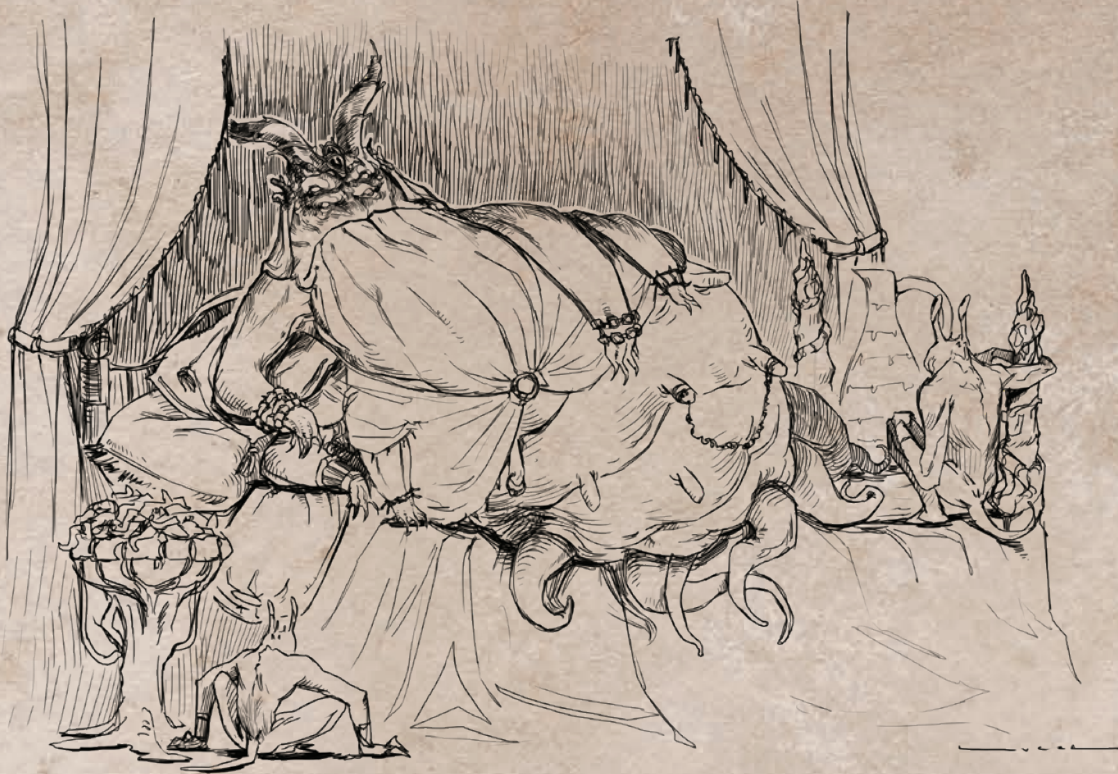
Na'Aqh is an Aml'Nāqru, multi-bodied being with a single conscience. It has discovered a slight Void-rift located in a cavern beneath the aristocrat's mansion and is secretly re-establishing a cult known as the Darkened Sun, gathering zealous followers to help it attract the attention of the mindless 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'Nāqru 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 resources 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'Nāqru 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.



Below is an overview of the notable people and main locations in the scenario. Complete details including game characteristics, skills, combat abilities and personality information on antagonists, NPC's as well as various tables, memories and other hand-outs can be found at the back. Additional background stories and information on the various creatures, peoples and species found in the eternal city can be found in the Black Void RPG core book or Quick Start document.

NOTABLE PEOPLE

Behzad	A young and overly ambitious enclave councillor – caught in his own schemes
Feerada	The despotic founder and leader of the human enclave
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 alien aristocrat enthralled 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 northern shore of the river
Telal's dwelling	An abandoned and trashed hovel in the Dhaarese district

GROUPS & FACTIONS

Cultists	Fanatical zealots following Na'Aqh
Hirelings	Six bullies hired by Behzad for personal protection and muscle
Rasha Galam	The constabularies, militia and agents of the enclave – led by Kûn Azhar

CHARACTER CREATION

Players are free to use a pre-generated character or create their own. Refer to the Character Creation chapter in the Corebook or Quick Start for details on how to build your character. Characters are created with 48 points without any 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.

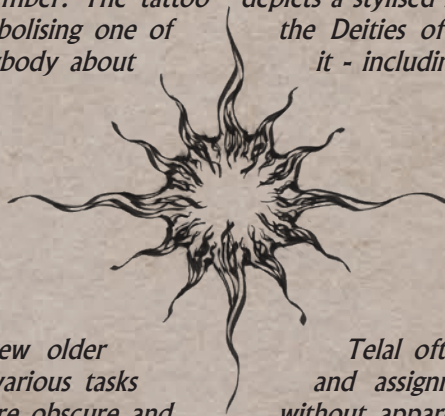


CHARACTER BACK-STORY

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 southern 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 use, asking you to perform various tasks and practical while others were obscure and 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...

Telal often put your acquired skills to and assignments for him: Some simple without apparent purpose. Your siblings left



SCENE I - 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 Rasha Galam), Tehmeena (elder councillor) and Behzad (young councillor). Telal however is not there...



LOCATION: 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

NPC's: Feerada, Kûn Azhar, Tehmeena and Behzad.

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.



SCENE I

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 Rasha Galam 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 - halfblood and Voidmarked 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 Rasha Galam 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 Rasha Galam.

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 recent information about his whereabouts. Most Rasha Galam 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 enquiries table.

If the characters try to approach the dais and high table they are stopped by Rasha Galam 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,

speaking 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].

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

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."

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 Rasha Galam, 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)



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 hirelings 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.

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 (map location 6) on separate platforms on the periphery of the enclave are in full blaze and as the Rasha Galam 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 grips people and the shuffling devolves into a full panicked scramble; people trampling each other like a stampeding herd in their headless flight.

TABLE 2.0 : OBSERVATIONS DURING THE FIRE

- While the Rasha Galam, 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

LOCATION: 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)



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 2.1 : OBSERVATIONS FIGHTING THE FIRE

- The PC's will notice a boat with 3-4 shadowy figures moving towards the plaza between the platforms.
- The character's 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 Rasha Galam 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.



- THE FEERADANI ENCLAVE
1. FEERADA/COUNCIL CHAMBERS
 2. CENTRAL PLAZA
 3. DOCKS
 4. DRINKING DEN
 5. FISHING QUAY
 6. STOREHOUSES
 7. RASHA GALAM BARRACKS
 8. TEHMEENA'S QUARTERS
 9. TO TELAL'S HOVEL



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.

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. 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.

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.



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.

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 Rasha Galam 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.



LOCATION: FEERADANI ENCLAVE

The central plaza on the main enclave platform.

NPC's: Feerada and Kûn Azhar



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 Rasha Galam 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 Jinassars 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

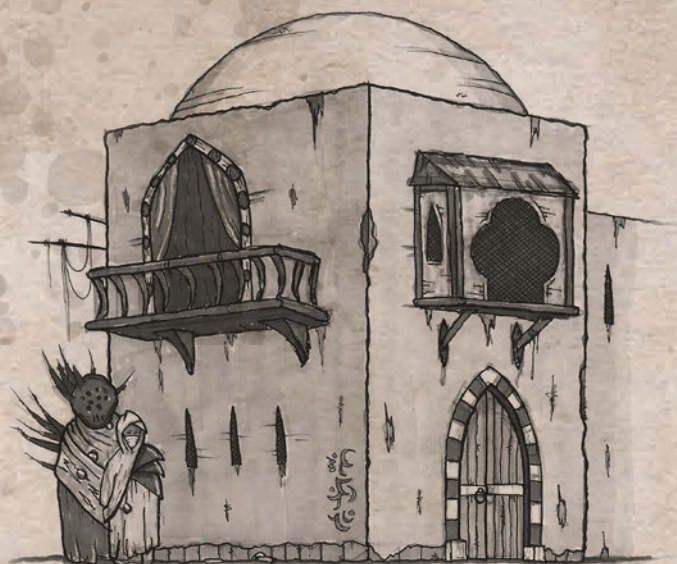
If the characters decide to postpone their departure and examine the enclave and what little leads they have, Feerada resignedly accepts this. The characters can find useful information by investigating the raiders, the fire-sites, Tehmeena's quarters and Telal's hovel.

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 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

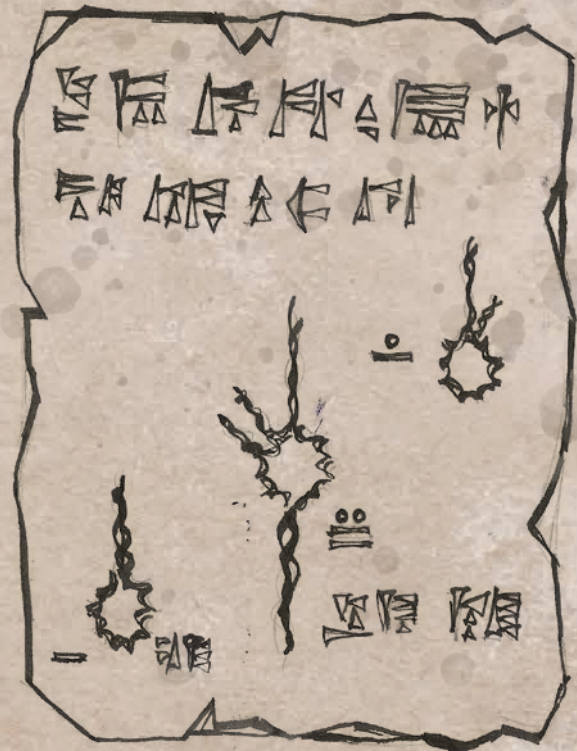
- The hovel is empty and has clearly been ransacked; yet whether the two facts are connected cannot be deduced from the scene. The hovel has been abandoned for at least a fortnight.
- There is a secret compartment under the bunk that the siblings knew nothing about. It contains the broken remnants of 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 - THE PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT

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

NPC's: Tahmtan and Maiara

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.

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.

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 should make a Stamina roll [11] to see if they are affected by an odd phenomenon (a Void effect) occurring around the mansion. Refer to the appendix for full rules and the Void Effect table.

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.

TABLE 4.1 : OBSERVATIONS 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-Wäikh stationed outside. A garrison building is visible just inside the gate, but the actual amount of guards is indeterminable.



- PAI'KARAAN DISTRICT**
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

The busy streets surrounding the mansion offer a variety of discreet spaces for observing the mansion gates without drawing attention, and no one are paying the slightest attention to the characters as they step off the skiff.

There is heavy traffic by the mansion gate as porters and slaves arriving with parcels and packages are redirected to the servants' entrance at the back by a couple of sly Ba'Waikh guards. 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.

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: 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.



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.



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

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.



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 portcullis does not reach the bottom of the canal.

THE MANSION WALLS

Forty hands 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, unimpressible 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 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 MANSION

A vast palatial complex consisting of two main buildings and a number of pavilions surrounded by grounds containing a menagerie and a small lake.

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.

TIMED EVENTS

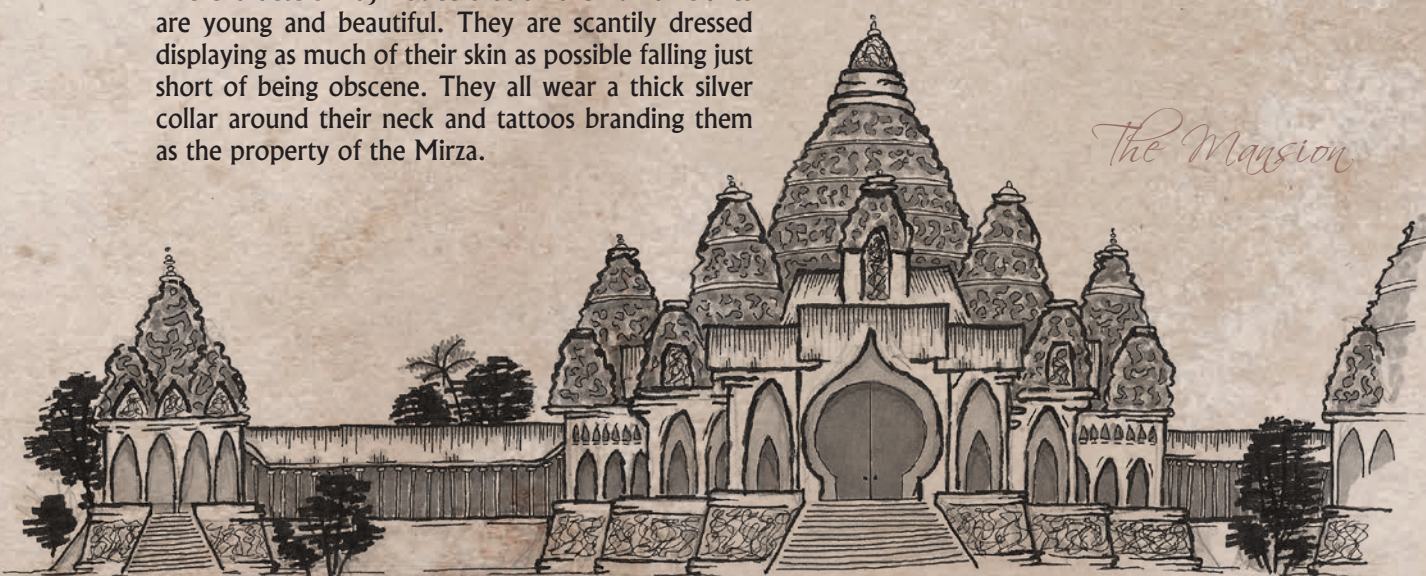
Na'Aqh continue to perform sacrificial rites in its attempts to draw the mindless abominations of the Void to the rift. Every twelve hours characters should make a Stamina roll [11] to see if they are affected by an odd phenomenon (a Void effect) occurring around the mansion. Refer to and roll on the Void Effect table. 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.

NPC's: The Mirza, Na'Aqh and Sayu Mah

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

- 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 Mansion

TIMED EVENT:

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)

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."*



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 a 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 as 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

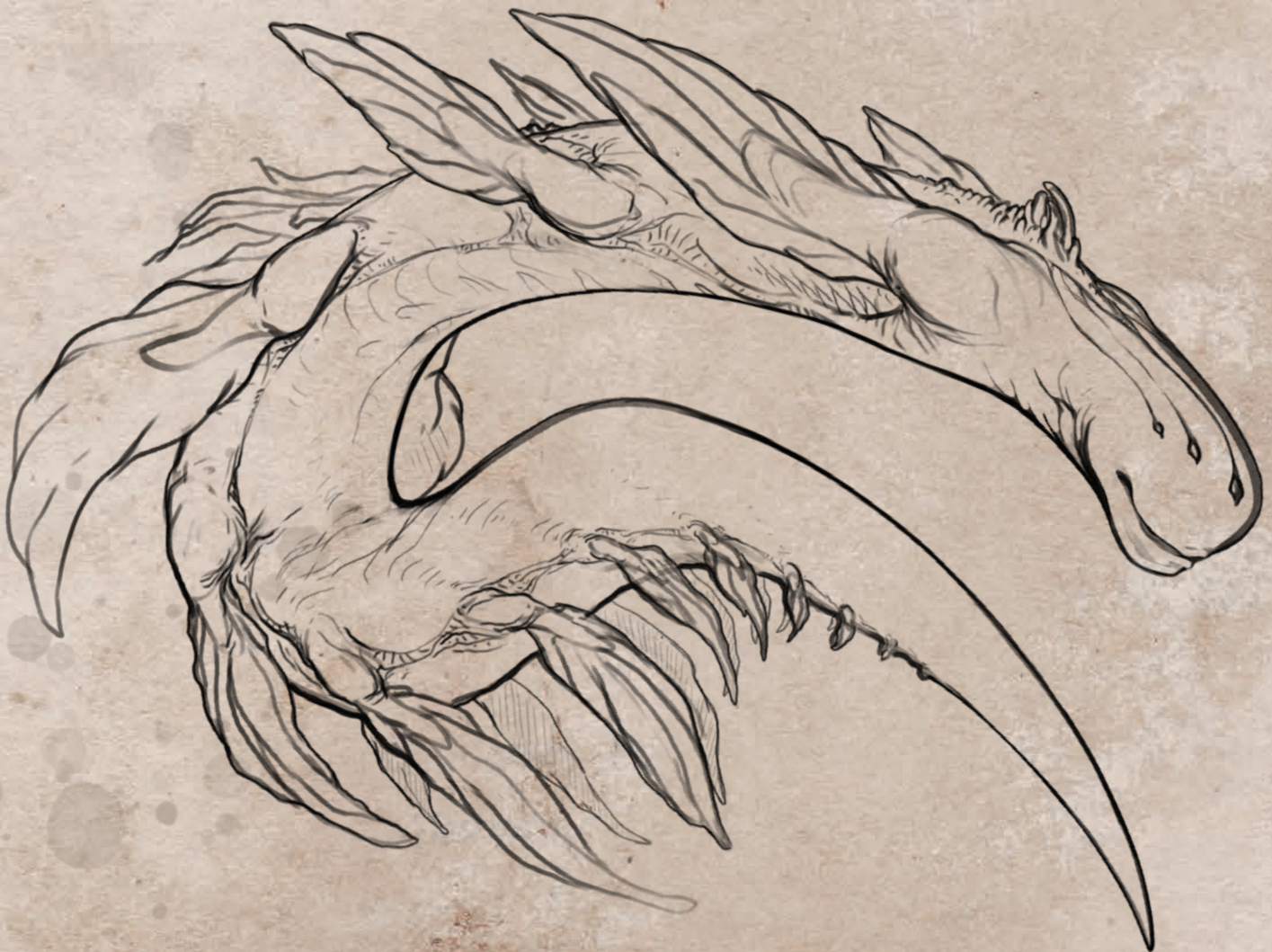


EVENT 5.1 – FOLLOW THE SLAVE

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.



SCENE VI - A 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 MANSION

A vast palatial complex consisting of two main buildings and a number of pavilions surrounded by grounds containing a menagerie and a small lake.

TRIGGERED EVENTS

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.

NPC's: The Mirza and Na'Aqh

SCENE VII

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

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.

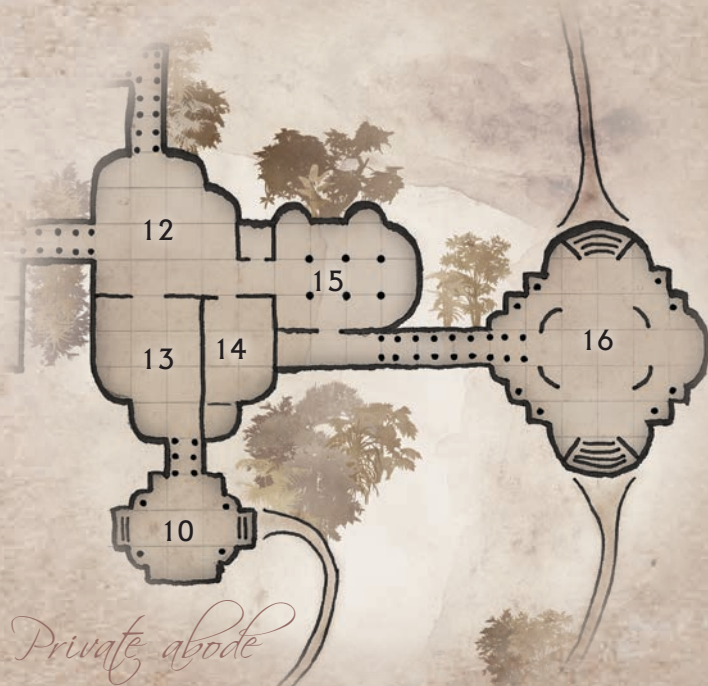
Several small furry creatures with wings are buzzing about the room keeping a safe distance from any of the characters. On further examination the characters notice that each has a thin chain attached to a limb preventing it from flying out of the room. All the chains are attached to a ring in the centre 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

The basement complex beneath the mansion is a little-used storage area with a hidden passageway into a cavern containing the lair of the cult of Na'Aqh.

TRIGGERED EVENTS

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.

NPC's: Na'Aqh and Sayu Mah

SCENE VII

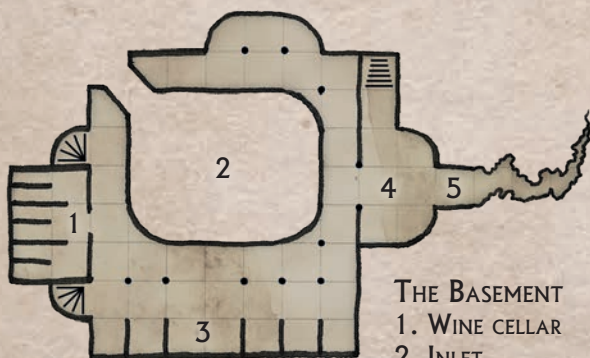
THE BASEMENT

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 6.2 : 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.



THE BASEMENT

1. WINE CELLAR
2. INLET
3. STORAGE SPACES
4. DOME CHAMBER
5. UNFINISHED TUNNEL

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.

ARBITRARY 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 Void effect [see the Void effect table]. 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. 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 passage are affected by cramped conditions, causing a -3 penalty to size 3 or smaller weapons while making size 4 weaponry unusable.

TRIGGERED EVENT: 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.



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.

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**.

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.



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.

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.

TABLE 7.2 : 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.

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 CAVERNS

A cavern complex containing the lair of the cult of Na'Aqh and a large grotto with a dormant Void rift.

NPC's: Telal, Tehmeena, Na'Aqh, Behzad and Sayu Mah (if alive)



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 begin below.
- Another Na'Aqh sibling is waiting below with two zealots holding a third prisoner: Telal. [Seeing this triggers a memory!]

As the characters snap out of the memory the procession is taking up position around the crevasse continuing the chanting while the prisoners are brought to stand on a small natural plateau on the edge. Alongside the plateau are two zealots, Sayu Mah and Behzad who wears a veil made from bronze coins obscuring his features and hiding his identity.

The third Na'Aqh sibling appears from either the tunnel in the wall or the second ledge - whichever is opposite to where the characters have entered - and descend to its siblings. Once the triplets are together they entwine above the canvas covering the crevasse, becoming as one and begin a bizarre writhing dance in mid-air.

As the dance increase in intensity something seems to be occurring beneath the canvas cover: The air becomes charged and the shadows lengthen while space itself appears to grow simultaneously darker and lighter. An odd gust of what can only be described as sweltering coldness suddenly exudes from the crevasse as a dark mist seeps slowly through the canvas.

Below the canvas is a Void rift, which is emanating slowly into the grotto. All characters must make a Stamina roll [7] or be affected by Void influence as the Na'Aqh trinity compel the emanations into the grotto (roll on table 6.1 for each character).

TRIGGERED EVENT: 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 humanity 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 nearest 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 dragging it towards the misty abyss. The telepathic screams of all three Na'Aqh echo inside the heads of the characters - insistent 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 remaining 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: The Arbiter can decide that during this encounter the left-behind 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. "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 it 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 dead elders at their feet...



ANTAGONISTS & NPC'S

BA'WAIKH GUARDS

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.

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.

AGILITY	3	SIZE	Average
AWARENESS	3	MOVE	5
STAMINA	2	HEALTH	16
STRENGTH	3	ATTRIBUTES	Night vision
INTELLECT	3	TALENTS	Fast reflexes
PERSUASION	2	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	2	DEF VALUE	7
WILLPOWER	2	PROTECTION	DR 4

FAST REFLEXES: The Ba'Waikh react rapidly and has almost instant movement in response to stimulus, receiving +1 to all surprise, initiative and dodge rolls.

NIGHT VISION: The Ba'Waikh are very sensitive to light and you can see well in low light conditions. Night Vision removes all penalties for performing actions in the dark, but if no light source is available at all the normal penalties apply.

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Halberd	0	+1	D12 (+1/P1)
Short sword	+1	+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.



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. He begins most sentences with "One thinks..." and tends to speak fast and with a slight stammer during conversations.

AGILITY	3	SIZE	Average
AWARENESS	3	MOVE	5
STAMINA	2	HEALTH	16
STRENGTH	2	ATTRIBUTES	-
INTELLECT	4	TALENTS	Specious
PERSUASION	4	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	3	DEF VALUE	7
WILLPOWER	3	PROTECTION	DR 0

SPECIOUS: The character has a natural ability to appeal to people without real merit or argument; shifting the focus and spinning pleasing or plausible arguments fitting what the listener wants to hear. Add +1 modifier to persuade or distract others and Presence skills can utilise Persuasion instead.

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Dagger	0	0	D4 -1

SKILLS: Small blades (0), dodge (1)

EQUIPMENT: Robes and a dagger

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Behzad abhors physical violence. Preferred manoeuvres are disengage, dodge and flee.

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.

AGILITY	2	SIZE	Average
AWARENESS	2	MOVE	5
STAMINA	2	HEALTH	16
STRENGTH	3	ATTRIBUTES	-
INTELLECT	2	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	2	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	3	DEF VALUE	6
WILLPOWER	2	PROTECTION	DR
WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Dagger	-1	-1	D4

SKILLS: Dagger (0)

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.



FEERADA (ENCLAVE MATRIARCH)

Feerada is the founder and undisputed leader of the Dhaarese 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

AGILITY	2	SIZE	Average
AWARENESS	3	MOVE	3
STAMINA	2	HEALTH	16
STRENGTH	2	ATTRIBUTES	Missing arm
INTELLECT	5	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	4	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	6	DEF VALUE	6
WILLPOWER	5	PROTECTION	DR 0

Cosmos. Her face is furrowed and sombre with old pains while her dark and intense eyes carry great authority. The left arm is missing at the shoulder from a past encounter, supposedly with slavers thinking her an easy target. 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.

SKILLS: Common lore (3), Enquiry (3), Intimidation (4), Subterfuge (2), Socialize (2), Streetwise (4).

EQUIPMENT: Robes and cane

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Feerada will never engage in combat if another option is available.

KÛN AZHAR (ENCLAVE PARTISAN LEADER)

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. He is a tall and broad-shouldered man with a cropped full beard and thick wavy hair. He carries himself with authority and has dark piercing yet slightly haunted eyes.

Kûn seeks to liberate mankind from oppression and vassalage. He was a slave for many years, in which time he lost his family and two daughters. He was eventually purchased and set free by Feerada. Due to his traumatic history he is willing to go to extremes in order ensure freedom to humanity, occasionally suffering from neurotic tendencies, which can lead to bursts of uncontrollable rage.

Kûn became the leader of a group of ex-mercenaries and beer hall brawlers. He named the group Rasha Galam and organised them to protect the members of the enclave from harassment and antagonism. The purpose of the group has developed, and it has become an intrinsic part of the organisational hierarchy of the enclave, de facto a constabulary. The Rasha Galam are divided into squads of four to eight men with one squad leader. Two to four squads make up a troupe, each of which is led by a principal. Troupes are divided into sections determined by their designated assignments: Protection, intelligence gathering and patrolling. Each division has a commander reporting directly to Kûn.

Lair or Domain: Kûn has his personal abode in the headquarters of the Rasha Galam.

Quote: "Terror must be broken by terror"

Status: Leader of the Rasha Galam and Feerada's right hand.

AGILITY	3	SIZE	Average
AWARENESS	4	MOVE	6
STAMINA	5	HEALTH	37
STRENGTH	4	ATTRIBUTES	-
INTELLECT	4	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	3	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	5	DEF VALUE	8
WILLPOWER	5	PROTECTION	DR 5

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Crow-bill	+1	+4	D12
Crow-bill	+1	+4	D12

SKILLS: Pick axe (3), Acrobatics (1), Common lore (1), Streetwise (3), Stealth (2), Wilderness Survival (1), Intimidation (3), Observation (2), Small blades (1), Dodge.

EQUIPMENT: Kûn's daughters (2 custom crow-bills), metal torso scale armour (DR4), Bracers (DR1) and dagger.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Kûn is a ruthless warrior happily engaging in combat. Preferred manoeuvres include called attack and disarm.



MAIARA (PROPRIETOR OF HOUSE OF MAIARA)

An elderly female Je'ehl Pariah Maiara is the proprietor of a Sheesha and Opium den known as House of the 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.

AGILITY	5	SIZE	Average
AWARENESS	4	MOVE	4
STAMINA	2	HEALTH	20
STRENGTH	2	ATTRIBUTES	Horns
INTELLECT	4	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	5	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	4	DEF VALUE	9
WILLPOWER	6	PROTECTION	DR 0

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Stiletto	+2	+3	D4 (P1)

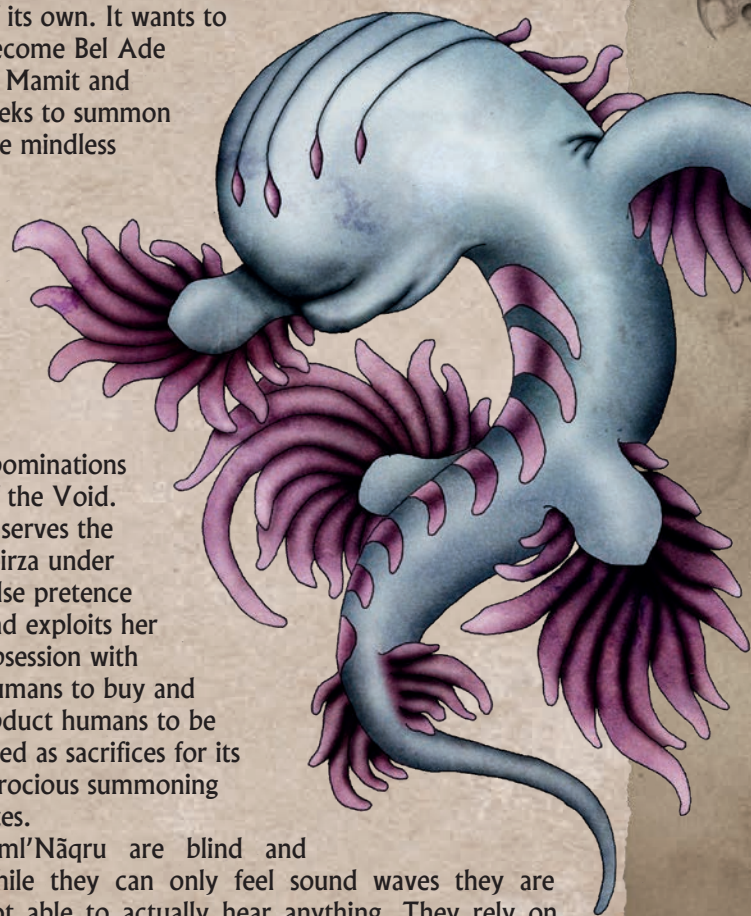
SKILLS: Acrobatics (4), performance (1), Streetwise (3), Stealth (2), Intimidation (3), Observation (2), Small blades (1), Dodge (4).

EQUIPMENT: Expensive dress, stiletto blade.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Maiara usually lets her sons deal with any violence, but if pushed she does not hesitate to plunge her thin stiletto blade into any offender.

NA'AQH (AML'NĀQRU YOUNGLING TRIPLET)

Na'Aqh is a 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. 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.

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. 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.

AGILITY	5	SIZE	Large
AWARENESS	5	MOVE	6
STAMINA	3	HEALTH	28
STRENGTH	4	ATTRIBUTES	Tough skin, aerial, alternative sense, prehensile tail.
INTELLECT	3	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	3	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	4	DEF VALUE	9
WILLPOWER	5	PROTECTION	DR 1

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Lashing tail	+ 2	0	D6

SKILLS: Occult lore (1), intimidation (2), common lore (2), scholarly lore (3)

EQUIPMENT: None

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.

POWERS: Mysticism – Path of Mind (4), channelling (2), two known manifestations (2)

DOMINATE (known manifestation)

Difficulty	9
Channeling time	3 sec (1 rd)
Range	9 metres
Duration	9 sec
Area	1 individual
Effect	Influenced [9]

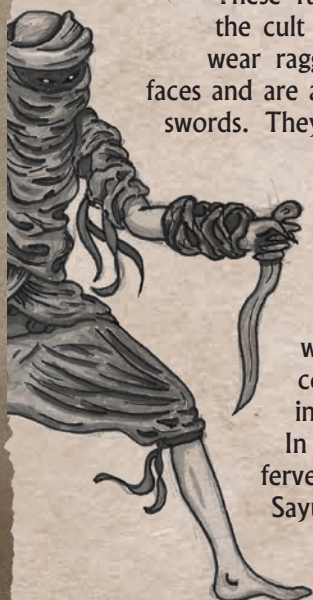
Upon a successful channelling the target must make a Willpower resistance roll [9] or act in accordance with the mystic's instructions for nine seconds (3 combat rounds).

ILLUSORY PAIN (known manifestation)

Difficulty	8
Channeling time	Instant (normal initiative)
Range	9 metres
Duration	9 sec
Area	1 individual
Effect	-3 penalty to all actions

The target experiences a vicious burst of pain as the mystic torments her through sheer force of will.

RAIDERS (CULT ABDUCTORS)



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 martyrism 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.



AGILITY	4	SIZE	Average
AWARENESS	3	MOVE	5
STAMINA	2	HEALTH	14
STRENGTH	3	ATTRIBUTES	-
INTELLECT	2	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	1	FLAWS	Fanatic
PRESENCE	3	DEF VALUE	8
WILLPOWER	1	PROTECTION	DR 1

FANATIC: The raiders are zealously following the creed of Na'Aqh with fanatical devotion. The raiders would never willingly betray the cause and count as having a Willpower score of 6 for actions involving defending the ideals they believe in.

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.

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Short sword	+ 1	+ 1	D6

**Wave-blades (+ 1 to parry)*

SKILLS: Acrobatics (1), Stealth (1), Blade weapons (1), Occult lore (0).

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. As a result their preferred actions are Defensive stance, parry and counterattack.

SAYU MAH (TALATH OVERSEER/CONSPIRATOR)

This massive Talath is an overseer of the guard at the Mirza's mansion in Pai'Karaan. He is secretly aiding Na'Aqh in its endeavours, while retaining the facade of overseer at the mansion. Sayu Mah leads the raiders in the abduction of Tehmeena at the enclave. One of his eyes is clouded and sightless due to an old combat injury giving him a blind angle on his right side. Sayu Mah is a cunning warrior utilising environmental advantages and utilising disarming manoeuvres (+5 with his axe) to great advantage and preferring called attacks targeting weak spot with no armour.



AGILITY	3	SIZE	Large
AWARENESS	2	MOVE	11
STAMINA	6	HEALTH	49
STRENGTH	6	ATTRIBUTES	-
INTELLECT	3	TALENTS	Strong legs
PERSUASION	2	FLAWS	Blind angle
PRESENCE	4	DEF VALUE	7
WILLPOWER	4	PROTECTION	DR 1

STRONG LEGS: Muscular legs built for power make the character run faster, kick harder, jump higher and longer than others of similar overall strength. Add one (1) to the character's movement.

BLIND ANGLE: Because Sayu is missing his right eye he has a blind angle on this side making him unable to see incoming attacks.

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Battle Axe	+1	+5	D12+3

Superior quality battle axe (+1 attack modifier)

SKILLS: Axe (4), disarm (axe), intimidate (3), blade weapons (2),

EQUIPMENT: Laminated torso armour (DR4), leather bracers & greaves (DR2), helmet (DR1), superior quality battle axe and short sword.

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 release 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.

THE MIRZA (ALIEN ARISTOCRAT)

A Dai'Quai aristocrat, 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. 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. The Mirza is very wealthy, but seemingly scorned by other Dai'Quai. 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.

She enjoys playing mind games with the slaves setting impossible challenges or promising them rewards, which are never given. Quotes: "Am I not merciful?"



AGILITY	1	SIZE	Large
AWARENESS	3	MOVE	1
STAMINA	5	HEALTH	57
STRENGTH	3	ATTRIBUTES	multiple eyes
INTELLECT	3	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	7	FLAWS	Addiction
PRESENCE	3	DEF VALUE	5
WILLPOWER	3	PROTECTION	DR 0

MULTIPLE EYES: The Mirza has several eyes facing forward and gains a +1 bonus to all attempts at judging distances (this also applies for long range modifiers when using missile weapons) and to all perception rolls involving sight.

SKILLS: Socialise (3), commerce (2), enquiry (2), intimidation (1).

EQUIPMENT: Extravagant clothes, gaudy jewellery

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: The Mirza would never dream of engaging in physical combat and will bargain, plead and beg if ever endangered and without the aid of her attendants.



TAHMTAN (IM'ZU CHATTER BROKER)

This infamous species is rather small and unremarkable in physical appearance whilst known for their extraordinarily guile and somewhat roguish demeanour. They often act as traders and dealers in information or as advisors. Never more than eight hands tall (80 cm) their primary feature is a pudgy dark greyish torso supported by two minute clawed feet, making them seem ungainly and waddling in their movements. The flat-faced head is directly attached to the body without a visible neck and flippers split into two digits at the end - occasionally with short claws - provide the species with a somewhat tenuous ability to grip objects.

This Im'Zu chatter broker habitually sojourns in a semi-private booth in House of the Morning Star 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.

AGILITY	2	SIZE	Little
AWARENESS	5	MOVE	2
STAMINA	2	HEALTH	11
STRENGTH	1	ATTRIBUTES	-
INTELLECT	4	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	5	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	2	DEF VALUE	6
WILLPOWER	2	PROTECTION	DR 0

SKILLS: Socialise (3), commerce (2), enquiry (3), observation (3),

EQUIPMENT: Scribing tools and notes.

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Tahmtan is never far away from his trusted Talath servant Oqq (use Talath overseer stats if needed) who will happily step in - should the threat of violence arise. If threatened Tahmtan would sell his kin to save his own skin.

TALATH OVERSEERS

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. 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 Adarus, who obey his commands.



AGILITY	3	SIZE	Large
AWARENESS	2	MOVE	9
STAMINA	5	HEALTH	42
STRENGTH	5	ATTRIBUTES	-
INTELLECT	2	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	2	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	4	DEF VALUE	7
WILLPOWER	4	PROTECTION	DR 6

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Glaive	0	+3	D12
Curved sword	0	+3	D12

SKILLS: Polearms (3) 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.

ADARU

The Mirza has two Adarus; wild predators caught in the jungles of Llyhn. Lithe, agile and stealthy the Adaru is an apex predator. Their long slender limbs and torso with a streamlined head and elongated snout are built for speed and manoeuvrability. Their four eyes give excellent depth perception as well as keen sight in dark conditions. A mane of bristly spikes covers its upper shoulders and long neck, protecting them during territorial fights. Rows of canine teeth are constantly exposed as there are no noticeable lips to cover them. Matt dark skin with vaguely marked lighter patterns make Adarus blend perfectly into the shadowy foliage of the undergrowth.



These Adarus are semi-trained and can only be handled by the appointed beast-master, a Talath overseer. The beasts are mostly used for display to guests, but it is also utilised for patrolling the grounds and occasionally for punishing slaves or other macabre pastimes. The Adarus are held in large pens between the lake and the main gate.

AGILITY	5	SIZE	Medium
AWARENESS	5	MOVE	15
STAMINA	3	HEALTH	21
STRENGTH	5	ATTRIBUTES	Huge Fangs, small claws, tail, thick fur, multiple eyes
INTELLECT	0	TALENTS	-
PERSUASION	0	FLAWS	-
PRESENCE	0	DEF VALUE	9
WILLPOWER	0	PROTECTION	DR 1

THICK FUR: Adarus have dense fur manes providing protection from blows, giving one point of damage reduction.

HUGE FANGS: Huge fangs can be used in brawling attacks similarly to ordinary fangs and cause D6 + 1 points of damage.

MULTIPLE EYES: Four forward facing eyes grant a +1 bonus to all perception rolls involving sight.

SMALL CLAWS: The claws add +1 to attempts to climb and holding on, and cause D4 points of damage when used as weapons.

TAIL: The creature has a tail helping it keep its balance. When performing any feat requiring acrobatics or balance add +1 to applicable action rolls.

WEAPON	SPEED	ATT MOD	DMG
Fangs	+2	+3	D6 + 3
Claws	+2	+3	D4 + 2

COMBAT BEHAVIOUR: Adarus are animals that always employ brawling or grapple manoeuvres.

APPENDIX E HAND-OUTS

VOID EFFECTS

As Na'Aqh performs its rituals to draw Void entities to the cavern rift the chaotic influence of the Void emanates into the surrounding area affecting those in the vicinity. Whenever a Void effect event occurs make each player make a Stamina roll (or do it secretly on their behalf if you want to increase the weirdness). Depending on their distance to the

rift the difficulty changes. When in The Pai'Karaan district, mansion grounds or mansion the difficulty is 11. When inside the cavern the difficulty is 7. Those that fail are affected by the Void influence: Make a secret roll on the Void effects table and describe the effect to the player.

VOID EFFECTS TABLE

Roll	2nd Roll	Effect
1-3	1-4:	No effect.
	5-8:	A chill runs down the spine of the character making him feel eerie.
	9-12:	Mild trepidation grips the character.
4-6	1-3:	A distinctly sweet aroma of decay emanates around the character
	4-6:	A chilly breeze stirs the air close to the character making him or her feel cold.
	7-9:	Noticeably the temperature increases around the character.
	10-12:	The ground around the character trembles slightly.
7-9	1-3:	A strange light seems to glow from the character drawing the attention of those nearby.
	4-6:	An unnatural aura emanates in the area, spooking any nearby animals.
	7-9:	A strange sulphurous stench fills the area making creatures slightly nauseous.
	10-12:	An odd rolling echo hangs on any word spoken in the area, inspiring a slight sense of trepidation in all who hear it.
10-11	1-3:	The character's vision seems impaired limiting his or her vision to four metres and conveying a -1 penalty to all actions using sight.
	4-6:	The character feels icy cold, suffering a -1 penalty to all actions.
	7-9:	The character feels extremely hot, suffering a -1 penalty to all actions.
	10-12:	The ground seems wobbly, making the character stumble. Make a Strength roll [4] or fall to the ground.
12	1-3:	A strange sensation pervades the character as her features blur and change. Re-roll one random aspect of the character's appearance (skin, hair or eyes). The character is unable to do anything but stand trembling for the remainder of the round.

CYLINDER SEAL HANDOUT



MEMORY FLASHBACKS

During the adventure there are five (5) instances where characters may experience a memory flashback. When a memory is triggered in the scenario the Arbiter 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 not 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

MEMORY 1: Triggered by the raider tattoos

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!

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!

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!

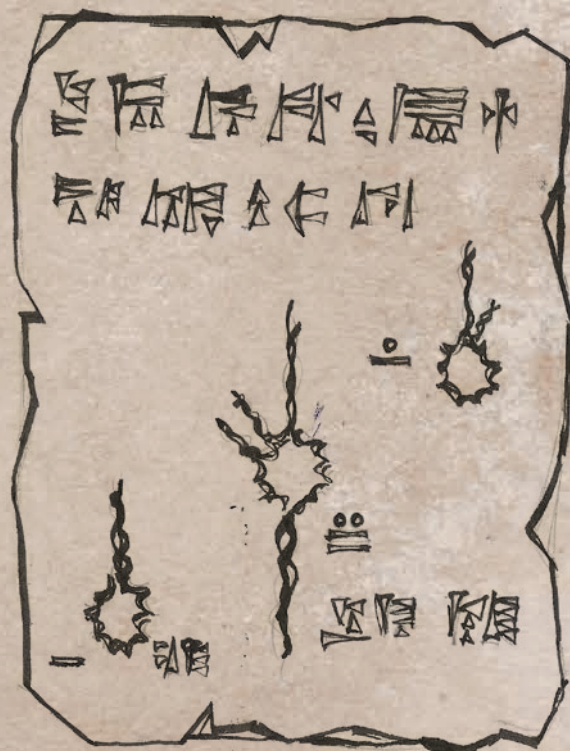
MEMORY 2 : Triggered in Telal's hovel

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.

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.

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.

CLAY TABLET HAND-OUT



MEMORY 3 : Triggered by the cylinder seal in Tehmeena's quarters

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.

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.

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 4 : 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!

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!

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 5 : 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.

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.

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.

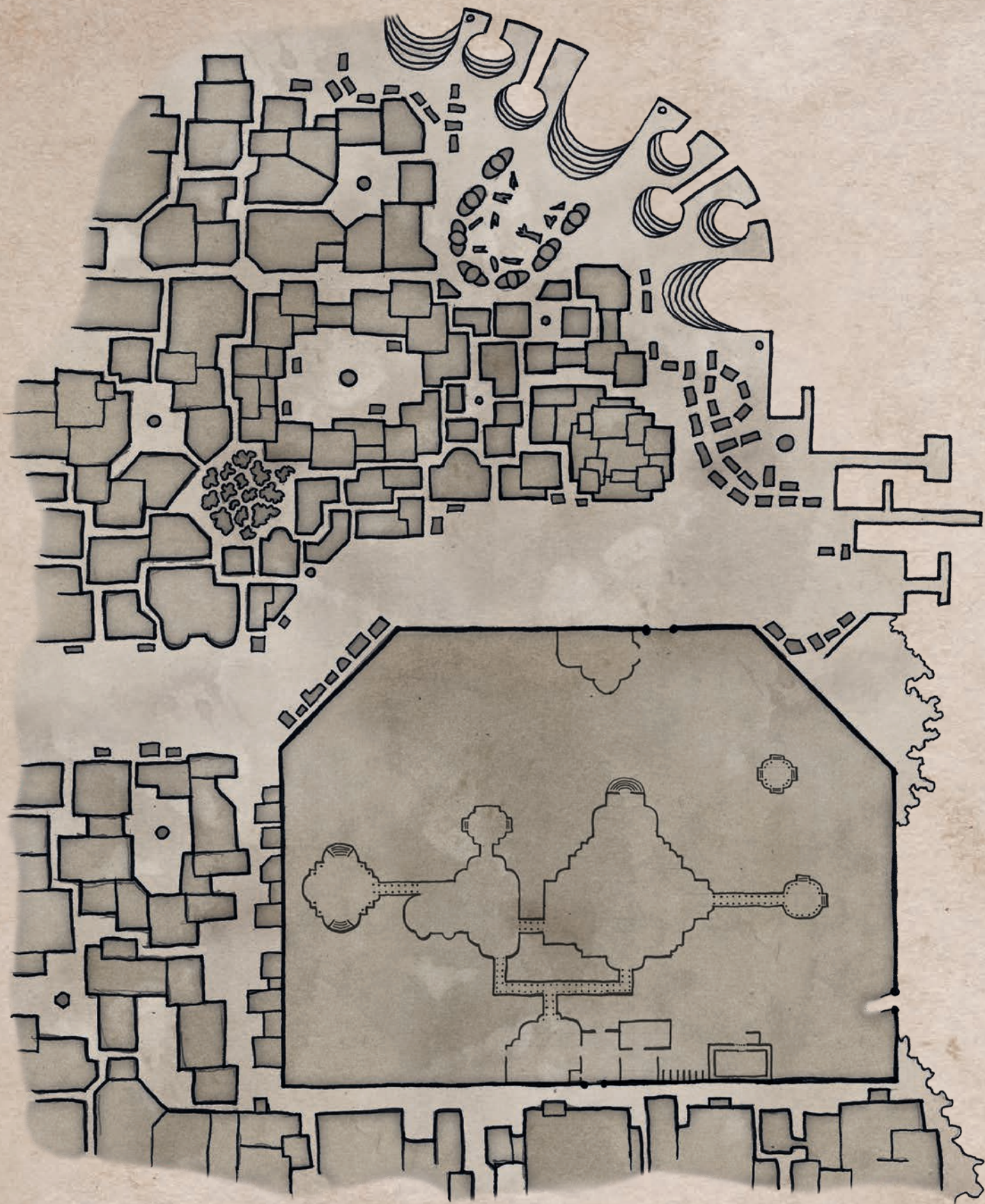
BASEMENT & CAVERN MAP



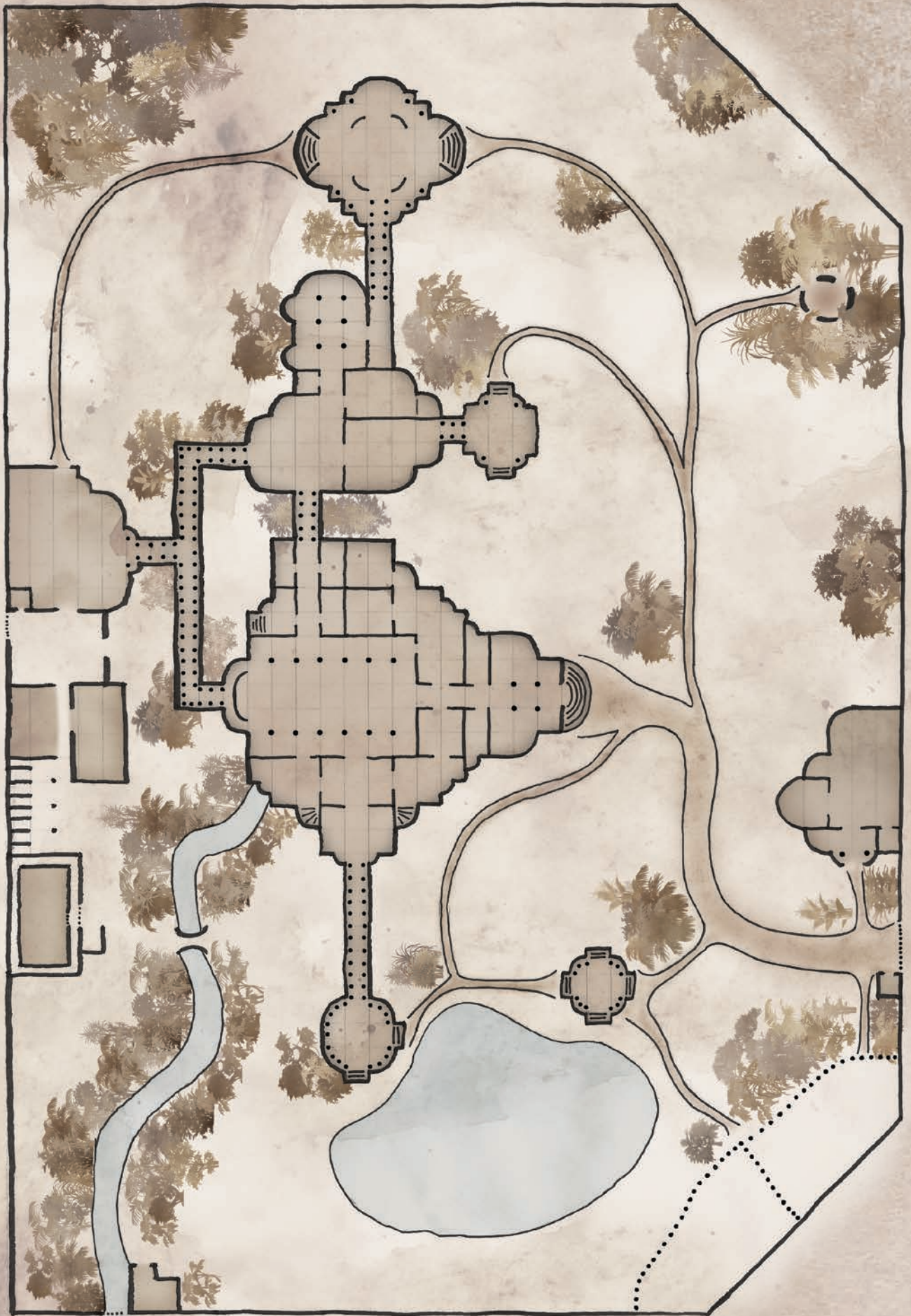
FEERADANI ENCLAVE MAP



PAI'KARAN DISTRICT MAP



THE MIRZA'S MANSION MAP



WHEN DARKNESS FALLS

A BLACK VOID RPG adventure

Originally designed as a stand-alone introductory adventure for showcasing the system, central themes, species and locations of the Black Void game and setting preceding and during the 2018 Kickstarter campaign - When Darkness Falls later became the outset for the Black Void campaign: Those who would be Gods.

This is the original adventure and only names and select design elements have been amended or corrected for consistency with the final incarnation of the Black Void RPG.

Written by Christoffer Sevaldsen

This is an adventure module for the BLACK VOID RPG
and requires the BLACK VOID core rulebook to be played.

IN THE UNKNOWN | BEYOND THE HORIZON | WHAT IS HUMANITY

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