

Also This Month: **Dragonmeet 09** - This years coverage • **Conan** - Praise the Serpent • **Traveller** - Patrons and Dredd goodness

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS

• Signs & Portents 75 • December 2009 • MGP 5575 •

PS Signs & Portents

The Evolution begins,
brought to you right now,
welcome to

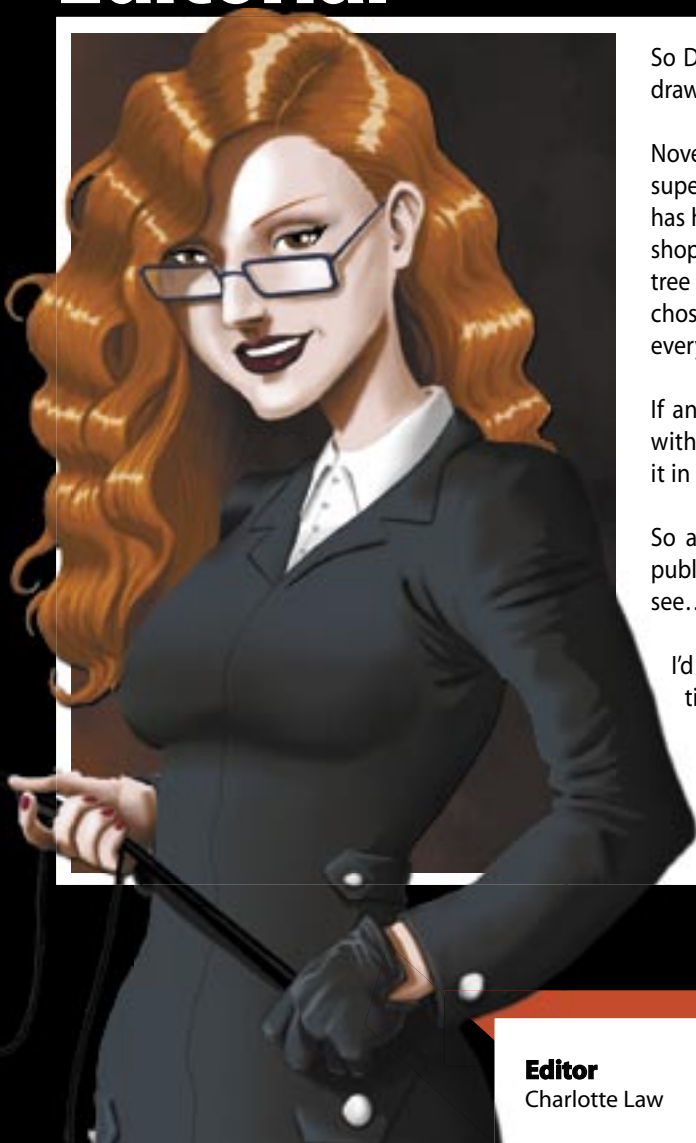
Rune Quest II

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Editorial



So December has arrived, the day only lasts a few hours and the year is drawing to a swift end... must be nearly Christmas then!

November in Mongoose Towers ended with myself and Matthew having a supermarket dash in Tesco for Christmas office supplies. Unfortunately, as has happened before when Matthew has made the mistake of taking me shopping, we came back with rather a large haul! A pink office Christmas tree managed to sneak into our shopping trolley (no it wasn't me who chose the colour!), along with many tins of chocolates, advent calendars for everyone in Mongoose Towers and, quite randomly, a sandwich toaster!

If any of you ever have the opportunity to be in a large supermarket with Matthew, take it... the amount of excitement over nougat is worth it in itself!

So as the year draws to a close the State of the Mongoose has been published and our intentions for the next year laid bare for the world to see... so hopefully you are as pleased with us as we are with ourselves!

I'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and I hope you all enjoy your time off... mine shall probably be spent catching up on my sleep from the past year! Enjoy.

Charlie

Credits

Editor

Charlotte Law

Managing Director

Matthew Sprange

Mongoose Studio Staff

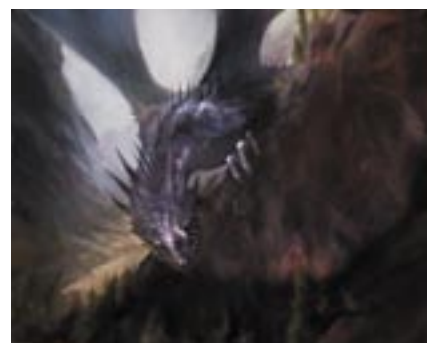
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Mongoose News

By Charlotte Law

Farewell to RQI

As you will have all read by now in the State of the Mongoose, in the early part of next year the current version of *RuneQuest* will be replaced with the shiny, new and improved *RQII*. Because of this the current *RQ* line will be taken out of print at the end of 2009. Anyone who is after a specific title will need to order before the 31st of December to ensure that they don't miss out.

New Games

The State of the Mongoose was made available for your viewing pleasure at the end of November. Within it Mongoose announced several new games that will be appearing in 2010. The first of these new games is *Deus Vult*. Check out the January issue of S&P for an exclusive introduction from the writer, Gareth Hanrahan.

Free Downloads!

The *Traveller Character Pack* has been updated with free downloads for *Judge Dredd* and *Strontium Dog* that allow the pack to be customised for different *Traveller* settings.

Visit :

<http://www.mongoosepublishing.com/home/detail.php?qsID=1739>

for further details and to download.

Christmas Shutdown

During the Christmas holidays even Mongooses get to take a break! Mongoose Towers will be closed from 24th December to 2nd January 2010, at which point normal service will resume. Please be advised that no mail orders will be sent out during this period.



Convention Diary

Ludicrus '09

Kesgrave Community Centre, Ipswich, UK
Sat 5th - Sun 6th Dec 2009

www.ludicrus.org

Siege of Augusta

Doubletree Hotel, 2651 Perimeter Pkwy, Augusta, GA, USA
Fri 22nd - Sun 24th January 2010

<http://www.siegeofaugusta.com/cgi/index.php>

The Awesometer

Generic events that get our hearts racing (or sometimes not) each and every month!

Angus Abranson's TOP 5 Movie Soundtracks

1. Bladerunner
2. Gladiator
3. The Thing
4. Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
5. Lord of the Rings



AWESOME

Christmas!!!

WOO HOO!!!!



Sorry We're
CLOSED

Christmas
Vacation, HO HO
HOooooooo
Merry Christmas
and remember
were closed :)

The Pink
Mongoose
Christmas tree,
who says we cant
be festive and
colourful.



Think of all that
money spent on
Christmas...not
worth it huh.



Dark Nights...
I think we really
dislike these as
being on the
gruesome side
twice is bad juju.

That present that
you get every
christmas from your
grandparents...such
a cliché



GRUESOME

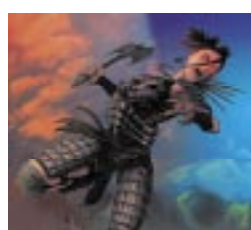
The Timeline

A visual guide to get your tails wagging for future Mongoose releases

January: Look out for the Mega-City One Archives

February: Pavis Rises, up first for the new Glorantha

March: Glorantha the



Quote of the Month

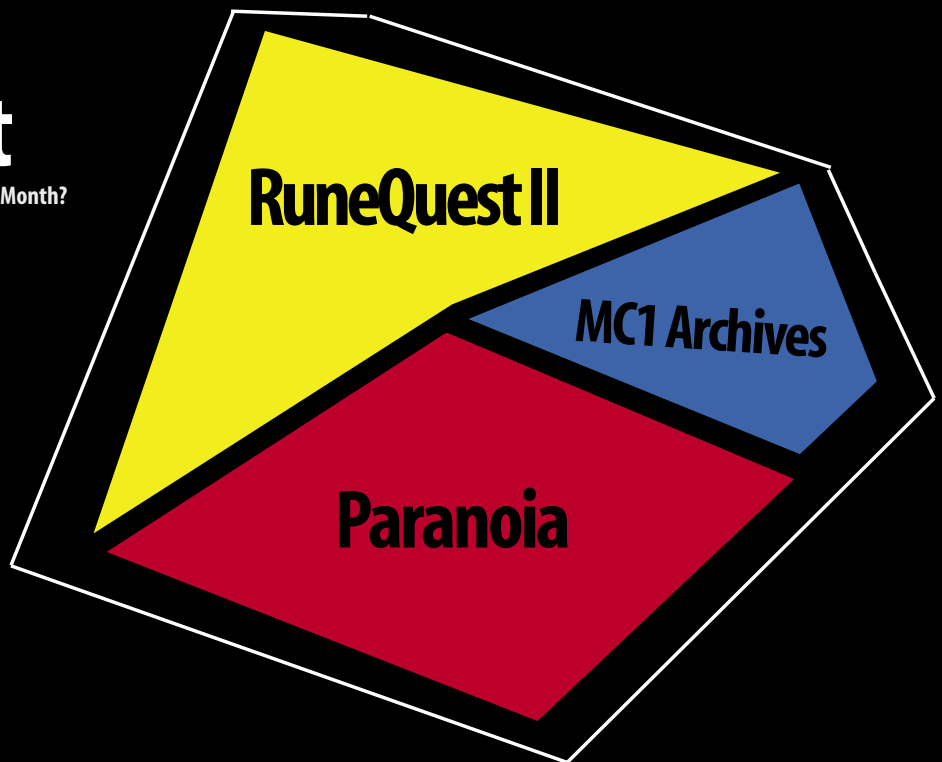
Which phrases have been flying around the office more than the dogs ball?

Yes, You all have High School Musical Advent Calendars

This year Matthew unfortunately left it a little late to go shopping for the Studio staff advent calendars. In previous years we have all had individual calendars to represent us as individuals. However the High School Musical ones were the only ones left so we all have them. Still, Mongoose Editor Fordy is happy at least!

The Time Chart

What have we been spending our time on at Mongoose this Month?



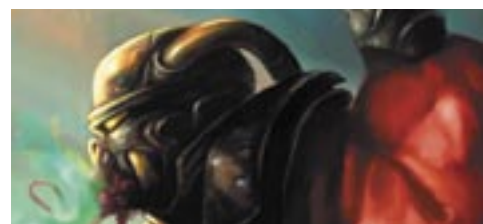
Core Rulebook washes up



April: Bring your best slaying gear, its time for Deus Vult

DEUS
VULT

May: Terror of the Darklords Unleashes it's Fangs



December 09 Releases



Bounties and Warrants

Price: \$24.95

Format: Softback (128 pages)

MGP10003

Bounties & Warrants is packed full of missions for budding bounty hunters. From petty thieves to genocidal maniacs, from lone assassins to fortresses packed full of criminals, players will have to be cautious and inventive if they are to maximise their profits, and bring back their targets – alive, not dead!

Corporation: The Dragon Awoken

Price: \$29.99

Format: Softback (160 pages)

The Dragon's strength is industry. Countless factories stain the skies and poison the cities to spew out an unending flood of weapons and war machines. Join us, and we will grant you the means to obliterate your enemies with overwhelming force. Those who resist will be crushed.

The Dragon's cunning is secrecy. Let fools whisper of forbidden technology and unholy alliances with rogue god-machines, for they still cannot imagine the full horror of the truth. Join us, and we will induct you into a world of shadows, that you may witness the power we keep hidden from our enemies. Those who are loyal shall learn all.

The Dragon's spirit is unity. The greatest criminal syndicates across the globe, a pack of snarling, squabbling dogs, have been united – a wolfpack beneath the banner of the Dragon. Join us, and we will offer you a family who will always be at your back, a family to whom allegiance is life. Those who betray us shall beg for death... eventually.

The Dragon has awoken in the East, and the world's most amoral, ruthless villains rush to swell its ranks.

Welcome, Agent, to the Ai-Jinn Corporation.





Shards Collection Volume 1
 Price: \$24.99
 Format: Softback (96 pages)

JOURNEY TO LANG

An errand along the Serpent River exposes the characters to the dangers of the Scourge.

RUNVIR'S TOMB

Searching a tomb for magical treasure, the heroes find that not everything evil is dead.

KEPT IN THE DARK

In the depths of the Servos Jungle, an expedition takes a different direction when the heroes encounter the Therans.

PALE RIVER

Beneath the Kingdom of Throal, an underground village harbors thieves. But why are they stealing food from the bazaars of the dwarf city?

TOURNAMENT TROUBLES

The heroes take part in the annual tournament of Travar, the outcome of which determines the city's political fate for the coming year.

Shards Collection Volume One is a collection of five stand-alone adventures for Earthdawn Third Edition, providing challenges for Novice through Journeyman adepts. Requires use of the Earthdawn Player's and Gamemaster's Guides.

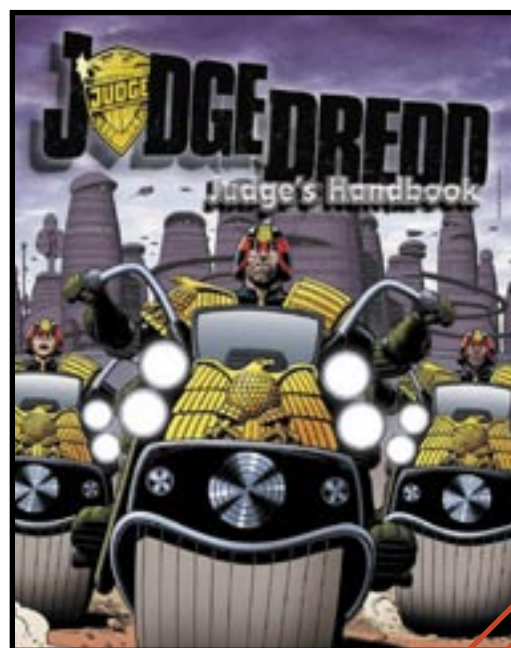
Judge's Handbook

Price: \$39.99

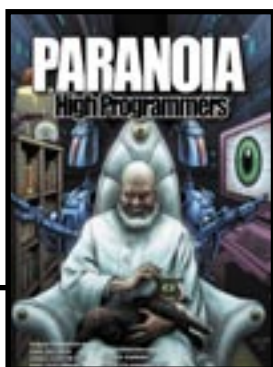
Format: Softback (160 pages)

Uncover the secrets of the Justice Department in Mega-City One. Within this book, you will find all the methods, technologies and procedures the judges use to track down criminals. From the forensics of Tek-Div to the Manta Prowl Tank, there is a tool to solve every crime, and your judges have access to them all.

The Justice Department provides new rules and options for judges as they patrol the streets of Mega-City One, and allows them access to the more elite divisions and promotions, allowing them to become Exorcist Judges, join the holocaust Squad, or even Acc-Div! If that is not enough to complete an investigation, then the judges will be happy to try out the latest weapons and equipment, straight from the workshops of Tek-Div.



December 09 Releases



The mandatory enjoyment of Paranoia's 25th Anniversary continues! With this ultra-high-security book, players can forget the troubles of the little people of Alpha Complex. No more hose jobs as Troubleshooters, no more policing the madness that is Alpha Complex as a Blue Clearance Trooper. No, the life of a High Programmer is one of luxury!

As High Programmers, players will enjoy the fruits of their labours (and those of everyone else) as the pre-eminent leaders of Alpha Complex. There is no way their plans will be scuppered by Alpha Complex's nightmarish bureaucracy. No way that rival High Programmers will seek to bring about their demise. No way that the citizens below them will revolt. No way that the Computer will find even more insane challenges that cannot possibly be completed.

No way at all. Uh huh.

White Washes is the limited edition version of High Programmers, demanded by fans, sporting a new cover matching that of Black Missions. Strictly limited to just 100 copies worldwide, White Washes can only be found on this web site. It will not be appearing in shops.

Paranoia: High Programmers - White Washes

Price: \$49.99

Format: Hardback (208 pages)

Paranoia: High Programmers

Price: \$39.99

Format: Hardback (208 pages)

You are the warrior Lone Wolf – Kai Grand Master of Sommerlund. You have defeated the Darklords of Helgedad and avenged your murdered ancestors but now you are challenged by a sinister evil that threatens to destroy all life in your home world of Magnamund.

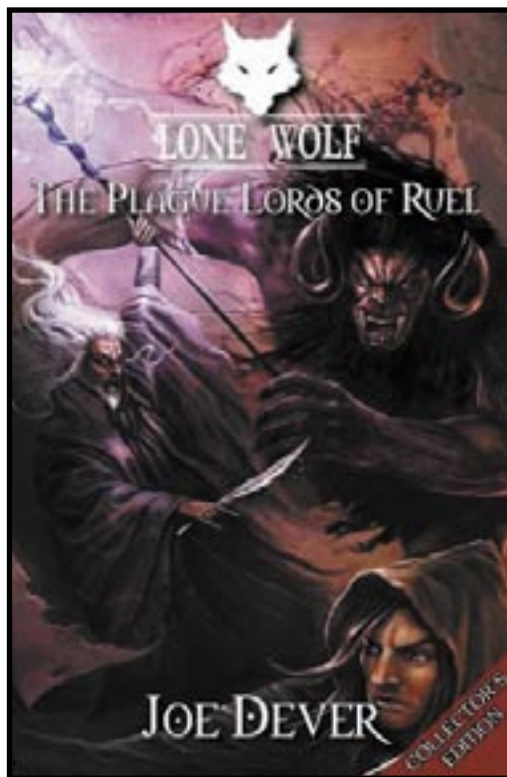
In THE PLAGUE LORDS OF RUEL, your mission is to prevent the malevolent Cener Druids of Ruel from releasing a deadly plague virus that will destroy all but their own kind. Of all the warriors of Magnamund only you can thwart their wicked plans – for only you possess the disciplines of a Kai Grand Master.

Using high quality paper and hardbound for durability, this Collector's Edition of the thirteenth Lone Wolf gamebook marks the return of the last Kai Lord.

Lone Wolf 13: The Plague Lords of Ruel

Price: \$21.95

Format: Hardback (300 pages)





The Spinward Marches awaits your exploration in this huge poster map, featuring every system, trade link and starbase in the sector. Beautifully illustrated in full colour, this map is the first in a series that will allow you to explore the entire Third Imperium and beyond, joining posters together to form one gigantic map!

Includes a full key to aid navigation.

Spinward Marches Map Pack

Price: \$9.99

Format: Poster (1 page)

MGP 3827

Trojan Reaches Map Pack

Price: \$9.99

Format: Poster (1 page)

MGP 3828

The Trojan Reaches awaits your exploration in this huge poster map, featuring every system, trade link and starbase in the sector. Beautifully illustrated in full colour, this map is the second in a series that will allow you to explore the entire Third Imperium and beyond, joining posters together to form one gigantic map!

Includes a full key to aid navigation.





CONAN'S[®]

SCORE OF STEEL

Every month the guys at Mongoose will be looking to bring you their reviews and opinions on some of the hottest events happening around the world, from Movies, Video Games, Books and naturally Hobby Gaming, of course we all need some scoring assistance.



The Twilight Saga: New Moon

By Charlotte Law

The 20th of November was a magical night for myself and a good friend... the long awaited viewing of the new Twilight film! Now I know that these films, to the untrained eye, may seem a little childish and girlie but the fact remains that they are fantastically shot films with a nice story behind them; one that rings a few bells with a lot of roleplayers!

The books that these films have originated from (all of which I have read!) are very well written and gripping books. They have been designed to appeal to teenage girls and are narrated from the point of view of a High School girl, so inevitably they will speak to women on a slightly more personal level than to men. However they are also well designed for adults with several underlying messages that only ring true to older readers. Also I happen to know several men who have enjoyed both the films and the books. In fact



just the other day I lent Breaking Dawn, the fourth book in the saga, to Angus of Cubicle 7... you cannot get more macho than he!

The main appeal of these films, from a writer's viewpoint especially, is that they have stayed immensely true to the books, even to the point of retaining most of the original dialogue. Because of this they have not only retained their charm and appeal but also introduced the concept to a much larger audience... who have inevitably gone out and read the rest of the books... any film that promotes a healthy obsession with reading is ok by me!

The Plot

Following on from the first film, New Moon dives straight back into the plight of the fragile (and somewhat clumsy) mortal Bella Swan (played by Kristen Stewart) and her 'vegetarian' Vampire soul mate Edward Cullen (Played by Robert Pattinson). The pair have already overcome a threat from regular vampires in the first movie, only to be faced with danger coming from within.

The film begins with Bella's musings about the fact that she is getting older whilst her handsome beau will remain 17 forever. She longs to become an immortal so that she can live forever with Edward, yet Edward himself is plagued with guilt over what Bella will miss out on should she cease to be human, whilst also

being terrified of losing her because of her frail human form.

Edward's fears become more real at his own house on Bella's 18th birthday. One of his adopted brothers Jasper (played by Jackson Rathbone), who is also the newest 'vegetarian' in the coven, is overcome by his instincts when Bella accidentally cuts her finger whilst opening presents. The once quiet and sensible vampire turns into the insatiable predator that he really is and lunges for his human friend, who is nimbly protected by Edward.

This event spurns Edward and his family into some soul searching and they decide that it is simply too dangerous for them to be in such close proximity to humans and so they move away. In a painfully cold scene we see the once devoted Edward shattering all of Bella's 'illusions' and trying to persuade her that he simply does not care for her.

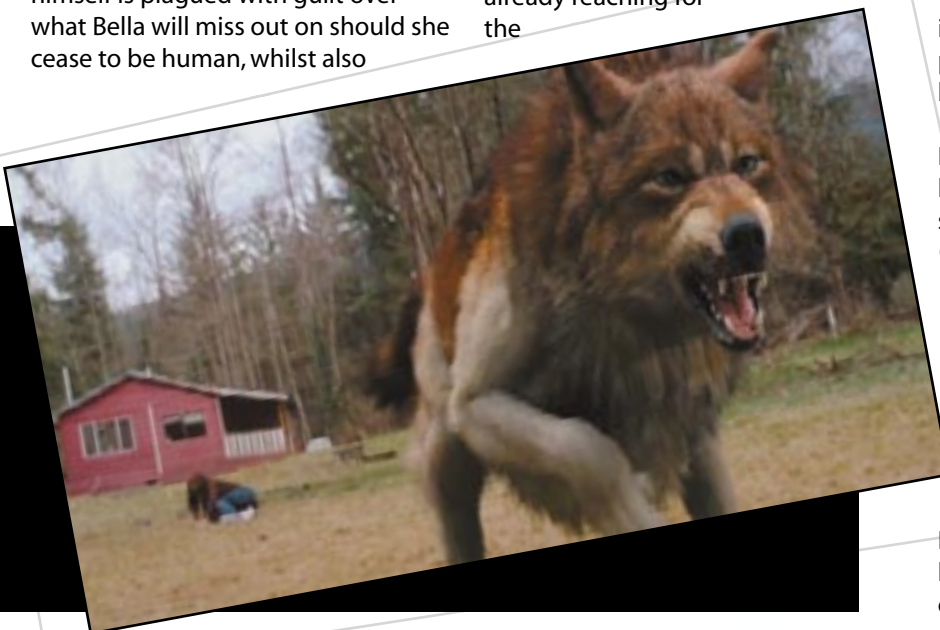
The devastated young woman is plunged into a state of mourning for her lost love that cannot help to pull at the heart strings of anyone who has ever found themselves broken hearted. In the book, the passage of time that follows the disappearance of the Cullen family is enough to reduce you to tears. Simple yet effective, you get to the point of already reaching for the

Kleenex when you turn the page and see just one word, the name of the month, this continues for six pages (months) and is a fantastically symbolic way to show the emptiness in the passage of time. I was eager to see how they would mimic this in the film, in fact I had come up with several ideas of how they might do it, but once again the film makers blew me away with their fantastic take on it (which I won't spoil!).

Once out of her slump, Bella rediscovers her old friends, who find her a much changed shadow of her former self, with a blatant disregard for her own safety. This has come about because she has realised that when she places herself in danger, her subconscious manages to manifest itself as Edward warning her to take care. She becomes addicted to thrill-seeking in order to catch a glimpse of her lost love in her mind's eye.

Bella's life becomes more complicated when one of the threatening vampires from the first movie rears her head. The presence of vampires (both the threatening ones and the former presence of the Cullens) has caused some members of the local Native American population to succumb to their ancestry and their recessive genes have come to light. Several young men from the Reservation have developed into the vampire's natural enemy: werewolves, including Bella's best and most protective friend, Jacob Black (played by Taylor Lautner).

Eventually Bella's lust for thrill seeking leads her to appear in one of Edward's sister Alice's (played by Ashley Greene) visions, causing Alice to come racing back fearing the worst. No sooner has Alice discovered that Bella is safe (and that the small town is now the residence of a pack of angry werewolves) than the drama begins again as it becomes apparent that Edward has discovered Bella's supposed death. Not being able to live without her he embarks on a journey to Italy to commit vampire suicide by angering



the vampire version of the mafia. Having seen this in a vision, Alice takes Bella on a race across the globe to try to prevent Edward from being lost forever and in doing so manages to ensure that there is more drama to come for her family in the future.

No... I'm not going spoil the end!

Overall I was really pleased with how the film makers translated this book onto the silver screen. There were a few minor alterations but nothing that really mattered for the purposes of the story and in fairness it leaves these nuggets of gold for the smug book readers out there to enjoy being privy to. The ending, in a way similar to that in the first film, leaves you on the edge of your seat desperate for a year to whizz by in seconds to the release of the next instalment, Eclipse.

8/10



Roleplaying

'So...' I hear you ask, 'how the hell does this film relate back to any Mongoose products?' Well dear readers, those of you who have seen the Twilight films/ read the books, will be all too familiar with the moral dilemmas that are rife throughout. Good Vs Evil, love conquering all, sacrifice for the benefit of others, mortality Vs immortality. All of these things play heavily into roleplaying games and can be used as inspiration for games like RuneQuest and Traveller.

Werewolves alone have always been excellent foes for players to deal with. When you factor in that New Moon werewolves, in their wolf form, stand at about six feet at their back, they become instantly more menacing and fun to play than the strange deformed humanoid wolves that you often find in game settings.

I have heard a lot of criticism regarding the fact that the Twilight vampires are not typical 'turn to dust in the sunlight, garlic hating' vampires. On the upside the Twilight vampires are able to move amongst a regular society unnoticed, coupled with their heightened senses and personal powers this could be an excellent addition to a gaming session and turn vampire characters into the truly formidable predators that they are destined to be. Their special abilities like mind reading, tracking, seeing the future, and in the case of a new character in New Moon played by Dakota Fanning, the ability to inflict excruciating pain just by willing it, can all be used in a host of different settings.

Even if you just get a couple of small ideas for new skills and powers out of these films, I am certain that they will add greatly to your overall gaming experience. Often inspiration comes from the places that you would least expect.



MONGOOSE PUBLISHING
www.mongoosepublishing.com

State of the Mongoose

The Condensed Version!

By Charlotte Law

The end of November brought the annual document that is always the subject of much intrigue and discussion; The State of the Mongoose. This lengthy document is available to view on the Mongoose Publishing forums and Mongoose head honcho, Matthew Sprange, has laid bare all of the tantalising tit bits that you could ever desire about what you can expect in the year to come.

The full document is well worth a read as it contains a great deal of detail. However, it is rather long! So for those of you who have not gotten around to it yet and are waiting until you have the spare time, I thought I would just give you the condensed version in order to whet your appetite further!

- Mongoose Publishing is thriving and experiencing record sales despite the credit crunch.
- The joining of Mongoose with the Rebellion group has continued to be successful for all concerned.
- The new Mongoose website should be online by the end of February 2010. The planned UK office move should now take place towards the end of 2010.
- Richard Ford returned to the editing team, August Hahn joined our writing team and Will Chapman's Layout genius is now being felt throughout our lines (including S&P!). Sandrine Thirache joined Mongoose to launch our French language division.
- Internal proofreading procedures have been improved and refined resulting in a massive improvement in the quality of Mongoose Products.
- All book printing has been moved solely to the USA.
- *Reaver – Piracy in the Sea of Stars* and *Codename Veil* – two new titles to look forward to from the *Traveller* line in 2010, along with many other supplements for existing lines.
- The Third Imperium will be further expanded upon as well as the world of Mega-City One.
- *RuneQuest II* will bring new game mechanics and refined structure to the existing system, along with new twists to improve the game as a whole.
- *Glorantha*, *Deus Vult*, *Eternal Champion* and *Wraith Recon* will further bulk up the *RQII* line.
- The summer of 2010 will see the launch of two living campaigns – *Living Glorantha* and *Living Traveller*.
- Expect several *Paranoia* supplements in 2010 to support for the three Core Rulebooks along with the release of the third and final Core Rulebook itself: *High Programmers*.
- Thanks to licensing issues with *Conan* we will not be producing any new books for this line in 2010. Instead we are dropping the prices of our existing *Conan* line to make it the best value RPG and we are going to be packing *Signs & Portents* to the rafters with bonus *Conan* material.
- Our *Flaming Cobra* partnerships have continued to be successful in 2009 and all companies involved have several new and exciting things planned for 2010.
- The *Mega-City One Archives* are a 13 volume collection covering the history of the comic strip inclusive of the villains, the technologies etc that help to shape the worlds of *Judge Dredd* and *2000AD*.
- Miniatures are on the horizon to make a comeback in the world of Mongoose... stay tuned for more news later in the year.
- *Lone Wolf* has been scheduled to perfection so that you should see regular releases of the solo gamebooks over the next year, including the much awaited Book 29. The multi-player gamebook will also make an appearance on your shelves early in 2010.

So the general round up... we're feeling pretty pleased with ourselves!



*READ IT,
PUNKS!*

**ARE YOU GETTING
THE GALAXY'S
GREATEST COMIC?**



2000AD
THE GALAXY'S GREATEST COMIC

Dragonmeet 2009

By Katrina Hepburn

Once more the dragons of the gaming industry gathered together. Once more we trudged over the rain-soaked motorways to London. Once more I donned the black heavy leather drow armour to be the eye-candy for hundreds of gamers and once more Matthew walked into the glass door at the front entrance to Dragonmeet because the automatic doors do not open very fast...

It Was Dragonmeet 2009 and after a long journey of what seemed like endless tarmac and rain that came down so hard you could feel it stripping the paint off the car, we finally arrived and began to set up the legendary stall that dominates the Dragonmeet Traders Hall. You could not miss us, we were the first stand that everyone would see when walking into the hall...plus the big signs that had 'Mongoose Publishing' written on them kind of gave us away. This year not only did we have the new *Judge Dredd* books but also *Strontium Dog*, *Hammer's Slammers*, *Earthdawn*, *Dragon Warriors*, *Traveller* and my personal favourite – the limited edition *Paranoia The Blue Line* in hardback form limited to only 100 copies! As well as special reductions and offers on *Conan* books!

We weren't the only traders there, however, oh no! This hall was packed wall to wall with all kinds of goodies by the time the doors opened to the public. Among the plethora of traders were names we all know and love: Cubicle 7, profiling the new *Doctor Who* RPG, of which people were running games; but also something new known as *Hellcats and Hockysticks* written by Andrew Peregrine, which I could not resist taking a peek at. The little book I picked up looked rather harmless with a picture of a schoolgirl on the front. It was only when I noticed the burning car wreck and half smashed school building in the background that I thought this might have something more... and indeed it does! Witchcraft, necromancy, demonology, chaos, murder and sacrifice where you play



Andy Looney



**Bob & Julian at the
Bring & Buy stand**



Dom@Cubicle7



Gareth Hanrahan & me



James Desborough

the role of one of the students at an all girl school causing and toying with all of the above effects. It is designed to be a fast-paced and fun RPG and as you can imagine I was intrigued to know more, which is why I am passing on the website address where you can all take a peek at this for yourselves *winks* (www.hellcatsrpg.co.uk).

Jon Hodgson



Pagan Angel made their appearance also; this is the shop that you take one look at and immediately get drawn into and is usually accompanied by the words 'oooo' and 'shiny' as you float towards it. They sell all kinds of wonderful jewellery and t-shirts and are a must see whenever you get the chance, as I am always seeing something different on their stall every time I catch them at a convention. Triple Ace Games were profiling their Hellfrost and Savage Worlds games and of course there were several rather large dice stalls; one in particular which caught my eye and is quite new to the conventions market was Q-Workshop (for the first time making the trip all the way from Poland) with its vast array of extremely detailed and ornate dice, ranging from Cthulhu mythosian dice to LOTR elven dice, all of which have an almost embossed or embroidered look to them. You can see their wares at www.Q-workshop.com. I would highly recommend checking out their real leather dice cups as well. It is all really beautiful work and if you an avid gamer like myself you cannot resist adding that little touch of difference or class to your collection of gaming utilities.

LARPERS!



Linda Pitman & me



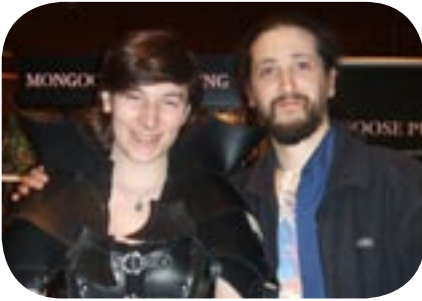
Of course Leisure Games, Pelgrane Press, Tritex Games, Magic Geek, Warrior Elite with their wonderful *War for Edadh* (pronounced 'E-Dath') card game, Flagship Magazine and BITS (British Isles Traveller Society) to name a few more of the vendors involved. There were also the usual 'Bring & Buy' tables! So if you had any old or unwanted games/books etc... you could bring them along to the convention and perhaps sell them off during the course of the day. This is a wonderful medium for collectors and a small percentage of what is sold goes to charity.

Dragonmeet 2009

Linda Pitman & Sand



Nimrod & me.



Q-Workshop



Pagan Angel



Triple Ace Games



TradeHall



A few guest appearances from artists, writers and creators included Jon Hodgson, the man responsible for most of the cover art on the Dragon Warriors books (Sold by Mongoose Publishing), Linda Pitman who contributed to the illustrations in the *RuneQuest* Rulebook (also sold by Mongoose Publishing) and who has been helping Sandrine with tips and advice on her drawing; James Desborough from Postmortem Studios signing and profiling his written works and Andrew Looney, the Creator of Fluxx the card game, had travelled all the way from America! Myself and Nimrod both took this opportunity to say the extra secret magical word to him to be granted our special Fluxx Keeper Cards which are available from Andy Looney himself but require him to sign them in person! Of course the extra secret magical word is 'Autograph'...shhh...don't tell anyone! He was an absolute joy to meet and a very funny guy.

Three floors of gaming madness is no small thing to miss and I could not help noticing the amount of members from The Phoenix Games Club, which is a London based gaming club that you can look up on www.phoenixgamesclub.org.uk. They meet up for fun and frivolity every Thursday from 7:30pm. So if you are in London and you are looking for a gaming group, check these people out!

Among the Phoenix gamers were a few LARP gamers from Seaxe & Sorcery! So I did not feel completely out of place while

wearing my armour. The couple looked fantastic dressed up in their fantasy character outfits and proceeded to tell me all about their Tabletop, Historical war gaming and Live Action Roleplay group based in Essex. You can catch up with these wonderful people at www.seaxeandsorcery.co.uk. They do a lot of events and meet throughout the year, so if you live in the area and you have even just a curiosity of 'how to' or 'what is' LARP, I would highly recommend checking these people out.

To add to this I would like to reiterate, as I do in so many of the articles I write for *Signs & Portents*, how welcome it is to see LARP gamers come fully dressed in their fantasy/medieval garments and if there is an artist/writer/creator or any person of note whom you wish to speak to, please do not be timid. Some artists like Andy Looney are visiting from other countries and it may be your only chance to meet them in person. So if you see someone you want to speak to, DO IT, because you may never get another chance!

Dragonmeet 2009 was an excellent experience, not only was it full of brilliant people all having a good time, it was also benefitting charity by holding an auction at the end (this year the auction raised a fantastic £2,300 for charity!). I cannot stress just how absolutely fantastic this gaming convention is but of course the next one is Conception just after Christmas *grins*. May the fun never end...



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Childish Things

playing kids in Spycraft 2.0

By Emma Newman with additional material by Mark Newman

2230 hours

A slight figure checks its watch in the darkened room. It peers past the edge of the door and sees a middle aged man neatly piling clothes in the hall, then whispers in a female voice: 'Damn... He should be asleep by now.'

She checks her pack again and nervously looks at her watch: 2235. Forty-five minutes to get to the docks. The lights finally go out and she stuffs some gum in her mouth. She slides the door open and creeps out, avoiding the creaky floorboards. Tiptoeing past the master bedroom, she hears kissing and quiet giggling. 'Gross...' she whispers, poking her tongue out in disgust.

Downstairs she climbs through Polly's dog flap, shrugs on her backpack and collects her bike. She runs with it until she's clear of the house and standing on the sidewalk. 'Parentals,' she mumbles, smiling. 'Soooo gullible.' She peddles toward the dock, hoping her handler is still waiting for her.

Introduction

Kids have always enjoyed prominent roles in fiction, from plucky assistants to ass-kicking main characters. This is especially true in the espionage genre, with the likes of Cody Banks, Alex Rider, Kim Possible and the Spy Kids but there are countless examples in other genres as well, including the Hardy Boys, the Goonies and the Famous Five. They have the same potential in roleplaying games, providing a fun diversion from traditional fare.

First up: tone. A kid-centric game can be light-hearted, which can be a lot of fun for players new and experienced but there's a lot more to playing kids than goofing around. Your game can be just as tense and challenging as any adult outing, if not more so.

Assuming an age gap spanning 8 to 18 years of age, you can cover a lot of ground. Younger characters are less likely to engage in fisticuffs but they are much more likely to have to dodge the grownups while

thwarting the bad guys. The action can get rougher as the characters creep into their teens and adult supervision tends to be somewhat less intense as well.

So, Why Play a Kid?

At some point we have all mused about that savvy kid outthinking his peers and one-upping the bad guy. There are a lot of advantages to playing a kid and it's funny that so many people think it sucks being young. It's only when we reach adulthood that we realise just how good we had it.

For instance, how many people at a party notice the kid in the room? Sure, spies scour rooms looking for potential threats amongst the adults but even they don't look twice at the kids. They write them off as harmless innocents at best and risky obstacles at worst. No one notices when kids sneak off to snoop around and even if they did, they'd chalk it up to the curiosity of youth.

Most kids have a small frame, letting them slip into areas that adults can't reach. This makes them great infiltrators but their perks don't stop there. They can make excellent martial artists too. Remember that strength often has little to do with unarmed mastery; speed, technique and keen observation of your opponent are just as valuable. Those 10 year old Shaolin monks in the movies aren't entirely fictional. Feel like picking a fight with one of them? No, me either.

Even better, kids don't scare easily, letting them attempt harebrained stunts and face obstacles most adults would consider dangerous, perhaps suicidal. Daring duels across city skyscrapers, high-speed chases in tricked out cars (or bikes, or rollerblades, or skateboards); even tense games of cat-and-mouse through a deranged mastermind's trap-laden lair... It's all just fun and games to them – until somebody gets hurt, of course, which brings us to one of the most important decisions you have to make when playing as kids.

Invincibility: It's a State of Mind

Despite the scrapes and bruises of childhood, few kids realise they can be seriously hurt – most blithely barrel through life, assuming they're impervious. For reasons practical and political, fiction reinforces this, rarely portraying children suffering anything more than a superficial injury, except to further the story. Unless you'd prefer to break from the norm, you can model this with two new campaign qualities (which can work equally well in any Spycraft 2.0 game).

Bang, You're Dead! (Seasons Only: +0 XP): Heroes never die but they sometimes retire. A character doesn't die when his wounds drop below 0 but rather becomes an NPC. The GM may 'write him out' of the season in any way he wishes (even making him a villain or dependant), though any player may make suggestions to enhance the mission or season. If the GM uses these suggestions, or plans to, the suggesting player earns 1 bonus action die per idea used or reserved. If the player whose character retired earns any bonus action dice through this option, his next character starts with them.

No I'm Not! (Seasons Only: +0 XP): Heroes never die – their lives just get more complicated. A character doesn't die when his wounds drop below 0 but rather falls unconscious or is otherwise removed from the action for a short period, per the GM's discretion. He also suffers a significant setback of the GM's creation, which should pose a clear and immediate danger, or present a tangible obstacle for the whole team and should raise the stakes of the mission or season. For example, the character may fall unconscious and wake hours or days later, leading the team to investigate what happened, all the while dealing with problems arising from events that occurred in the intervening time. Alternately, the 'killing blow' might actually harvest the character's DNA, letting the



villains clone him (if the science is available) or use it to bypass home office biometrics.

The Burdens of Youth

The main problem facing kid agents is being taken seriously. Children have to work harder to be accepted as equals by most adults and sometimes it's just impossible. No one likes being told what to do by a kid – even other kids – and then there are all the challenges with seduction and dealing with foils. Most kids also have a curfew and even those with 'cool' (or uncaring) parents still stick out like a sore thumb in late night operations.

Gear can also present issues, especially for Young (and therefore Small) agents with restricted carrying limits. Likewise with motor vehicles, which are designed for adults with full-length limbs and grown-up body weight. An expensive mountain bike is nice but it's never going to be as fast as an Aston Martin Vanquish. And really, how much training would a kid have with firearms? Even the smallest caliber weapons can provide recoil problems when you only have a Strength score of 6.

In a (semi-)realistic game, which we don't recommend, the rigors of espionage can be hard on kids. Few are prepared to grapple with life-and-death decisions (especially when loved ones are involved) and roleplaying the emotional fallout of a

superspy's life on an undeveloped agent can be extremely taxing. One need only glance at the stories of child soldiers in war-torn Africa to see how heart-wrenching a true depiction could be.

Probably the strongest approach, while unrealistic, is to embrace the practical limits of childhood adventure and maintain a light enough tone throughout the game that the mental impact never enters the equation. Keep the action and excitement high, incorporate the physical and social limitations into your game (or not, as you prefer) and indulge in the wild, unsullied enthusiasm of early life.

Rules of the Playground

Kids play by their own rules, including the following Talents, Specialties and feats, though these options are of course equally useful for grown-up characters.

Talents

For more on Talents, see the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook, page 18.

Young: You are a child and that makes you the sneakiest, wiliest opponent in the world.

- **Child:** You're 7 to 11 years old and your attributes are adjusted for your age (see Table 1.17: *Aging Effects*, on page 61 of the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*).
- Your Size becomes Small (1×1).
- You gain an extra Interest at Career Levels 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20.
- Blend is always a class skill for you and your result cap with it increases by 5 (maximum 60).
- Each teammate who can see or hear you benefits from your Interests as if they possess them.
- While you're in a group of 5 or more characters with your Talent who are within 15 ft. of each other, you gain the *swarm* NPC quality.

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- You begin play with 3 fewer weapon proficiencies.
- Harmless: The Disposition toward you of non-villain NPCs improves by 1 grade.

Teen: It's hard being a teenager – but it also has its advantages...

- +2 Charisma, –2 Wisdom
- Teenager: You're 12 to 15 years old and your attributes are adjusted for your age (see Table 1.17: Aging Effects, on page 61 of the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook).
- You gain a +1 bonus with Initiative checks. This bonus increases by an additional +1 at Career Levels 4, 8, 12, 16 and 20.
- Bluff is always a class skill for you and your result cap with it increases by 5 (maximum 60).
- You gain a +1 insight bonus with action die results. This bonus increases by an additional +1 at Career Levels 4, 8, 12, 16 and 20.
- Mistrusted: The Disposition toward you of characters who don't share your native culture and are aware of your Origin worsens by 2 grades.

Specialities

For more on Specialities, see the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook, page 21.

Troublemaker: You didn't do it, they can't prove it and it totally isn't your fault. No, really!

- Bonus Feat: Dash.
- Your base Defense increases by 1.
- You may Taunt 1 additional opponent. You roll only once for the Taunt action while each opponent rolls to resist separately. The number of opponents you may Taunt increases by 1 more at Career Levels 4, 8, 12, 16 and 20.
- Once per session, you may make a minimum value Bribe without committing money (see the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook, pages 121 and 163).

Style Feats

For more on Style feats, see the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook, page 201.

Brat

You're hell on wheels when you want something.

Prerequisites: Up to 15 years old, Manipulate 3+ ranks.

Benefits: Once per day as a full action, you may target a character who can see and hear you and one object they're carrying. Unless the character immediately gives you the object, he must make a Will save (DC 15) or suffer 1d4 stress damage. The character continues to suffer this effect for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier, until he gives you the object, or until he moves out of sight and hearing from you, whichever comes first.

Special: If you outgrow this feat (i.e. you live to your 16th birthday), you immediately lose it and may replace it with another Style feat of your choice (you must still meet the new feat's prerequisites).

Wail

Most adults panic when confronted with a crying child. It's something you use to your advantage.

Prerequisites: Up to 12 years old, Bluff 3+ ranks.

Benefits: Once per mission as a full action, you may target a character who can see and hear you, crying hysterically and throw baseless accusations at them. He suffers stress damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1) and the Disposition toward him of each other character who can see and hear both of you, including the target's allies, worsens by 1 grade for the rest of the mission.

Special: If you outgrow this feat (i.e. you live to your 13th birthday), you immediately





lose it and may replace it with another Style feat of your choice (you must still meet the new feat's prerequisites).

Story Seeds

Buried Alive: A teammate is celebrating his 15th birthday and all is going well – until a stranger arrives and IDs himself with a Agency code phrase. He explains that the team's handler has been kidnapped and offers a note saying he's been buried alive. The kidnapper will deal only with the birthday boy or girl and time is running out. The team must negotiate with or distract the kidnapper and race against time to find their missing man.

The Insiders: A young espionage team is covertly recruited to guard their parents, who are all important government figures. Alerted that a villainous organisation plans to attack a gala the parents are attending, the kids must find and thwart enemy operatives without cluing anyone – including their parents – into their special status.

Into the Cold: For reasons the characters will never understand (they're kids – they don't watch CNN), the Russians are massing troops to invade Alaska, disguising the build-up as a 'training exercise'. The team is sent on an undercover mission to the Volen Sports Park, 60 kilometres outside of Moscow, with covers as rising stars in the snowboarding scene. They must infiltrate the local KGB headquarters and the office of the military action's commander, learn what's really going on and potentially neutralise the situation before things escalate out of control.

Made to Measure: A band of kids from a local orphanage befriend the characters, seemingly as a benign way to cope with their sad circumstances but as the agents get to know the newcomers they learn that none of them can remember anything before their 8th birthdays. The orphans are also prone to bouts of freakish strength and speed, which leads to a few unfortunate accidents and draws the attention of adults and eventually local reporters. Soon, strangers appear,

kidnapping one or more of the orphans and leading the team to protect the rest. Only by turning the tables on the strangers does the team stand a chance of finding out what's really going on – that the orphans are all that remains of a long-abandoned super soldier program, their memories (and their erratic but superior genes) wiped by benevolent researchers to give them a shot at normal lives. The team also learns that the shadowy masterminds behind the program have a more... permanent solution in mind.

Social Enemy: Nasty rumours have recently circulated that a local terrorist cell is training kids as suicide bombers. Happily, the Agency has its own junior operatives – trained to penetrate the cell and bring it down from the inside.

Running a Kids Season

Incorporating kids into your game, or running an all-kid season, can start with just a few choices from the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*.

Campaign Qualities: The following campaign qualities may apply in games containing kids. The GC may alter this list if he desires a less traditional version of the genre.

- *Black and White:* Kids rarely sell each other out. It's a luxury most adults don't enjoy. Also, most kids can usually spot a bad guy a mile off.
- *Bulletproof:* If you don't apply *bang!* you're dead or no I'm not! (see page XX), this is a decent substitute. It still allows for serious bloodshed, though far less often.
- *Revolving Door:* Kids have an uncanny way of bouncing back from accidents that would spell certain death for adults.

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SPYCRAFT
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- **Soap:** Elementary and high school are social minefields. Between hormones and sugar rushes, even casual games of dodge ball can get dicey, so it's no surprise that Young and Teen agents endure more than their fair share of drama.
- **Spirited:** Children are lucky. They tumble down stairs (or if they're agents, through mastermind mazes) and somehow escape without a scratch. They always seem to be at the right place at the right (or very wrong) time and even when they get caught doing something they're not supposed to they can often talk their way out of it.

Common Classes: The following class options are especially well suited for a game involving young agents.

- **Explorer:** Kids instinctively seek out adventure. They're new to the world and always wondering what is over the next hill.
- **Hacker:** Children now have better access to computers than any generation in history and with the internet available in schools the digital world is second nature for them.
- **Intruder:** Slipping into and out of tight spots is another strength of the little ones and more than a few make decent thieves as well.
- **Sleuth:** A child's innate curiosity leads him to many discoveries – including some he might wish he'd never made.

Common Objectives: Kid-centric games can be focused on specific objectives or free-flowing but there must be a strong plot. Let the players guide the action, introduce lots of Subplots and don't skip on the overarching story. Missions can be highly structured but expect the characters to tackle them in their own way and at their own pace. They certainly won't be listening to what the adults tell them!

- **Distract:** Kids are naturally talented at talking in circles, causing big (sometimes *really* big) commotions

and commanding attention. These traits come in extremely handy when keeping the eyes off sensitive action elsewhere.

- **Evade:** Kids are also slippery and fast, able to shrink out of sight without warning. Enemy agents are likely to find nothing in their prey's wake apart from a trail of shed backpacks and clothing.
- **Infiltrate:** It rarely occurs to adults – especially those arrogant enough to assume they can threaten the world – that someone a kid's size might actually return the favour. Oh, how wrong they are.
- **Investigate:** Children love rifling through desks and piles of paper for interesting stuff. The home office frequently turns this inquisitive behaviour toward finding and stopping the bad guys.

Recommended Inspirations: *Agent Cody Banks* (M), *the Alex Rider series* (B, M), *Battle Royale* (B, M), *Bully* (VG), *Cherub the Recruit* (B), *Cross My Heart and Hope to Spy* (B), *Dark Angel* (TV), *The Famous Five* (B), *the Gaia Moore series* (B), *The Goonies*

(M), *Hackers* (M), *The Hardy Boys* (B), *I'd Tell You I Love You, But Then I'd Have to Kill You* (B), *James Bond Junior* (A, B), *Joe 90* (TV), *M.I. High* (TV), *The Karate Kid* (M), *Kim Possible* (A), *Recess* (TV), *Scooby Doo* (A, M), *Spriggan* (A, CB), *Spy Kids* (M), *Specialist Model Spy* (B), *Spy X* (B), *The Squad* (B), *Stand by Me* (M), *Tin Tin* (A, CB), *Undercover Girl* (B), *Wargames* (M)

The Last Word

Playing a kid can be a wonderful departure but it's also quite a challenge. Keep in mind that much of the everyday knowledge you take for granted as an adult probably wasn't part of your skill set at age 15, let alone 10. Also, while many people have a soft spot for kids, don't assume it'll be a cake walk. The black hats may just assume you're a scamper with nothing but mayhem in mind – which in all fairness probably isn't so far from what you and your team have planned. Keep a bright outlook, don't forget to have fun and try not to worry too much about the consequences of your actions.

After all, most kids don't...



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RuneQuest Too

By Lawrence Whitaker and Pete Nash

Now that the secret is broken... now that the cat is out of the bag, the beans spilled, the rumours confirmed, we can talk openly about *RuneQuest II* (or MRQII – or, if you're one of the more ardent purists, dating *RuneQuest* since its very first appearance, RQIV or V or VI, depending on how you count *RuneQuest: Adventures in Glorantha* and *RuneQuest Slayers* into the bargain). But, for us, this is the second edition of Mongoose's treatment of *RuneQuest* and so it is, officially *RQII*.

But that's semantics. What does *RQII* actually mean, for you, the player or Games Master, whether new or seasoned? What does *RQII* give you?

Some basics first. This is a complete overhaul of the previous edition of *RuneQuest*. Changes have been made to just about every aspect of the game to a greater or lesser degree. Some changes are barely noticeable whilst others are wholesale additions or revisions. However, the design philosophy running through *RQII* is as follows:

- **Elegance:** Game mechanics that use common concepts, easy to understand and apply.
- **Realistic:** Although a set of fantasy rules, we've tried to be faithful to real-life where it is appropriate and where we can find an elegant solution to a fantasy situation.
- **Intuitive:** Whilst some of the new rules and mechanics introduced may require a little digesting at first, they should become logical and intuitive to use. There is far less a reliance on matrices for resolving combat, for instance.
- **Flexible:** No rule system is ever perfect but one of the hallmarks of *RQ* has always been the ease with which it can be 'house-ruled' or adapted to fit many different situations. The mechanics in *RQII* are designed with that in mind. You can drop or change just about any part of the mechanics without compromising another.

- **Compatibility:** *RQII* remains compatible with supplements and settings created for the first edition. Indeed, many of the rules included in books such as 'Guilds, Factions and Cults' are now formalised in *RQII*. However, all the core concepts that previous books have used remain in *RQII* and it should prove to be an easy task to convert old books to work with the new rules.
- **Sophisticated:** Although *RQ* is essentially an easy system to learn and play, *RQII* includes a certain level of sophistication that the previous edition lacked. This sophistication manifests primarily in the combat, magic and cult rules and is aimed at *encouraging* a certain style of play.
- **Fun:** What attracts people to *RQ* is that it is an easy, fun set of rules. We think this is still true. Some of the sophisticated elements should, we think, engender some fun situations that previous editions of *RQ* have hinted at but never fully explored.

The team behind *RQII* is myself and Pete Nash. Pete is my long-time collaborator on all kinds of roleplaying projects and he and I have been tinkering with the rules for some time. *RQII* is the culmination of many, many months of discussion, testing, out-of-the-box thinking and rule integration that some of you may already be familiar with.

Changes

What, then, can you expect from *RQII*? This article is not a blow-by-blow run through of all the changes or a set of conversion guidelines but we can summarise the way key sections have altered.

Genericism and Glorantha

RQII retains its emphasis on Glorantha as the core and default setting for *RQ*. All the mechanics are designed to simulate Glorantha as closely as possible and the examples given throughout the book reference Glorantha. However the rules

are also generic enough for Glorantha to be completely ignored if this not a world that you are interested in. Using *RQII* Rules-As-Written for Eternal Champion games, Lankhmar, or your own campaign backgrounds, should be much easier.

Character Creation

Much remains the same and familiar. All the key stats and attributes are there, as are the skills, divided into basic and advanced (although Basic Skills are now renamed Common Skills) and developed through a combination of culture, profession and personal choice. However a great deal of rationalisation has been made and is, broadly, as follows:

Characteristics. Roll in Order, Rolled Allocation and Points Buy are now all legitimate options for creating a character. We have dropped the 4D6 and ignore the lowest die opting for a straight forward 3D6 for STR, CON and so on, and 2D6+6 for INT and SIZ. All characteristics are capped at 21 for humans but they otherwise work precisely as before.

Attributes. Damage Modifiers and Hit Points work as they did before but the way Combat Actions are calculated has changed to take into account the Intelligence of the adventurer. This helps to de-emphasise DEX as the 'uber' characteristic and incorporates how Intelligence contributes to gaining tactical advantage. A new attribute that influences Improvement is introduced and is based on CHA, which again helps de-emphasise CHA as a 'dump' characteristic, especially when allocating rolls or using Points-Buy to build the character.

Skills. All skills are now based on either the sum of two characteristics or a single characteristic with a multiplier. There is no formula or arbitrary numbers in calculating the basic value of a skill – either a Common or Advanced skill. We have also changed the list of Common skills, conflating some and breaking out others. For example, Athletics is now complemented by Brawn

and Swim skills, whilst the three Lores (Animal, Plant and World) become a single Lore (Regional) skill. New Common Skills are introduced too, reflecting the greater emphasis on culture and community *RQII* offers.

Cultures and Professions. The list of cultural backgrounds have been greatly trimmed and skills within each overhauled. Professions too, are modified, increasing skill bonuses and ranges of skills. Guidance on creating a magic-using character is provided. However, if you are using a character from the previous edition you will not need to completely change the background he used: simply adjust the skills he has accrued thus far.

Community. A new addition is *community*. Here, characters identify parents and siblings, friends, rivals and enemies. Some new rules help characters form connections with each other which should contribute to the ever-challenging question of why, and how, a group of adventurers have come together.

Skills

As mentioned, skills have been juggled and tweaked but the broad spread is the same. Skills introduced in the Games Masters' Handbook have been formally included in *RQII* and every skill has critical and fumble results listed with their description. The success ranges have been tweaked slightly but otherwise all works as per the original *RQ* rules.

Resolving Opposed Rolls works as described in the PDF Players Guide: that is, characters must roll under their skill but achieve a high roll to gain the advantage. If a character rolls a critical success, it automatically trumps a standard success. For skills over 100% we have changed the mechanic so that all participants in the Opposed contest see their skills reduced by the over 100% amount of the highest skilled character. Thus, a character in an Opposed test of 110% facing two Non-Player Characters of 80% each would see his skill reduced to 100% and his opponents to 70%. This involves a little more arithmetic

than before but helps with scalability for characters with very high skill values.

Improving Skills is now easier. Characters gain a bonus to their Improvement Roll which should help increase the chance of a skill advancing. However, the new Improvement modifier will influence the number of improvement rolls a character has – so it is worth considering this when designing your character from the outset.

Combat

A problematic area of *RQ* has always been combat and this has been addressed by completely redesigning how it works.

There have been a number of minor fixes to Combat, such as combining two-weapon or weapon and shield into a single skill, to avoid the unfair bias of learning two separate skills to be competent. Combat does not use Opposed Rolls for resolution, as introduced in the *Players' Guide PDF* and reverts to standard rolls for each party in the fight. This removes the 'Downgrade'



RuneQuest Too

situation which caused a great deal of consternation when introduced!

However, neither are there tables for combat resolution. It has been simplified – as an attacker you either hit or miss and as a defender you parry or you don't. Whether damage penetrates your parry depends on the comparative sizes of the weapons used. Bigger weapons will overcome the damage absorption of smaller weapons and longer weapons will keep your foe at bay. Do not expect to be able to consistently block a greatsword with a dagger, or a giant's tree-trunk club with a broadsword.

The always sticky and tenuous differentiation between parrying and dodging has been removed, by combining them into the same action. In reality defending yourself in close combat is, and has always been, a combination of blocking, parrying and footwork rolled into the same movement. Diving for cover or avoiding traps is now covered by the Evade skill: something useful to do if facing missile weapons without a shield.

Armour penalties have been revised completely, so that they no longer affect your skills but hinder Strike Rank and Movement instead, making characters slightly slower to respond in combat, depending on the armour worn.

The way Combat Actions work has also been changed – and this is a significant alteration. Reactions have been removed, so that you must use your Combat Actions in order to both attack and defend yourself; adding a strategic advantage for whoever goes first in combat. Should you wear lighter armour in order to act first, thus using more of your CA to attack? Or select the added protection of heavy armour in exchange for potentially attacking less?

The next major change to combat is the introduction of Combat Manoeuvres. If you score a degree of success over your opponent (you successfully attack, he fails to parry, for example), you gain a Combat Manoeuvre. These manoeuvres allow you to perform a variety of offensive and

defensive techniques that have both a tactical element and include a 'cinematic' feel. Thus the flow of combat becomes, overall, far more tactical, with trips, disarms and the like occurring naturally in the flow of the fight. Remember the scene from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, where Michelle Yeoh fights Zhang Ziyi? *RQII* combat can now mimic the bashes, pins, knockbacks, weapon breaking and all the other flashy techniques, without ever needing to mention 'precise attack'. A few combat manoeuvres such as are tied to specific weapon types; and some weapons have, in turn, had their basic damage and abilities overhauled too. So, using your CA wisely and choosing manoeuvres according to what you want to achieve – and your weapon's capabilities – makes combat a far more satisfying experience but without having to rely on reams of charts, matrices, or simply rolling for hit, location and damage. Furthermore, fights tend to resolve faster and can end with a lot less maiming or fatalities.

Of course, not all players may like this style of combat. But as stated at the beginning of this article, *RQII* is flexible and modular. Combat manoeuvres can easily be ignored by those who prefer just chopping their enemies into dog meat, rather than defeating them in flashy ways.

Lastly, the damage rules have been revised so that a Serious Wound requires a single opposed roll to avoid some sort of impediment and a Major Wound uses the same roll to avoid maiming or death. This reduces round to round book keeping and no matter how huge the foe's Resilience value, a Major Wound still incapacitates, preventing them from continuing to fight.

Magic

Like Combat, Magic has been rebuilt. The system supports four magical paths: Common Magic, Divine Magic, Spirit Magic and Sorcery. Following the aim of minimising the number of skills used in the game, all types of advanced magic have been reduced to learning only two skills (the exception is Common Magic, which uses only one skill) – ostensibly

one for casting and one for restricting the overall effect of what happens. This allows characters to master their chosen forms of magic more easily and enables Games Masters to more precisely judge both their capabilities and those of their opponents. In addition, learning new spells now requires Improvement Rolls, allowing a better balance in alternate game settings between those who use magic and those who cannot.

Bringing the system back into a more Gloranthan mindset, Rune Magic has been renamed as Common Magic and its dependence on physical runes has been removed. Since it is the weakest form of magic, it only requires a single skill to control the casting. In general, Common Magic spells affect single individuals, normally only the caster if non-offensive, reflecting their petty nature. Also, the highest Magnitude of Common Magic spell which can be learned is limited by the caster's INT.

Divine Magic with its reliance on dedicated POW caused some concern in the past. However, the whole of Divine Magic has been reinvented so that the average initiate, acolyte or priest gains a huge benefit in return for funnelling part of his Magic Points to a god. To prevent runaway POW dedication, the maximum amount you may dedicate is restricted by your cult rank. If you ever leave the cult then your dedicated POW returns, since you never sacrifice it, merely redirect MP production.

In return, all Divine spells now only require a single point of dedicated POW to store, can be recovered away from the temple and, depending on your cult rank, are recovered at a much faster rate. The strength of a Divine spell is now linked to the Pact skill so that Rune levels can channel the power of their god at fairly awesome magnitudes, making it exceptionally hard to block or dismiss.

Sorcery likewise has been overhauled. The biggest benefit for sorcerers is that all the manipulations have been bundled into just one Manipulation skill and groups

of spells into a single Grimoire skill. This helps overcome the age-old problem that sorcerers could never improve as quickly or be as well balanced as other magicians. However, the spells have also been revised to rebalance their effects and make them completely flexible so that any of the manipulations can be used to tweak them. Whereas Divine Magic is very strong, Sorcery's strength comes from being very versatile, especially when it can affect multiple targets simultaneously.

Spirit Magic has, for the first time in RuneQuest's venerable history, been given a fully coherent and unique system which actually treats spirits as magical otherworld entities in their own right, rather than just a source of Magic Points or spells. Spirit magicians are able to perceive and eventually enter the spirit world by using one of their skills. Additionally a second skill to command and bind spirits is used. A spirit's magical effect can *only* be manifested if the spirit is summoned to the physical world, or called forth from the fetish to which it is bound. The major benefit of Spirit Magic is that until returned to a fetish or the spirit plane, the spirit's supernatural power is everlasting. Although very Gloranthan in nature, these rules can easily be used for Demonology and the like.

Also, since spirits are *not* spells they can be particularly devastating against Divine Magic or Sorcery users, especially if they are dragged into spirit combat with their reduced or expended number of Magic Points. The days of shaman being despised as primitive dabblers should be over, as they become feared as potent, terrifying foes in their own right.

Cults

The work on overhauling cults began in the *Guilds, Factions and Cults* book and many of the cult concepts introduced there are carried forward to *RQII*.

The Cults chapter has been updated so that practitioners of any magic can form cults, whether it is a barbarian tribe worshipping a storm god, sorcerers

sacrificing to a demon, or jungle primitives venerating their ancestral frog totem. Thus each cult now has its own myths and HeroQuests, becoming a fully fledged social organisation – and a useful plot source for adventures. Since ultimately all magic comes from the runes, whether via gods, grimoires, or spirits, all members can now call for miracles by drawing power directly from the cult's runic source. Such attempts are truly acts of desperation, as they come at a terrible cost to the skills of the caller but are no longer limited to theistic cults in the form of Divine Intervention.

Heroic Abilities

To support the Cult rules, Legendary Abilities have been renamed Heroic Abilities and as well as being taught, can be won as part of HeroQuesting. Heroic Abilities have also been rebalanced and streamlined with the rest of the system. In addition they now require a Magic Point to invoke, better reflecting other genres that *RQII* may be used for, such as the Ki or Chi talents of oriental settings, or possibly psychic powers of mystical knights. For those who fear this is too much like magic, the trigger for such abilities could easily be substituted for burning a fatigue level or Combat Action instead.

But it's Still RuneQuest...

It is impossible to summarise all the tweaks and changes in one short article but essentially *RQII* takes its previous edition, improves upon it, rationalises it and incorporates ideas, themes and mechanics that have been introduced in previous RQ releases. It is a game that remains very familiar to players but feels fresher and offers more opportunities and possibilities.

It would be untrue to claim that the game is perfect. Players and Games Masters will find things they want to change, ignore or enhance. Some changes will be popular and others less so. Writing a rules set is a challenging job as there is no way that every individual preference and campaign style can be accommodated without producing a rulebook that requires STR 21 to lift. However the strengths of *RQII* should greatly outweigh its weaknesses and the weaknesses present have been scrutinised to a high degree to minimise any intrusive effects or illogical consequences.

For those who have established *RQ* campaigns, introducing *RQII* should not be too difficult a job. For most characters it will require a little recalculation of skills and some adjustments to spells but you will certainly not need to begin from scratch. In fact, existing characters changed to *RQII* should emerge with greater benefits than they had before and new characters should be more rounded, capable and satisfying.

We're proud of *RQII* and hope you will be, too.



Artism... Vol 4

The Demon

By Jason Banditt Adams

Hello everyone, Jason Banditt Adams here again for another exciting instalment of Artism! Today we will be delving into a very popular villain, a Demon. While interpretations may vary, I have tried to go with a clean and classic look. Cloven hooves, horns, big teeth and claws are all there to give this foe a dangerous edge. Being humanoid in design, it is pretty straightforward and familiar to us and will only take three steps to complete.

STEP 1

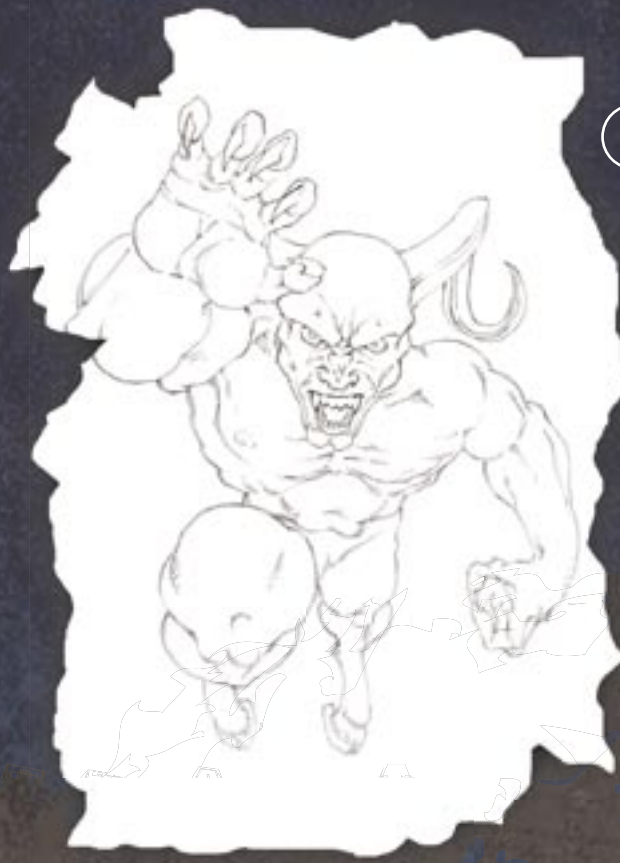
I've begun by blocking out a pose. Like a wooden posing armature, I've given it a sort of made-of-blocks look. I did this because a demon is a rather thick-bodied foe. By bypassing a 'wire skeleton' it also lets me get straight to the meat of the drawing.

To make this enemy more menacing, I've posed him leaping at the viewer. Hand outstretched, claws and teeth bared give this the look of a more immediate threat.

STEP 2

From the block armature, I've begun to assemble a more definite look. I've given finite shape to the entire body and outlined all the details to be filled in next. I've given a lot of contorted detail to the face. The head of any figure should be the concentration of detail. In this case though, I have added more to give it an alien look.

I have attempted to give the claws and teeth prominence so that their danger is evident. However, I am not completely



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happy with the position of everything. That is okay. Like I said in the last article, art is organic, it flows and changes. Never be afraid to make as many revisions as is necessary to make each piece the best it can be!

STEP 3

Here I have given the final coat of detailing, all the nitty-gritty. I have changed the outstretched arm to give it a more natural look but also so that it does not detract from the hand before it. Those claws are supposed to be a focal point! I have also changed the position of the foremost leg only so slightly in an effort to make it a little more natural and less detracting. It is a difficult act to balance. You don't want large objects to detract the viewer's attention from the prominent features. In this case the claws and teeth are the prominent features. While they are at the top, those large muscled legs are at the bottom. We want them large and muscled, giving the threat of being able to propel this foe at great speeds and heights. Yet, not at the expense of attention to where it needs to be.

Note that the claws and teeth, those focal points, are kept as bright white as possible to attract the eye as much as possible. To aid in that, the areas surrounding them are shaded. The eye sockets are heavily darkened to give the white eyes a more prominent and crazier look as well.

Keeping a sense of light source in mind, add shadowing to appropriate places.

Larger objects and deeper recess demand more shadow. Larger, smoother objects, like the round of the thighs and chest demand less. It all ties into giving detail to a drawing, which turns a good sketch into a great one. It requires that just a little more time invested for a much greater payoff.

That's it for this round. Remember to keep your pencils sharp and your eye for detail sharper. If you have any questions or suggestions for a specific subject in future editions, please feel free to e-mail me at: Rogue@Rogue-Artist.com Drop by my website: www.Rogue-Artist.com for more inspiration to drive you to draw.

Yours in art,
-Jason Banditt Adams

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A Game of Worlds, Part 1

By Gareth Hanrahan

The first settlers called the planet Rub' al Khali, the Empty Quarter, because it was empty when they came. It was a desert world, home to nothing but a few native shrubs and no animal life. The settlers dug canals to irrigate the dusty ground and they engineered Earth plants to tolerate the curious mineral content of Rub' al Khali's soil. Slowly, over the centuries, the desert bloomed.

Hydraulic despotism describes a culture where a small elite control access to a vital resource; the descendants of colonists who held the pumping stations and headwaters became the despotic nobility of Rub' al Khali. These despots, collectively known as the Water Princes, ruled Rub' al Khali and turned the small settlement of Oasis Seven into a thriving capital city, now called Oasieven. This economic development was driven by two discoveries. First, the planet was rich in uranium, ripe for export. Second, in the deserts north of Oasieven, early explorers found a cryptic alien monument, a ruined alien ship thousands of years old. The cyclopean hull had long since been stripped for parts by some other long-vanished species but the huge ribs and cavernous chambers of this massive vessel inspired pilgrims from all over human space. They called the ship, inevitably, Ozymandias. The tourist trade paid for the Water Princes' mining efforts and soon cargo loads of uranium from Rub' al Khali were being sold across the galaxy.

The nearby industrial world of Palad relied heavily on uranium and other minerals from Rub' al Khali; the minerals were traded for luxuries for the Water Princes. The price of the uranium rose to unsustainable levels as the kings became more selfish and cruel.

Seven months ago, the people of Rub' al Khali rose up and overthrew the Water Princes. The new government, the People's Alliance, drove the Princes and

their followers out into the scrublands. In exchange for help and support from Palad, they opened up the uranium trade once more. Out in the wilderness, the Water Princes regrouped and consolidated their forces under their best military leader, Prince Garim Dosha. Soon, the Warrior Prince will be ready to strike.

War is inevitable.

And for mercenaries, war is business.

Background

This *Hammer's Slammers* scenario assumes the characters are part of the Slammers or another mercenary unit. Their unit is finishing up its current contract and is on the look-out for new business. The unstable situation on Rub' al Khali sounds like a potentially lucrative little war but the unit needs intelligence on the ground. Which side is hiring? Can they pay? What will the war involve – and how long will it drag on for? What's really going on down there?

The characters' mission is to travel to Rub' Al Khali undercover, make contact with both the People's Alliance and the Water Princes and find out what they are offering. The whole mission has to be conducted in secrecy. Neither side has yet to openly advertise for mercs but if one side suspects the other is talking to the Slammers, they'll run to the Hiring Hall and bring in the competition. The longer the characters can go undetected, the better.

A Game of Worlds, Part 2 covers encounters outside the capital city and negotiations with the potential employers.

1. Opening Moves

Briefing

The People's Alliance has restricted travel to Rub' Al Khali. The only way to get there is to go via Palad, pass immigration checks

there and then take a Palad Incorporated ship to the nearby system. The characters need to come up with a cover story, take suitable equipment and then bluff their way to Oasieven. Once there, mission goals are:

- 1) Gather all possible intelligence on military forces present on the planet.
- 2) Gather information about the defences at key locations – the starport, the seat of government, the pumping stations, the aqueducts, the uranium mines and so on.
- 3) Gather information about local politics and cultures. What level of support does the new government have? Would the contract involve police action against civilians?
- 4) Once you've done all that, make contact with representatives of both the People's Alliance and the Water Princes. See if they're willing to hire mercenaries and gather all information possible about their ability and willingness to pay, their military preparedness, their likely goals and tactics and the state of their leadership. Do not sign anything, do not promise anything if you can avoid it and **do not** let one side know you are talking to the other.
- 5) In two weeks time, a Slammers representative will contact you. Be ready to either specify an employer or to extract immediately.
- 6) Please don't shoot anyone you don't have to.

Preparation

The characters have a budget of 50,000Cr to purchase equipment and disguises for their trip and to cover living expenses and bribes. If they run out of cash, the regiment *may* reimburse them for spending their own money, if they can prove they had no choice but to dig into their own pockets. Obvious weapons are not allowed onto Rub' al Khali, so the characters are restricted

Why Us?

This part of the scenario is ideal for SpecOps or Support characters but a bunch of groundpounders or tank gunners may wonder why they're being sent to negotiate on behalf of the unit. The answer is, as usual, they're the wrong people in the right place. The unit can spare them for the moment, so they're the ones who get to go in first.

to personal-defence sidearms unless they can come up with a way to smuggle heavier weapons through the starport.

The Slammers can provide false identification papers for the characters, as well as documentation to support whatever cover identity they want to use. Likely travellers to Rub' Al Khali include:

- Uranium merchants, prospectors or miners
- Wayist pilgrims
- Tourists heading for Ozymandias
- Journalists or aid workers

Once the characters are ready to depart, their ship takes them across the sea of stars to Palad.

Palad Starport

Spinning down from orbit, Palad is an unprepossessing sight. Thick clouds of industrial pollution cloak the cities and make the planet look like a slate-grey marble. The characters' ship heads straight for the sprawling city-sized complex that is Palad's starport – their visas do not permit them to leave the starport's precinct or visit the surrounding metropolis.

Inside, the starport is a cheerier sight – if you like tacky commercialism. Everything is for sale here and the characters have to shuffle past rows of shops, bars, outlet stores and security checkpoints. The people of Palad are, and absolutely everyone has heard the joke before, pallid-skinned and quiet-spoken. On Palad, efficiency is everything. The government is run as a corporation and citizens purchase shares in order to vote.

The planet is dominated by a dozen hyper-competitive companies, each one trying to earn more credits to buy more of the government. Visitors to Palad are advised to be cautious – the locals are notorious penny-pinchers and highly litigious.

The ships for Rub' Al Khali leave from an outlying part of the starport. To get there, the characters have to take a monorail. The windows of the monorail are blacked out as they approach the satellite port, to hide the troop movements. Palad is shipping more troops to Rub' Al Khali to deal with an anticipated counterattack by the Water Princes.

At the satellite port, the characters are questioned by **Undersecretary Vinge** of the Palad Transit Authority 'on behalf of the People's Alliance Provisional Government'. He wants to know why they're going to Rub' Al Khali, what they're bringing to the planet, where they will be staying and so forth. As long as the characters give prompt and concise answers and do not arouse suspicion, they will be allowed onto the transport bound for the desert world.

Most of the passengers are Palad government officials, clerks, or soldiers; there are also a small number of pilgrims and one self-important businessman from Interstellar Minerals, a mining company that had a contract with the Water Princes.

- Questioning the Paladians gets a lot of evasive answers and stonewalling; they are there to provide 'ancillary support' or 'peacekeeping' for the Provisional Government.
- The pilgrims, led by **Brother Arvik**, are heading for the Cathedral of the Strangers, a religious site built in the shadow of the alien spaceship in the desert.
- The mining executive, **Winston Valamar**, wants to find out if the Provisional Government is going to honour the Water Princes' contract and after six months of trying to contact the government through interstellar channels, he has bitten the bullet and is now going to talk to them directly.

The Empty World

The ship crosses through hyperspace once more between heartbeats and the characters are approaching the desert planet. From orbit, the contrast with Palad is marked – Rub' Al Khali blazes as the endless desert sands reflect the searing light of the system's primary star. The irrigated region is clearly visible as a green patch surrounding the capital. The Palad transport drops towards Oasieven through the thin atmosphere. When the ship lands, all non-Palad passengers are asked to remain on board. This waiting period grows interminably long; four hours after the ship grounded, the characters, Brother Arvik's pilgrims and Winston Valamar are still sitting around waiting (The Paladians are disembarking their military vehicles and don't want civilians nosing around).

Finally, the characters are allowed to step out onto Rub' Al Khali. The air is thin, the sun's heat blisteringly intense and everyone stares curiously at the characters – offworlders rarely visit, these days.

The Starport

The Oasieven Starport is a magnificent edifice, although the effect is rather spoiled by the ugly scarring on the wall facing the landing field. This wall once bore a huge mural depicting the Water Princes; after the revolution, the People's Alliance blew up the mural but have yet to replace it with a more egalitarian greeting for visiting vessels.

Two-thirds of the starport is off limits, as it's concerned with mineral shipments and the growing Paladian military presence. The civilian section of the spaceport feels more like a cathedral than a port, as it was built to cater for the pilgrims. Wayist preachings and iconography are everywhere. In the starport, the characters are questioned again by the authorities, this time in the person of Utha abd-Ransho of the Provisional Government. He basically asks the same questions the Paladians asked but more haltingly and with a lot more confusion and checking of papers. He is obviously in over his head. He eventually

A Game of Worlds, Part 1

calls a halt to the proceedings while his Paladian 'aide' completes checking the characters' documentation.

While they're waiting in the starport, the characters overhear the other passengers' discussions with the customs officials.

- The pilgrims say they are going to Ozymandias' Shadow and the Cathedral of the Strangers. They are told that the monorail to Ozymandias is under reconstruction and is unavailable; they might be able to hire a bus to bring them across the desert, or charter a flight but there is no easy way to get there.
- The customs officials apologise to Valamar but they have no idea who he should talk to in the government. Maybe if he tried the Palace of Life – wait, no, it's been renamed the People's Palace – he might be able to get help there.

All the newcomers are directed to the Central Hotel. It's conveniently located in the centre of town, right opposite the White Tower (police headquarters). It's only a short walk and very, very secure. Valamar goes there; the pilgrims intend to stay at a religious hostel near the monorail station.

As the characters exit the starport, they notice that while it is guarded by People's Alliance troops, they're all carrying brand-new Palad-manufactured weapons.

2. Oasievenx

Oasieven is a garden city. There are green plants everywhere. Many of the streets are covered by translucent parasols to provide shade for pedestrians and dancing water fountains provide welcome relief from the oppressive heat while also demonstrating the wealth of the Water Princes. The planet's technology level is roughly analogous to late 20th century Earth. Most vehicles are battery-powered; Rub' Al Khali has a wealth of cheap electricity from fission plants.

Oasieven is a scarred city. The recent coup was not an especially bloody or destructive one, as these things go, but there was

fighting in the streets when the People's Alliance drove out the Water Princes and their followers. The major boulevards have been repaired but walk down any side-street and you will see recently patched bullet holes or smashed windows.

Unemployment seems rife; the further away you go from the starport, the more dangerous the place becomes.

There are only a handful of family names in use on Rub' Al Khali. Anyone without the 'abd' prefix is a member of the Water Prince families; everyone else's family name begins with abd- and is followed by one of the Water Family names. 'Abd' means slave or servant; if you are abd-Dosha, your family is one that traditionally relied on the Dosha family aqueduct for water.

Surviving in the City

The hotel suggested by the customs officials is clean and comfortable but also under constant observation by the secret police. Offworld visitors are watched for the first few days of their stay, to ensure they are who they say they are. Most of the Secret Police are new recruits and are not very good at their jobs. Trained characters will easily spot their tails with a Recon check.

The characters have two weeks to complete their survey of Rub' Al Khali and make contact with the representatives of the potential employers. They will have to work fast but they must also be careful not to arouse suspicion. Soliciting for mercenary work is illegal in the eyes of the Provisional Government. If the characters do anything to draw attention to themselves, the Secret Police will keep following them (and use better, more experienced agents like Farad abd-Loas and Jamila abd-Dosha) and start bugging their hotel rooms, if possible.

Farad abd-Loas is an experienced old secret policeman. He knows the city better than anyone else and spent years dealing with the predecessors of the People's Alliance, the never-ending stream of desert-farmer conspirators and idealistic young reformers. Farad stayed loyal to the

police force instead of going into exile with the Water Princes but he has come to regret his decision – the People's Alliance are incompetent and he'd prefer to see the planet ruled by home-grown despots instead of being a puppet of the Palad government.

Farad's a charming, avuncular man with white hair and a moustache, the sort of spy who sits down at your table and has a nice friendly chat, secure in the knowledge that he has arranged for a sniper, who is lurking across the street and has a rifle trained at your head. If the characters are dangerous, Farad will have them arrested (if the local police can handle it) or he will report them to the Palad troops at Fort Liberation.

His younger partner, **Jamila abd-Dosha**, agrees that the Provisional Government is a poorly-run affair but she thinks it can be salvaged. The two pass the time on stakeouts by arguing about politics. Jamila owes Farad a great deal – he pulled her from obscurity in the depths of the civil service bureaucracy and got her assigned to the secret police – but she loathes the old order and thinks her mentor's nostalgia for the good old days blind him to the corruption and self-service of the Water Princes. It is true that things have gotten worse since the revolution but that will all change soon.

Jamila's an adept liar; her usual tactic is to adopt the persona of a waitress, tour guide or even prostitute to gain access to the offworlders. She then looks for clues about their intentions. Jamila knows **Minister Kail abd-Dosha**, the junior security minister, who is one of the potential employers that the characters seek. If she discovers that the characters are mercenaries but they also show they are trustworthy and skilled, she will put them in touch with the Minister.

Word on the Streets

Asking questions on the streets of Oasieven is suspicious unless the characters blend in with the natives. A few Streetwise or Carouse checks get a lot of useful information:

- Everyone thought that the Water Princes were invincible. According to rumours, the Princes had bombs in the pumping stations and if anyone tried to overthrow them, they could just shut off the water supply to the planet. No-one knows how the Alliance dealt with that problem.
- Things have gotten strange since the People's Alliance kicked the Water Princes out. Most people in the capital city worked for the Princes, directly or indirectly. The rest of the planet may be doing better but there are not many jobs in the capital anymore.
- Worse, the few jobs that are left are all being taken by Paladians. Those pale offworlders are everywhere now, from the big fortress up by the starport to the Palace of Life.
- The Water Princes are out in the wilderness now, out by Ozymandias. Rumour has it that they are getting ready for a fight. No-one looks forward to that prospect – war is bad for everyone and everyone agrees that they got off lightly during the coup. They might not be so lucky during a full-blown civil war.

Notable NPCs that the characters run into:

- **Yana abd-Jirk**, a former harem girl. She is ill-equipped for life outside her gilded cage and is terrified by the prospect of freedom. She wants help getting back to the Water Princes; she knows the Princes' new stronghold is out in Ozymandias' Shadow. Yana is sweet, helpless and not especially bright.
- **Alamir abd-Loas**: A merchant from the *suk*, Alamir knows everyone in Oasieven. His current line of work is smuggling luxuries into the Palad military base. He has an understanding with base commander **Anna Taris** and makes sure that the drugs and girls he sneaks past security are clean and healthy. If the characters win his confidence, he can put them in touch with the Paladian military commander.

- **Genji abd-Hamar**: A beggar. He was crippled by one of the Water Princes, **Joli Hamar** – the young prince crashed his hovercar into Genji, breaking his back and then whipped him for damaging the vehicle. He hates the Water Princes and is a supporter of the People's Alliance. He spends most of his days outside the Palace of Life, begging for alms.

Gathering Intel

Part of the characters' mission is to gather intelligence about the planet and its potential defences. This is best done with Recon and Investigate checks. Some of the locations here are secure locations, so the characters will have to sneak or bluff their way past the guards.

- **The City**: The city has a population of some 150,000. It is divided into six districts, each of which is dominated by the palace of the Water Prince who once ruled there. Six aqueducts lead from the city out into the surrounding countryside. At the head of each aqueduct is a fission-powered pumping station.

The city is not especially defensible. Attackers could approach from any direction with equal ease, forcing defenders to fight along a wide front. Most of the buildings are made of compressed concrete but would not be suitable shelter against a powergun-equipped force. Holding the capital city will not be a significant advantage in any war.

The population are unsure about the government – the exile of the Water Princes was greeted with cautious enthusiasm but living conditions have declined since the People's Alliance took over and many fear the People's Alliance are just puppets of offworld masters.

- **Palace of Life**: The seat of government. The Provisional Government is still getting to grips with the problem of

ruling the planet and most day-to-day functions are carried out with the help of Paladian aides. The growing tension between the putative rulers of the planet and their supposed 'helpers' is plain to see.

The building was not designed to be a fortress but it is sturdy and could be a strongpoint in any conflict. It overlooks the entire city and the wide flat roof on top is perfect for powergun and calliope emplacements.

The Provisional Government ministers all have offices here. Notable NPCs include **Junior Minister Kail abd-Dosha** of security and **Minister Bahran abd-Jirk**, the minister of war. Bahran is in the pay of the Paladian government and is actively trying to hand over as much power as he can to them without being detected. All military questions go through **Anna Taris** at Fort Liberation. If the characters approach him, he will report them to Taris.

The characters will encounter **Winston Valamar** in the Palace. He is furious – the Provisional Government claim that the contract with Interstellar Minerals is null and void after the revolution. The Paladians have taken the uranium his company bought in good faith!

- **Monorail Station**: The monorail that links Oasieven to the outlying towns was damaged in the revolution, so there's a noisy, dusty crowd of buses outside the station, offering to take passengers to various obscure destinations. It's a motor bazaar, confusing and dangerous. A lot of former city-dwellers now want to leave in search of jobs on the farms or in the uranium mines – there's nothing left for them in the capital.
- **The Starport (Secure)**: If the characters can get into the cargo handling section of the port, they observe that the Paladian freighters

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are landing once or twice a day. They bring in more clerks, troops and supplies and take away uranium and other metals. Judging by the number and size of the freighters and the average transit time, it would take a week for the Paladians to send reinforcements in the event of a war and a month for them to organise a significant counter-attack from space.

- **Pumping Stations (Secure):** All six pumping stations are working at full capacity. All six are guarded by People's Alliance Troops but three also have significant Paladian presence. Careful observation reveals the Paladians are engineers and bomb disposal experts; they are combing the huge pumping stations for the bombs hidden there years ago by the Water Princes. The Princes could blow up these pumping stations at any moment but have instead chosen to let them fall into enemy hands...
- **Fort Liberation (Secure):** This is a new military installation at the edge of the town. It is being built by local workers under the supervision of Paladian engineers. Officially, the fort is for training the People's Alliance troops but it's obviously a Paladian military base. The Paladians have dozens of TR6BKU-1 *Black Scorpion* tanks and a few *Sabres*. Their troops are equipped primarily with coilguns but they also have powergun artillery pieces. Currently, the Paladians are heavily outnumbered by the locals but at the rate new troops are coming in from the starport, this advantage in numbers is rapidly dwindling.

3. Events in the City

Each event lists a suggested day but run them whenever it is appropriate.

Day 3 – A Mugging: A gang of eunuchs try to mug one of the Player Characters. The eunuchs used to work for the Water Princes but they've now got to survive on the streets. They all have shaved heads and wear fine clothing that is now grimy and soiled. The eunuchs aren't much of a challenge – but the characters are supposed to keep a low profile. How do they deal with the muggers without giving away their military training?

Day 4 – Fake Contact: A man named **Dao abd-Hamar** approaches the characters, pretending to be a representative from the Water Princes. He asks if they know anything about hiring offworld mercenaries – he has never travelled offworld before and is unfamiliar with the proper way to go about obtaining an army. Play him as a stuffy, self-important idiot who has no idea how to keep a secret. Dao is genuine about wanting to hire the characters but he's not working for the Water Princes. He's a pawn of Farad abd-Loas – Farad, posing as a Water Prince, convinced Dao to act as an intermediary. If the characters agree to talk to Dao, he arranges for them to meet Farad in a café. The meeting is a trap and the characters will be arrested by the secret police.

Day 5 – Demonstrations: Rioting breaks out near the starport. The initial protest is about Palad having too much influence over the government but it rapidly degenerates into brawling, looting and attacks on Paladian property. Some of the rioters head towards the Palace of Life,

where they are talked down by Minister Kail abd-Dosha using a classic carrot ('if you disperse now, I shall open a new investigation into government corruption') and stick ('if you don't go home, the water to the city will be cut off') approach. Another group of rioters mount an ill-conceived attack on Fort Liberation; six are killed, although no-one is sure if it was Paladian or local security who fired the lethal shots.

Day 6 – Sandstorm: A tremendous sandstorm hits the city. Visibility is cut to next to nothing; all ships are grounded. If the characters are still being watched by the secret police, it's a great opportunity to slip away.

Day 7 – The Brawl: A brawl breaks out in a bar between two local People's Alliance soldiers and two Paladian troopers. If the characters intervene, they can get an introduction to either Minister Kail or Anna Taris in the aftermath of the fight, as the respective leaders investigate the incident.

Day 10 – Aid from Palad: A shipment of emergency supplies and humanitarian aid arrives from Palas.

Day 12 – The Freighter: A freighter carrying a shipment of uranium takes off from the spaceport. As it climbs into orbit, its engines fail. The ship does not crash but is unable to change its current orbital trajectory. It's stuck in a low orbit, unable to jump away. An investigation reveals evidence of sabotage. Rumour has it that the saboteur wrote '*The Empty Quarter must remain empty*' on the hatch covering the sabotaged subsystem.



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LONE WOLF

THE CITY OF TYSO: UNCOVERED

BY DARREN PEARCE

'Now then, what did I tell you about Tyso? It's quite a big place; near on 50,000 make it their home. It's a nice city to settle in lad, you should think about finding yourself a good woman and perhaps carrying on the family business. Or you could ship out on a galleon, go crew a Sommlending Naval vessel like your brother and take a real man's position.'
— Old 'Salty' Jackin, ex-Sommlending Naval Marine.

BRIEF HISTORY

Tyso began life as a small fishing village built to the north of the Holmgulf, situated upon the road which leads to Anskavern. It was adequately supported by its first settlers and grew to prominence with the aid of both the Kirlundin Isles and several of the unsavoury pirate crews that flocked to the coastline around Tyso. Over the years the pirates settled in the village and devoted themselves to its defence, keeping the Darklords at bay on the seafront. Now they had made Tyso their home, the pirates set about renovating and expanding the settlement, bringing it to the size of a city around MS 5000. Then it was ruled by Baron Var Kalen, a man who served Sommerlund faithfully and united the bickering pirate clans during this time.

The Baron established the Seaman's Guild and drafted many of the pirates into naval careers within the Sommlending

Navy. Var forged alliances with many of the Shadaki Buccaneers and in exchange for certain immunities, mostly due to the Letters of Marque garnered from the King in Holmgard, the buccaneers kept the waters around Tyso safe, only taking from enemy ships and leaving both Sommlending and Durenese vessels alone. A tithe of the pirate's spoils is pledged towards the upkeep of the city and this tradition continues to this day behind closed doors. Later on the city became so prosperous that it was able to afford better defences. The Sommlending built a strong stone wall and expanded the harbour facilities to better support the large influx of galleons and warships that were now being stationed there.

Tyso helped in the defence against the Darklords and has repelled many attacks over the years. Its baron fought on the field and was struck down by a Giak arrow in MS 5010. Eventually he died from his wounds and the Giak poison before a cure could be found. He was mourned for a month until Kai came to the Lord Mayor in a vision and bade him seek out Tor Medan. He became the rightful Baron of Tyso and rules to this day in MS 5050. Just like his predecessor he maintains a cordial relationship with both Durenor and the Kirlundin Isles.

In MS 5045 the sea wall was finally built and three large dry-docks were constructed that use a complex loch-mechanism to filter out water, lift the boats and secure them for repair or

construction. Baron Tor Medar also expanded the cities Naval Yard as well as funding a significant expansion for the poor quarter, providing homes for the homeless in exchange for their toil in the shipyards or other quarters of the city. His guard actively seek out anyone who seems to have no place of residence and make sure that they are well cared for. Tyso at this time enjoys a relative sense of peace, prosperity and good fortune – this is due to turn ill when news of the Kai Lord's massacre reaches them at the eve of the Feast of Fehmarn.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

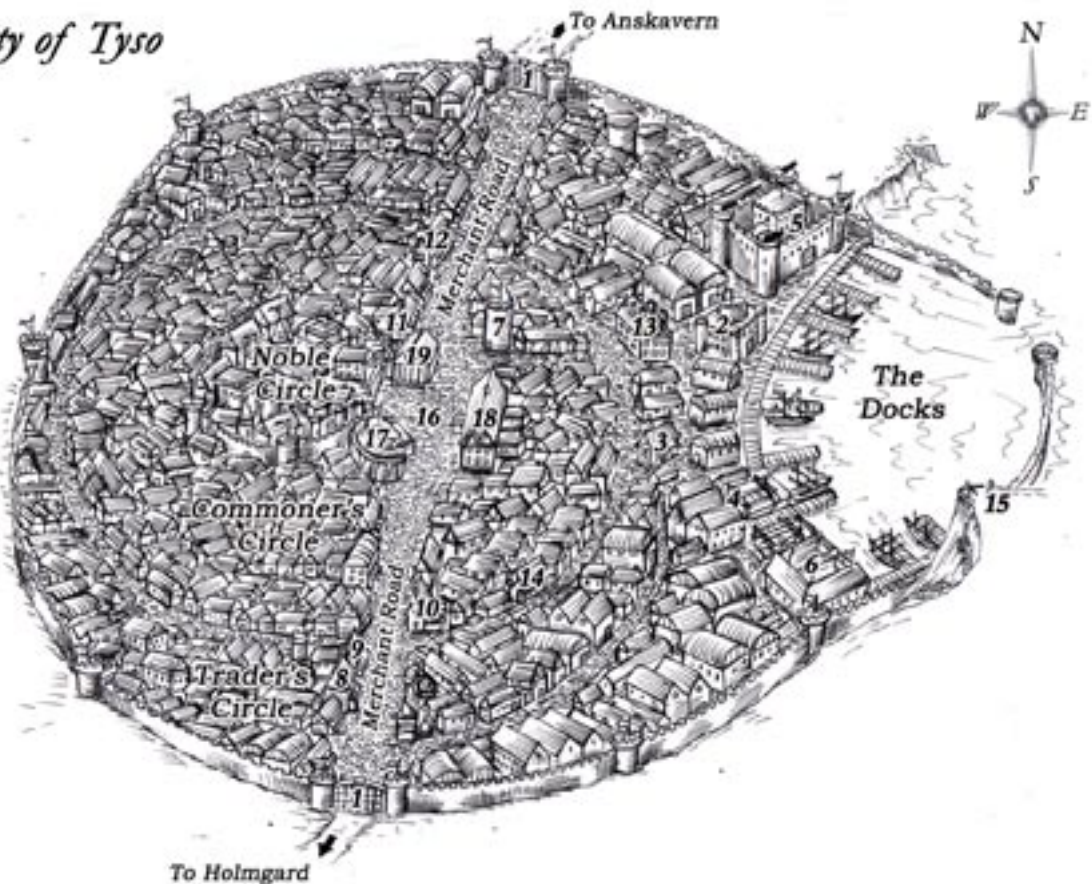
Tyso is a large city with many colourful flags adorning the walls. It has two large round watchtowers on the north gate and the same on the south gate. It is situated on the eastern edge of Sommerlund, close to the Holmgulf, south of the City of Anskavern but north of Holmgard. Two major roads lead in and out of the city, to Holmgard and Anskavern respectively. The city itself is broken into circles that begin with the academic halls, theatre and brightly decorated streets of Golden Crown Square in the dead centre of Tyso.

Moving out from the centre in offset circles there is the noble circle, the residences and so forth. In terms of architecture Tyso

Key

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Gates | 11. Sparkles |
| 2. Seaman's Guild | 12. General Store |
| 3. The Siren | 13. The Shanty |
| 4. Shipwrights | 14. Gambling Den |
| 5. Barons Keep | 15. Lookout Point |
| 6. Naval H.Q. | 16. Golden Crown Square |
| 7. Guard House | 17. Tyso Theatre |
| 8. Black's Smithy | 18. Hall of Academia |
| 9. Becka Ree's Armour | 19. City Hall |
| 10. Christian's Leather | |

The City of Tyso



is a very simple place, not as eclectic or impressive as Holmgard but possessed of a charm all of its own. By day the grey slate rooftops of the houses send out whispers of white smoke whilst gulls call in the heavens above. The docks are rife with workers and naval operatives, all of them moving about their assigned tasks against the heavy wooden planks and piers. The tall masts of Sommlending Navy vessels, trade ships and galleons dot the harbour and shipyards, pennants flying in the sea breezes.

By night the city is transformed with burning beacons, a light house that sits just off the coast on a small promontory of rock and glowing oil lamps light the various homes and streets. At the very centre of Tyso the theatre and the halls of learning light up, causing a golden crown effect that gives the area its name. The crowds lessen and the more unsavoury folk ply their trade in the deep shadows, many alleys and crowded taverns. A buzz passes through the air as if the city is alive; the atmosphere almost becomes

electric as if the darkness is just waiting to pounce.

The waters around Tyso are patrolled by sleek Kirlundin Naval vessels, Shadaki Galleons and Durenese Navy warships. The lookout point, a small cliff side view point close to the city up the side of a slope provides a perfect view out across the ocean and has been fitted with a sturdy brass telescope, during times of war or an attack; this seemingly innocuous vantage point can provide a tactical overview of

the ocean and surrounding waters. There are a dozen white flowers that are strewn around the edge by the side of a statue of a beautiful Sommlending woman that stands next to the large metal railing that is supposed to prevent accidents when people lean over to look into the waters below. This is where the daughter of Var Kalen plunged to her death after learning of her father's demise.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The City of Tyso is a veritable hotbed of places to go and things to see, from its massive shipyards and docks, to the halls of academia and the theatre at the city centre. The large defensive wall that surrounds the city makes the residents feel safe.

The North and South gates

The North Gate has two large towers that sit opposite a heavy portcullis and a pair of thick iron-bound wooden doors. It is patrolled by four to six men both day and night and shares a similar construction to the South Gate. There is a small area at both gates that allows travellers to rest and wait before they are allowed into the city; this is often reserved for large land based merchant caravans.

The Seaman's Guild

A large stone building sits next to the docks. It is three stories high and has a red and black flag flying from a circular tower atop it. The heraldry upon the flag denotes a ship, some kind of galleon, against a circular silver backdrop and four ravens are placed at the corner of the flag. The building itself looks to be well made, square in construction and appears to be more like a small fortress than any kind of residence. A large golden plaque placed firmly on a wooden post just outside denotes its function. It proclaims the building to be the Seaman's Guild.

The Seaman's Guild exists as a legitimate front for the pirate and buccaneer activity

within and around Tyso. It is carefully watched by the baron and his agents and is under the control of a couple of trustworthy Shadaki Buccaneers that keep an eye on the clientele as well as the waters around the city. It provides lower cost services and repairs for members and tithes some of its profit to the baron for the city's upkeep.

Amar Blackthorn: A middle aged swarthy skinned Shadaki buccaneer who has spent his life at sea, Amar is a man with a short temper, dark hair and sparkling green eyes. He is definitely a womaniser and is not a man to cross, he keeps a sharp eye on the goings on in the Seaman's Guild and knows every inch of the waters around his home, the city and Anskavern as well as the Kirlundin Isles.

Shandra 'Darkeye' Zanzanir: Amar's second in command of the guild and is his first mate aboard the Seahawk when they take to the waters. She is also his friend and occasional lover. Shandra is a hazel eyed, brown haired curvaceous Shadaki woman who is extremely skilled with a scimitar. She has a brace of pistols and is a wicked shot, able to take a seagull down whilst on the deck of a ship pitching in a sudden squall. Her sister runs the infamous dockside tavern, the Siren.

The Siren

From the outside this tavern appears to be ramshackle and dilapidated, with barnacles carefully placed over the woodwork and the odd bit of nautical memorabilia woven into the construction. It is a two story building with a large ships wheel offset to the right side of the door along with some rigging and netting with some preserved crabs hanging in it to provide a little more authenticity. A large recently repainted sign with a badly painted semi-naked woman on a rock proclaims that this is the Siren tavern.

Inside it is a dark and moody place, apart from the bar where a large figurehead of a voluptuous, semi-naked woman has been carved and built into the back of the bar itself. From time to time the figurehead sings thanks to a cleverly designed pipe system that feeds in from the top of the building, moving air down through a complex system of reeds and smaller

pipes to make a curious and mesmerising noise.

The Siren sells a heady concoction that is twice as powerful as grog; Siren's Best is capable of knocking the most able seamen off their feet in just half a glass and is sold for triple the price of standard beverages.

Andora Zanzanir: Andora is a slim woman with elegant features, a dry wit and a haunting voice. She is Shandra's sister and established the tavern as a way to recruit able bodies for the Seaman's Guild as well as learn secrets for the enigmatic Amar Blackthorn. She has green eyes and light auburn hair, pulled into a short tail. She is a tough customer and does not tolerate violence inside the Siren, she can handle herself and if pushed uses a pair of twin fighting knives to make her point.

Shipwrights

A pair of large buildings sits close to the water's edge on the eastern side of the city, just off from the main docks. A large dry dock serves the construction needs of the baron's men as well as civilian ships, maintained and operated by workers who are members of the Seaman's Guild. These wooden and stone buildings are the heart and soul of nautical manufacture in the city; they are supplied by local wood cutters who cut down swathes of trees for use in the construction of Sommlending Naval and civilian vessels. Blackthorn makes sure that the shipwrights charge a smaller amount for members of the Seaman's Guild and offer discounts for design and construction draft drawing.

The Docks

A large collection of criss-crossing wooden piers and platforms, the Tyso Docks are not quite as impressive as the ones found in Port Bax or Anskavern but they boast a sizeable fleet of civilian or naval vessels. Often the port city is filled to the brim with cargo ships and warships and the colourful flags of Sommerlund and Durenor fly from the masts of vessels berthed side by side during the day and the many lanterns bobbing against the waves during the night create a vibrant pattern of light.

The area is patrolled by the Waterfront Guard, a contingent of the baron's men who make sure that the many altercations from the various crews do not get out of hand. The guard tend to look badly upon those who leave bodies floating in their docks and they are swift to hand out sharp justice.

Baron Tor Medar's Keep

More of a fortress than a home, this is a massive square building with large ramparts and many tall towers. The flag of Sommerlund and its navy whispers high from the tallest watch tower and the four strong stone walls made from dark grey stone cut an imposing figure to the west side of the dock. The Keep backs onto the first part of the sea wall and provides an extra avenue of defence overlooking the ocean. Four large bore cannons point out across the water and can be quickly turned against enemy ships if they breach the sea wall.

It is patrolled night and day by the Baron's Guard. These are handpicked men and women who have served Sommerlund for a long time and are trustworthy and stalwart. They are responsible for security within the baron's compound and take care of his family when he is away. The current leader of the Baron's Guard is a woman known as Gilyan Norin, a feisty and tough commander who brooks no insult.

Naval Headquarters

An L-shaped two storey building set aside and off to the east of the dock, close to the infamous lookout point, is the Naval Headquarters of the small fleet that traverses from Anskavern to Tyso and sometimes out to the Kirlundin Isles. This large construction has three dry-docks for the maintenance and repair of military vessels and is staffed by workers who have either served in the navy or who have been taken from loyal families. It is a mark of honour in Tyso to serve in the shipyards of the Sommerlund Navy.

Guard House

This large craggy circular tower stands just off the main thoroughfare of the city and is the base for the Tyso City Guard. These stalwart men and women are led

by a female warrior known as Valastar. Rumoured to have been a Telchos Amazon she is a fiercely independent and loyal follower of Tor Medar. She administers justice in the city with an iron-clad hand and although firm, she is always fair. The Tyso City Guard are a force to be reckoned with and they have regular patrols throughout the city, cutting down crime rates by three quarters since the baron has given them greater powers of authority in the wake of the MS 5050 attack on the Kai Monastery.

Merchant's Avenue

A long street runs parallel to the residential areas of the city and it is here that the Merchant's Guild of Tyso has their approved businesses. Other proprietors businesses must buy a permit costing 100 gold crowns to be able to run a stall or a business in this area. It is a good quality street, well lit and patrolled by the Tyso City Guard. The money for this permit is waived for members of the Merchant's Guild; in this case the guild takes a 20% tithe of any profits made and makes sure to contribute to the city upkeep.

A small list of some of the services/shops that may be found in Merchant's Avenue:

Black's Smithy: Anton Black runs this hard working smithy. He takes care of approved guild business from his shop. It is a large building with a hammer and anvil sign and a covered stall outside allows people to watch Anton work. He is a tall bearded man with a heavy set frame and thick muscular arms. He shoes horses and repairs all kinds of metalwork.

Becka Ree's Armour: Next door to the smithy is a hardworking Durenese woman. Becka Ree is a tiny lass but she is an expert metalworker when it comes to armour. She can repair broken metal armour of any kind and delights in making new designs. Her shop is smaller than the smithy but shares the same chimney system. Fortunately Becka and Anton get on very well and there might be romance in the offing someday.

Christian's Leather: Christian Fabrult is the proprietor of this leather worker and

tanner, he is a master at his craft but his young son Branden is just learning and has so far been banned from working at his father's side. Branden is not as good as Christian and the older man's ego is such that he puts his son down at every opportunity, this means that the shop has a great deal of resentment within its walls. It is a ramshackle building that sits near the top end of the Merchant's Avenue to the south. Christian is a dour, taciturn, middle aged man, who is losing his once good looks.

Sparkles: An effervescent young woman called Priss runs this gem cutters, she has strawberry blonde hair and is a curvy, homely looking woman with dimples and a beautiful smile. Her dark auburn eyes convey a lot of emotion. Her shop is a small building next to one of the alleys and she openly works at her window so people can look in and see her cutting the gemstones. It is locked down at night with metal shutters and steel sheeting.

General Store: A medium sized building owned and run by Gregor Havelock. He is a big man with slightly dark skin and an odd accent, it's not exactly known where he comes from but he is friendly and courteous to old and new customers alike. He wears a large leather apron and is over six feet seven inches in height. He has a warrior's build and loves to talk to people constantly about anything and everything. He hopes to join Tor Medar's guard someday soon. He can usually get any kind of general goods and sells them at a discount to friends.

There are other stores and services that often ply their trades in Merchant's Avenue. There is a wine merchant, a baker, a butcher and a tailor along with an expensive shop that sells perfumes and other luxury goods. It is rumoured that the perfumer is also somewhat of an alchemist and dabbles in poisons and other concoctions.

Residential Area

This is where the city folk live. Nobles, commoners, tradesmen and those who are less fortunate are lightly segregated in the city via a series of roads with a walled enclosure that has an arched door

leading directly from the noble's homes to the Golden Crown square and allows the nobles direct access without needing to rub shoulders with the riff-raff and common folk.

The Noble Circle: This is the most affluent area of the city, home to manors, villas, tall towers and large keep-like fortresses where the baron's nobles make their homes. It is constantly patrolled day and night by members of the Tyso City Guard and the nobles are allowed to hire private mercenaries, as long as the mercenaries realise that they are second to the guard in matters of law enforcement. The noble's circle is walled off as well with watch towers and ramparts, containing guards who have orders to shoot trespassers first and ask questions later.

The Commoner's Circle: This is the largest population centre and it has a variety of stone and wood houses, packed together within. There is adequate space for the city folk here and they enjoy a good quality of protection thanks to the Tyso City Guard who post regular guards and make patrols around the area. They ensure that the nobles do not bother the commoners as much as the commoners could bother the highborn.

Trader's Circle: Beyond the Commoner's Circle is where the workers and tradesmen live, it is also where the poorer folk find a roof over their heads. If not in someone's house then in a specially set aside domicile for their needs. These are not workhouses and the poor are not whipped into shape, the baron prides himself on being able to care and cater for his people even those who might have little coin. He knows full well that only his blood separates him from these folk. A few patrols from the Tyso City Guard pass through here but it is mostly left to the various followers of Kai and Ishir who look after the poor, they are given the rights of law within their circle.

Golden Crown square

In the centre of the city is Golden Crown square, it contains the theatre, the Hall of Academia, the City Hall and Administration Tower. At night when it is lit up, due to the construction of the

tower lamps, it appears akin to a gold crown against the backdrop of the city.

Tyso Theatre: A large semi-circular building made with three stories and constructed from solid grey stone, the theatre can seat over 500 people and boasts an impressive selection of plays. It is also the centre of musical excellence in the city where bards and other players come to perform come the Feast of Fehmarn and other religious events. It is currently in the hands of Theatre Master Arnould, a thin rakish man, balding and possessed of a dry wit and charming manner.

Hall of Academia: Under the watchful eye of Brother Cornelius, a wispy haired old man, the Hall of Academia trains the city's promising students in all manner of civilian learning. Whilst the Naval Headquarters might be the focal point for naval tactics and training, the Hall of Academia fills in the history of the region as well as important events in Magnamund itself. Cornelius prides himself on having one of the best collegiums in the land. There are great advances in both architecture and medicine that have come from the Hall of Academia.

City Hall: Lord Mayor Harvild Torc sits in office in this large square building, it is made of white marble and grey stone, picked out with gold. It has three fluted pillars on each side and a peaked rooftop covered with a dark smoky grey slate. Here the laws are debated, made and passed down to the Lord Mayor's council and servants for the city guard and other parties to attend to. The Merchant's Guild and the Seaman's Guild also have offices here and there are 20 meeting rooms within the building.

The Shanty

A large four story building that sits just off from the docks, perched on a single thoroughfare through the city. Six chimneys pour white smoke out into the sky from a dark red slate roof and bawdy songs and music burst forth from the brightly painted and lit windows. A green and gold sign proclaims that this is the Shanty Inn. There are adequate stables and provision for at least 60 or more guests at most times. It is a bawdy and ribald place, full of impassioned sailors

and sea folk as well as travellers from right across Magnamund.

The taproom and common's rooms ring with songs and stories day and night and it usually sees a visit from the Tyso City Guard most nights as they break up fist fights and other more colourful engagements.

Hommen: He is the burly proprietor of the Shanty, an ex pirate and a tough customer. He has a large scimitar scar across his right cheek that just nicked his eye, not quite damaging it. He has a mop of red curly hair and a bushy red beard; he replaced two of his teeth with gold ones and wears rings on both hands. He wears a pair of bright striped pantaloons and a dark burgundy shirt. He has a booming voice and a wicked smile.

Zhiya: She is a bard and a minstrel, adept at juggling and fire breathing. She is a Shadaki woman, bright eyed and dark haired with a swarthy complexion. Her dark hair is pinned into an elaborate long tail and when unleashed reaches down past her shoulders. She is a lithe slender woman who wears simple flowing blouses and tight trousers. She can play the lute as well as throw a mean pair of knives. Zhiya tells wicked stories, sings bawdy songs and romances men and women alike.

Gambling Den

Behind the closed doors of a simple shop front, sits the den of Managar Tyr, a thin charismatic man. He runs an illicit gambling den under the eyes and nose of both Blackthorn and the baron. At the moment he has been able to get away with it because he keeps things very tight and secure. This underground operation has recently been infiltrated by one of the baron's spies, Lucas Tanon, Managar has not a clue that Tanon is not legit and if he ever finds out it could spell the other man's death.

Managar Tyr: A charismatic cut-throat of a man who has a dark secret. He was once in the employ of the Darklords and after a failed attack against Tyso he faked his own death and slaughtered his whole mercenary company leaving no survivors. He has adopted a new persona

on the surface, that of the enigmatic dark haired Managar Tyr. His true personality very rarely surfaces but he is a brutal and vicious man when crossed. He stands six feet tall and wears dark leather trousers, turn-top boots and a black silk shirt. He is a dab hand with a rapier and carries a bandolier of throwing knives laced with a debilitating poison.

Lookout Point

A slightly overgrown stone pathway leads up to a set of carved stone steps to the east of the city, it goes up to the side of the water and ends at a rocky promontory that looks out over the sea. A large brass telescope has been fitted to a big metal railing and a small sundial sits at the centre of the area. The sundial is mounted on a stone plinth and marked with a plaque that reads. 'Lookout point'. Off to the right of this is a white marble statue of a young Sommlending noblewoman, this was Dana Kalen, Var Kalen's daughter – she threw herself into the sea after her father's death and every year on her anniversary the city folk leave white flowers at the base of her statue.

POPULATION

Tyso enjoys a large expansion of its population when there is a feast or celebration. Normally it remains at about 50,000 people and swells to 70,000 when the navy is called to arms or presents its yearly inspection.

CULTURE

Tyso, like all cities in Sommerlund observes the Feast of Fehmarn, decorating the city with golden and orange bunting and throwing open its doors to strangers. There are many festival events during this feast but the final event is a series of naval tests that demonstrate marine excellence. There are races, shooting competitions and even sparring available during this time. The baron enters all these events himself and makes sure that people

know, during this time, that he is to be considered their equal.

It is also the time for the Halls of Academia to open their doors, demonstrating their various educational marvels for the populace. The students of the halls are invited to conduct grand tours, their own classes and more, for the population. The top three ideas are presented to the baron during this time and he judges the most favourable one, the winner is presented with a sum of monies to devote to this project and could find themselves drafted into the employ of Tor Medar or the Lord Mayor.

Young people take white flower wreaths to the statue of Dana Kalen under the night sky during this time, leaving offerings and perfumed candles around the base of the statue's feet.

SOCIETY

Baron Tor Medar: Tyso enjoys a good and prosperous life under Tor Medar's reign. He is a wise and clever governor who makes sure everyone knows their place. He will not allow the nobility to grow too powerful nor will he let the wrong people climb social ladders. He expects his people to serve in the Sommlending Navy where possible and makes sure that there is always a home for vagrants on the streets.

Lord Mayor Harvild Torc: The office of the Lord Mayor is a prestigious one and Tor Medar has chosen well. Harvild is a clever man, who is a master at politicking and has many supporters in all the social strata of the city. He has competent staff that works under him, amongst them is Judge Marlen. A staunch supporter who is responsible for delivering justice and making sure that the law is adhered to in the city.

Naval Commanders: The Naval Command is a vital part of Tyso and a strong tradition in the city, currently the command is in the care of Commodore North, a dour man with an eye for strategy. He held off a dangerous fleet of Darklord Corsairs

single handed with only a single galleon and a few tricks up his sleeve, outmanned and outgunned he proved himself an able seaman and earned himself a promotion to Commodore in the Naval Command.

Tyso City Guard: Guard Captain Valastar looks after the city guard in Tyso, she is a tall muscular woman who comes from the Telchos and she shares the traditional bronzed skin colour and prefers to shave her head. Her body is sculpted from years of combat and she wears the colours of Sommerlund with pride. She is a fair woman and knows how to get the best out of the guard under her command. She speaks her mind and has managed to recruit an able, fair and mostly trustworthy guard to patrol the city.

The Nobility: Despite Tor Medar's rulings the nobles of Tyso have a chip upon their collective shoulders, they are churlish for the most part towards anyone who does not display breeding and treat those lower than themselves with utter disdain. There are a few noble houses that display better behaviour but the rest are spoilt rotten. They are the sons and daughters of famous naval commanders, marines and some of them are even the descendants of pirates and buccaneers who founded the city. They want for nothing; they eat the best food available and have their own secluded archway that leads to and from the Golden Crown square.

Notable houses are, House Benad, House Yarli and House Blackthorn, the latter is a good example of a pirate family made good.

The Citizens: These are the upper and lower middle classes of the city; they consider themselves a cut above the rest of the working class and far above those who are too poor or too infirmed to do much. For the most part they help the other classes out and many resent the nobility that lord their power over others. They fill the middle echelons of the city society and many are apothecaries, surgeons, students, scholars and so forth. They have fine quality clothes, drink good wines and eat decent quality food.

The Workers: Dock workers, warehouse workers, street sweepers and the like, all of these fit into the lower class of Tyso. They are the hard working salt of the earth that keeps the city functioning. Many of the guards are drawn from this class and trained up, the baron's reasons for this are manifold but he has gambled, rightly or wrongly that someone from a lower class is less likely to treat others with disrespect when they gain a modicum of power. Those that think otherwise are swiftly disabused of that notion by Valastar and her methods. They have good quality clothing, nothing overly flamboyant and they eat hearty meals and tend to drink fortified wines.

The poor: Whilst there are poor, they are swiftly removed from the streets and placed in various doss houses, shelters and so on that Tor Medar has had built for such a purpose. They are given minor jobs if they are capable of working and several of the cities priests are given the task of looking after them. They fill the extra roles in all the manual labour jobs at the docks and even the shipyards, as long as they are not too ill or infirmed. They wear simple clothes, they eat fairly satisfying meals and they drink watered down wine and some beer. They are happy with their lot in life, even though everyone above them tends to look down their noses at the poor.

GOVERNMENT & LAW

Baron Tor Medar and the council have set out laws that are similar to many of the other cities in Sommerlund. Murder is punishable by death, usually hanging or beheading. Stealing can carry a sentence of incarceration or even the loss of a hand. Stealing a naval vessel carries a mandatory conscription sentence or lifetime incarceration. Violent crime punishments vary and can range from conscription to a life in prison. Those who show undue aggression are often shackled to a naval boat and sent out to fight on the high seas; sometimes they escape and commandeer the very vessel

they served on, killing their captors. Those men and women are hunted down and killed. Piracy against the city or its allies carries a penalty of hanging.

ECONOMY

Tyso imports exotic goods from across the seas, mostly luxuries for the various noble families, exotic meats and silks. It does a high trade in perfumes and soaps, silks and satins as well as fine quality clothing.

It also exports a lot of quality fish from the seas around the city, tools and various naval weapons. It does a hefty trade with Anskavern and Port Bax in shipwright goods and materials, mostly high quality woods from the local forests.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS / REGIONAL RELATIONS

Tyso enjoys a strong relationship with the Kirlundin Isles, Anskavern and the City of Port Bax. It counts Durenor as a strong ally and can summon naval aid from its allies if need be. It considers many of the Shadaki Buccaneers as friends as long as they do not ply their trades in the waters around the city or against its allies. The city also enjoys a healthy trade relationship with Lencia and Dessi. There are several naval vessels from Durenor berthed in Tyso during the summer months.

Secrets

A few agents of the Darklords have begun to infiltrate the city, using the Gambling Den and their contact with their old ally there. It is not known if they will act against Tor Medar as the Kai are exterminated on the Feast of Fehmarn in MS 5050 but they have begun to ship a large quantity of weapons into the port city right under the nose of the baron and his guards. Only Lucas Tanon stands between the city and these men, he tries to maintain his cover but their plans put his own on a knife edge.



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Ecrit par Gareth Hanrahan, le livre de règles de Traveller contient le matériel familier des fans de l'édition originale mais contient également quelques surprises.

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Praise the Serpent

The Houses of Set

By Rodrigo Vilanova de Allende

*Yours is the life-giving River,
Yours is the fang of dawn,
Yours is the poison that kills,
Yours is the tongue that whispers
And the eye that never sleeps!
Heed our plea and grant us your favour!*

INTRODUCTION.

Religion in the Hyborian World is a complicated and versatile affair. Not only is polytheism a common practice but regional cults and interpretations of mythologies and gods make the usual pantheon even more complex than it usually is, guaranteeing the safety of priests' jobs all over the world.

Although the nemedian sceptics may offer a different version, there is a particularly vile religion in the eyes of the hyborians. That is the 'cult' of Set, the Snake Arch-demon, enemy of Mitra and all its followers. Described as a corrupt, evil and blasphemous religion, the cult of Set nonetheless is one of the most ancient religions in the hyborian world and historically, one with the largest following also.

If the morally obsessed mitran priests are right and Set is a degrading, evil monster, the question arises: how can so many people be wrong and worship, willingly, the source of all evil in the world?

This article presents three maps of Temples dedicated to Set and one to the heretic cult of Ibis along with adventure ideas for Games Masters to use in their campaigns. As always, GMs should make all the adjustments required to better fit their campaigns.

The worship of both Set and Ibis are described in more detail in *Conan: Faith and Fervour* and in *Conan: Stygia – Serpent of the South*.

THE CULT OF THE SNAKE: BLASPHEMY OR RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Religion in Hyboria revolves around the belief in powerful gods. This belief, be it founded in love, hate, fear or hope, is crucial to understanding why a priest can extort money, work, blood and even loved ones for the greater glory of the god (be it real or imagined). To the worshipping commoner, the gods are real and their wish is made clear to them thanks to the priests who are direct links to these divine beings.

It is in this manner that Set has a real devoted worship. Not only stygians but many shemites, kushites and citizens from Keshan and the Black Kingdoms acknowledge Set as an important aspect of reality, either as a destroyer and corrupter or as a force to be admired, fearful and thankful of at the same time.

While hyborians and other races regard Set and its cult as a blasphemous obscenity, true believers have nothing but fear and respect for the god (some even may truthfully love it!), who is responsible of the continuity of life be it through inaction of its part or direct intervention of its will. Set is not merely a god (or a demon in the mitrans viewpoints!) of death and destruction, the priests are clear in that the Father Snake is the beginning of anything new and thus, all life.

If Set cuts the life of his worshippers and enemies alike it is so that the bloodshed may nourish the earth and so the strong may thrive and bask in the glory and magnificence of the god, or so the priests and theologians patiently explain.

In other words, to Set's priests what matters is that their followers keep supporting the god's cause through its sanctioned temples and through observance of its rituals reinforce the god's power in all of Hyboria.

OF VIPERS, COBRAS, MEN AND SHADOWS: ICONOGRAPHY IN THE HYBORIAN AGE.

Unlike the cult of lesser gods like Mitra, Set's worship was ancient when Acheron and Stygia where Empire. The rites and prayers may have changed somewhat throughout the ages but the symbols are there: binding oaths sworn to the great god in exchange of life itself. One example of this can be seen in the sculptures of Set itself, where Acheronian and 'classical' tradition depict poisonous adders instead of the infamous Stygian Cobra, made popular by the resurgence of said realm after the fall of Acheron.

Although a god and thus incomprehensible to mortal's minds, Set has chosen to present itself to human perception in a way comprehensible by it's would be followers. Thus, the figure of the Snake, enveloping the world, protecting it and strangling it at the same time.

Accordingly, the icons decorating Set's temples will be those traditionally related to snakes: water, circles (broken and full), eggs, snake eyes, fangs, serpent-scales designs and single columns. Also, it is important to bear in mind the function and general 'spirit' of the Temple, since not all temples are intended for worshipping Set in its primary vocation.

Thus, a temple may be dedicated to Set, the Three-headed Snake, which could be an aspect related to the Styx and agriculture, for example. Another temple may be focused on worshipping Set the Conqueror or Set, the Eyes of the Night, military and astronomical aspects of the same god respectively.

This in turn will influence the satellite godlings associated with each temple, the worshippers assisting to it, the offerings

to both temple and gods and finally, the power and influence said temple will have over the land.

It is worth noting that this fact is precisely one reason why the Great Temples of Set in Stygia may be the most prominent ones politically speaking in heavily populated regions but less important in rural Stygia, where the temples linked to agricultural aspects of Set and other deities are crucial to the survival of commoners all over the region they observe.

HOUSES OF WORSHIP

The following temples can be used as a quick reference or as complements for any given Campaign. They are not complete, allowing Games Masters to make adjustments as deemed fit for their Character's adventures. At the same time, the adventure ideas are not fully developed, so GMs will have to use previously designed Non-Player Characters.

Players and Game Masters alike should keep in mind that Temples are a crucial Institution in the hyborian age, not only are they important administrative and learning centres but they offer food, shelter, medical assistance and technical support on almost every aspect of hyborian life and economy. Thus, any given temple will be composed of much more infrastructure than the actual house of worship: granaries and warehouses are needed for all the grain (harvested in the temple's actual lands or tithed by the faithful), foodstuffs and goods collected throughout the year, hospitals and hospices for the sick and homeless, workshops and trading emporiums, schools and so forth.

Finally, a most important aspect of the temples in Stygia are the cemetery and spiritual preparations facilities for those recently deceased. In this case, not only crypts and catacombs are an important (if not vital) part of the temple proper but also the mummification laboratories where all the alchemical mixtures and elements are prepared for said rituals.

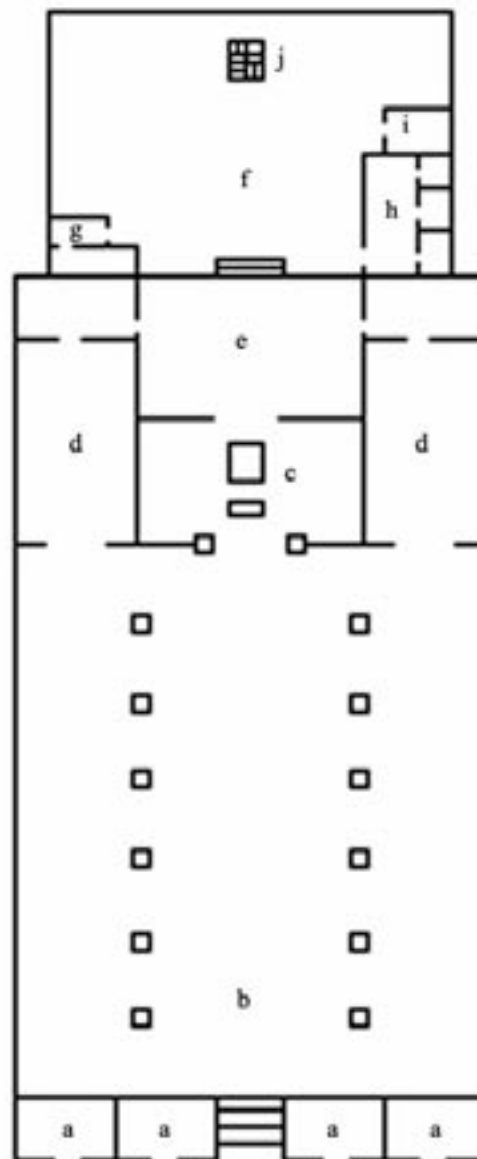
The Games Master should feel free to add as many of these additional buildings as required in the temple's complex, remembering that in Stygia, religious complexes can be as big as the Citadel of Khemi, for example.

SMALL STYGIAN TEMPLE

This temple can be set either in a small province, town or in a particularly wealthy neighbourhood in a big city. It has Stygian style architecture but can be located either in Shem or along the southern borders of Stygia.

The temple has a main altar-shrine dedicated to Set and two smaller chapels that are used to worship other aspects of Set. There are also four small shrines dedicated to lesser gods and their particular festivities.

This temple has a staff of two full-time priests and one part-time assistant. Villagers offer voluntary work in the temple's fields and granaries, along with helping in everyday chores in the temple itself. Since this is a minor temple, it does not have the resources to care for a proper



SMALL TEMPLE OF SET

- a. Lesser Gods' Shrine
- b. Main Hall
- c. Main Altar and Effigy
- d. Side Chapels
- e. Inner Sanctum
- f. Sacred Garden
- g. Tool Shed
- h. Priest's Quarters
- i. Kitchen
- j. Entrance to Catacombs

Praise the Serpent

The Houses of Set

Son of Set; instead it houses two large Cobras, who live in two gilded coffers at the base of the main altar. One of the Cobras is usually drugged and it is used during special ceremonies but they are still very dangerous especially if somebody were to open their caskets assuming it holds another type of treasure.

The temple's staff is usually busy performing religious tasks and obligations to both the church's hierarchy and their followers, going the extra mile for the main festivities celebrated once a year (depending on the principal aspect of Set worshipped in the temple).

An adventure involving this temple can revolve around the visit of an important dignitary to said temple's province or town. The priests have the honour to organise a visit to all the complex properties and prepare a fabulous welcome banquet for said eminence.

Alas, during the banquet, the High priest (or wealthy merchant or noble aristocrat) is poisoned, leaving the characters responsible to find the culprit before word of the crime reaches Luxur and Khemi. To make things worse, the murdered character was the recipient of an extremely valuable object (the 'Snake Amulet', for example) which is lost during all the commotion. Thus, the Characters will have the challenge to also find the misplaced treasure along with any culprit.

IMPORTANT STYGIAN TEMPLE

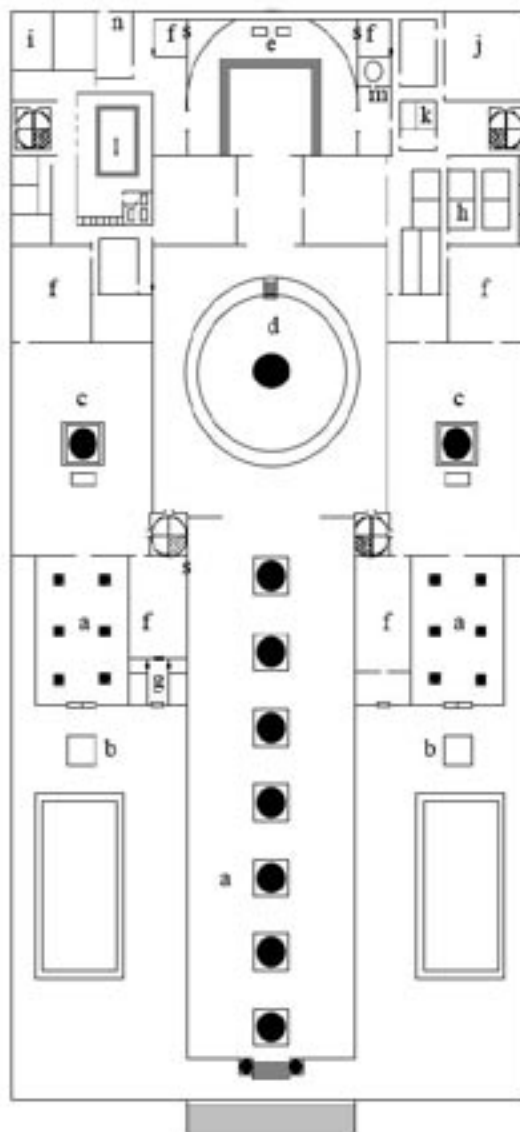
This temple of Set is appropriate as the main temple in a small urban emplacement or one of the main worshipping houses in a Temple Complex of a big city, like Khemi or Luxur. Like the smaller temple, it also has two lesser shrines dedicated most probably to supporting deities of the main aspect of Set worshipped in the temple or to other avocations of the Great Snake.

It's main features are the main hall, with a characteristic sequence of pillars that allow the worshipper to approach the main

shrine in the way dictated by the rituals of Set: entwining like the god itself, observing the sacred imagery painted all along the pillars and the walls of the vestibule until reaching the chamber where a huge pit holds one of Set's most precious creatures: a Son of Set in all its splendour. Beyond the pit, the main altar, where sacrifices and oracles take place holds an important quantity of followers and priests.

The building also includes warehouses and lesser priest's chambers, although lower and upper levels are left to the GMs discretion.

Adventures involving this type of temple may include rescuing an innocent victim chosen to be sacrificed to Father Set. Either Stygia is planning on war or the Long Night Festival is near but sacrifices are demanded by the god and the Temple is all too happy to oblige. One of the victims turns out to be the last daughter of a wealthy caravan merchant, or simply the High Priest of the Temple has annoyed a local nobleman. Either way, the Characters are hired to ruin the ritual (either by stealing the victim or by feeding false information to the oracle, through the secret chambers behind the main altar).



GREAT TEMPLE OF SET

- a. Vestibule
- b. Atrium to Lesser Shrines
- c. Shrines
- d. Sons of Set Pit
- e. Main Altar
- f. Warehouse
- g. Guardhouse
- h. Priests' Quarters
- i. Senior Priest's Quarters
- j. Library
- k. Holding Cages
- l. Bathing Area and Infirmary
- m. Purifying Room
- n. Temple Complex Entrance

The main challenge in this adventure will be to actually reach the captives and/or the main altar undetected and then exiting without bringing any undesired attention on the characters by the temple guards. Also, there is always the risk of being face-to-face with the Son of Set!

TEMPLE OF SET RUINS

These ruins were part of an ancient Temple of Set, during the early days of Koth, before the collapse of Acheron. After being abandoned by the acheronian or stygian might, the region suffered severe

earthquakes, which led to the formation of a nearby lake. Centuries later, the buried temple ruins are considered to be nothing but a haunted hill close to a hyborian village. There are several legends relating to this haunted hill, one of them speaks of an ancient race of dark skinned people who dwell in a majestic city under the hill and that they leave their dark realms to prey upon mortals once every full moon. The truth regarding these legends is that across the lake, a lesser scholar discovered the entrance to the caves that are now the ruins and learned about the dark rituals performed in its shrines. The scholar has

since created a small cult dedicated to Set and sacrifices are made every now and then, when children or defenceless villagers happen to come near the hill.

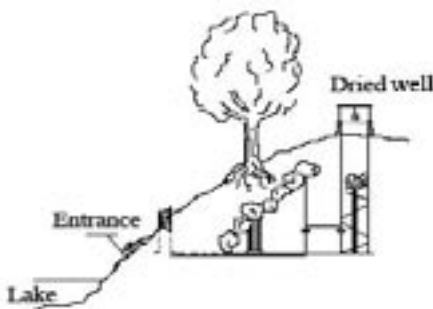
There are two entrances to the ruins: the first one is near the lake shores and is usually guarded by members of the cult (when there is worship to be done), the other entrance is through an abandoned well on top of the hill which leads directly to a collapsed stairwell, now dry.

The central pit of the temple is flooded and probably some kind of wild animal resides in (perhaps a large viper as described in *Conan the Roleplaying Game* page 375). Nevertheless, the cultists avoid getting too close to the pit, as they avoid descending into the catacombs beneath the temple and investigating the ruins in general, which may still hide some useful treasure.

This catacomb is partly flooded, with several dangerous animals living there but the real danger is the crypts themselves: these are thin clay-brick walls, easily broken if the characters decide to tear them down. The walls represent all the traditional funerary paraphernalia linked to the cult of Set, plus the ritual 'black gate' where the deceased's spirit may leave to the afterlife. Disrupting any of these crypts will have no adverse effect save the noise they make, except for the two bigger crypts, which include the corpses of two important nobles and their retinue. If disturbed, ancient spells cast on the corpses will make them rise and attack all living creatures nearby. Depending on the GM's needs, these corpses can range from simple risen dead (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 387) to vampires or something even more challenging.

ABANDONED TEMPLE OF IBIS

In Stygia, before the great purge of the heretic cult of Ibis, this temple was famous for its accurate oracles and thus it was one of the wealthiest temples in the realm. Once the purge was in effect, most of the Ibis worshippers went into hiding but unfortunately the temple, its lands and the small village that maintained it were put



RUINED TEMPLE OF SET

- a. Entrance through Well/Stairs
- b. Storerooms
- c. Vestibule
- d. Rubble
- e. Chasm
- f. Flooded Pit
- g. Main Altar
- h. Shack



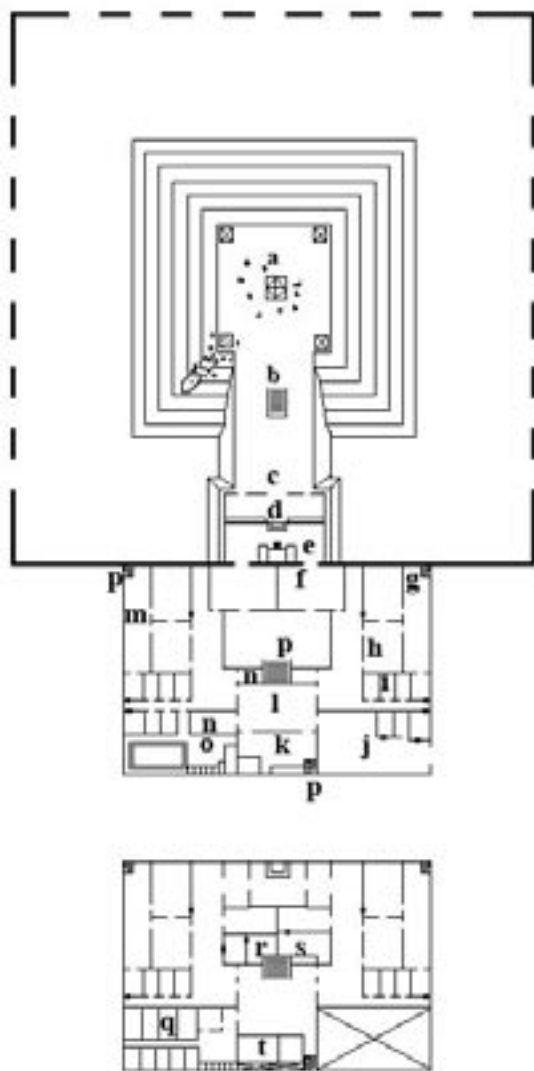
RUINED TEMPLE OF SET LOWER LEVEL

- a. Stairs
- b. Vestibule to Mausoleum
- c. Ossuary
- d. Mausoleum
- e. Priests'/Nobles' Tombs
- f. Underground Lake



Praise the Serpent

The Houses of Set



ABANDONED TEMPLE OF IBIS

- a. Main Alter/Image of Ibis
- b. Access to Catacombs
- c. Oracles' Temple
- d. Vestibule
- e. Oracles' Chamber
- f. Entrance/Exit to Temple
- g. Library, Administrative
- h. Classroom/Scribe Room
- i. Priests' study/office
- j. Warehouse
- k. Kitchen
- l. Refectory
- m. Library, Religious Texts
- n. Storerooms
- o. Bath House/Leech
- p. Stairs
- q. Priests' Quarters
- r. High Priest's Chambers
- s. Treasury
- t. Laboratory

The crypt of the temple of Ibis is built in order to guard the remains of all its faithful. It includes a vestibule, where the family of the recently deceased would leave the corpse along with available material offerings to the priests who would, in turn, either mummify the corpse or clean its bones to be stored in the appropriate chambers. In the inner crypt, where the priest's remains rest, there is a sacred pool, where the oracle would imbibe in order to attain important and sacred visions. To this day, the pool still holds waters, although anyone drinking from it may have terrible and accursed visions (but still gain important insight into the future, assuming they survive the corrupting madness that the cursed water brings).

The characters may be sailing along the Styx when they notice, at night, a strange reflection coming from somewhere in the nearby swamp. This can be the moon reflecting on the remains of the temple, teasing passersby to search its flooded remains. Another possible hook is that the characters are charged with consulting the long lost oracle of the temple; they will have to infiltrate into Stygia and search for the temple, with their ultimate goal being either death or a total hoax!

to the torch. Soon, the abandoned lands where claimed by the river Styx and the region became a cursed marsh in the eyes of the righteous worship of Set.

The temple of Ibis has a slightly different outlay than Set's temples; it focuses on an open courtyard where a central image of the bird-god was worshipped. In this case, it is on a very big platform, surrounded by four huge obelisks. From there, the priests would lead the people in their worship. Behind the statue there is a wide walkway that leads to the temple's catacombs and further down, to the oracle's temple, where votaries would hear their questions answered after paying the required tithe.

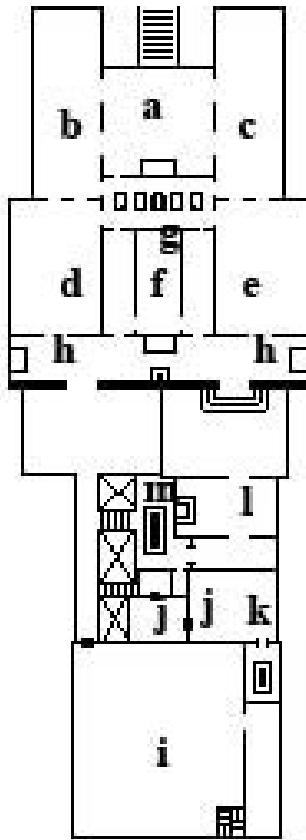
Beyond the oracle's temple, the temple's complex revolved around a frugal life of research and administration. Ibis's libraries were known as some of the richest of the hyborian world.

It is up to the Games Master to decide the level of destruction and ruin the temple is in. Perhaps, a powerful curse was cast upon any intruders and the temple contents are intact or, the opposite, not only was the temple completely pillaged but also it is cursed by the priests of Set. In any case, the temple is sure to be abandoned and forgotten, claimed by the swamp and its inhabitants.

APPENDIX: Temple treasures, priests and denizens.

The Sacred Amulet of the Snake

This cobra-shaped gold pendant is an important sign of status and political clout in Stygia since only the royal family has the right of using these amulets and they are relatively few in existence (about eight at most). By itself, it grants the wearer ambassadorial status (+4 in social related checks against Stygians) as only the highest nobility will be allowed to own one such amulet, also it gives the wearer a +4 bonus in animal handle checks against snakes of all types (+2 against reptiles). Expenditure of 2 power points and the proper incantation (Knowledge Arcana DC 20) will allow the wearer to use Entrance



ABANDONED TEMPLE OF IBIS CATACOMBS

- a. Depository
- b. Girls' Tombs
- c. Boys' Tombs
- d. Women's Tombs
- e. Men's Tombs
- f. Storeroom
- g. Laboratory
- h. Altars
- i. Storeroom
- j. Priests' Crypts
- k. Priests' Ossuary
- l. Altar
- m. Sacred Pool

on one creature within eye contact. A cost of 6 power points and the appropriate secret words (again, Knowledge Arcana DC 21) allows the wearer to cast Animal Ally, at first level, with the result being a snake ally loyal to the wearer.

Three-headed Statuette of Set

This small effigy of a three-headed adder represents Father Set as the ever-watchful protector of Stygia. It is delicately carved out of onyx, with golden decorations resembling the snake's scales. There are very few of the original statuettes surviving, although plenty of copies exist (the copies vary in cost but have none of the abilities described here). By itself a priceless piece of art, its true value becomes apparent when dipped in water or wine during the night of a full moon. If the proper prayers are intoned throughout the night, the liquid will transmute into a powerful antidote, capable of neutralising

any natural poison (the subject is entitled to a Fortitude saving throw DC 20 to nullify the poisonous effects. Also small snakes in the same room as the statue become somewhat friendly, giving anyone brave enough to handle them a +2 bonus on their Handle Animal checks.

Sacred pool of Ibis (cursed)

The sacred pool of Ibis was the centre of all oracular efforts in the Ibis cult. In Stygia, those holy places that were not utterly destroyed where heavily cursed and defiled by Set's priests. No Set-fearing Stygian will drink knowingly of these waters! Nevertheless, imbibing from this particular pool will force a character to make a Fortitude save (DC: 23) or suffer the effects of Channel Demon (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 271). After that, he will have to endure a Visions of Torment and Enlightenment (page 249) (Saving Throw: 23) for 1d6 minutes. Finally, during

his ordeal, a demonic entity will contact the character and offer a lesser demonic pact, focused on allowing the character access to the Divination School of Magic. If the character refuses, he will be subject to ill fortune and left to his own devices to learn anything about this gruesome experience.

Set-Harath, Master Archivist of the Temple.

5th level Scholar / 5th level Noble.

Hit Dice: 10d6 (41 HP)

Initiative: -1

Speed: 30 ft.

Parry defence: +3

Dodge defence: +2

Base attack: +6 / +1

Attack: Dagger +6 / +1 (1d4, 19-20 x2 / AP: 1)

Magic Attack: +4

Power Points: 9

Special Qualities: Title, Rank Hath Its Privileges, Wealth, Regional Feature +1 (Stygian) Social Ability (Family Ties), Lead by Example +2, Scholar, Background (independent), Knowledge is Power, Iron Will.

Saves: Fort +2 Ref +2 Will +8

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise 5, Bluff 5, Concentration 10, Craft (alchemy) 7, Craft (herbalism) 5, Decipher Script 13, Forgery 11, Gather Information 2, Heal 3, Intimidate 2, Knowledge (arcana) 12, Knowledge (geography) 8, Knowledge (local) 8, Knowledge (religion) 10, Listen 1, Move Silently 1, Perform (ritual) 4, Search 5, Sense Motive 1.

Feats: Sorcerer's boon, Priest, Alertness, Diligent, Knowledgeable.

Sorcery Styles: Counterspells, Divination, Nature Magic

Spells: Warding, Greater Warding, Summon Beast, Astrological Prediction, Visions.

Corruption: 1

Reputation: 7

The frail Master Archivist of a small temple of Set is renowned for his kindly nature and complete devotion to his god. The

Praise the Serpent

CONAN

younger son of the noble family in charge of the province, his fervour and love for anything written clearly defined his future. Currently, he is content keeping the temple's records up to date and studying carefully the theological scriptures of Set and its pantheon.

Although he is not part of the inner circle of priests, his arcane knowledge is somewhat self-taught, thanks to the long hours spent studying ancient manuscripts, not all of them as innocent as one would have expected.

Set-Harath is beloved by his followers as they see all that is good in Stygia and the cult of Set, ironically, this innocence is also the reason why the otherwise brilliant Harath, has not climbed in the cult's hierarchies. This suits him well: he watches his flock and is there reassuring them in the times of hardness... and sacrifice.

High Priest Erkan, Beloved of Set 7th level scholar.

Hit Dice: 7d6 (21 HP)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

Parry defence: +2

Dodge defence: +2

Base attack: +5

Attack: +5 staff (2d4 x2 /AP 1)

Magic Attack: +3 (+5)

Power Points: 8

Special Qualities: New Sorcery Style, Scholar, Background (pact), Knowledge is Power, Iron Will, Increased Maximum Power Points (triple)

Saves: Fort +4 Ref +2 Will +5

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise 2, Bluff 6, Concentration 6, Craft (alchemy) 3, Craft (herbalism) 4, Decipher Script 10, Forgery 8, Gather Information 5, Heal 3, Intimidate 8, Knowledge (arcana) 8, Knowledge (geography) 7, Knowledge (local) 8, Knowledge (religion) 4, Listen 3, Move Silently 5, Perform 3, Search 4, Sense Motive 7.

Feats: Hexer, Ritual Sacrifice, Great Fortitude, Leadership.

Sorcery Styles: Summoning, Divination, Curses.

Spells: Astrological Prediction, Visions, Demonic Pact, Lesser Ill-Fortune, Weapon Curse, Gelid Bones, Ill-Fortune.

Corruption: 4

Reputation: 4

Erkan hails from southern Corinthia, where he learned his father's trade as a scribe. During his youth, he left his hometown with a trading caravan headed for Koth in hopes of achieving great fortune. As it turned out, he only changed locales, living miserably as a kothian town's scribe.

One day, Erkan decided to visit the neighbouring town's fair, across the lake. He got lost at night and found a small cave near the lake's shore. Investigating, he discovered an ancient temple dedicated to mysterious gods and he was fascinated. Working on the strange scriptures written all over the altar's walls, he managed to understand the basics of Set's theology and decided to worship him, assuming the favour of an old and 'forgotten' god would be good luck.

Innocently at first, Erkan's worship of Set became more and more obsessed, to a point where he started to sacrifice animals at the dark altar. With these blood offerings, a whole new universe opened before Erkan and Set's minions manifested before him, willing to teach him the secrets of the gods in exchange of his worship.

Currently, Erkan has a small following of a dozen men and women from his village. So far they have only sacrificed animals and a drunken vagabond to Set but Erkan's ambitions are growing...

Bone Guardian

It is rumored in Stygia that the heretic cult of Ibis made pacts with demons to use the earthly remains of those who were buried

in Ibis's temples. These demons inherit the decaying flesh of desecrated corpses and feast on the souls of any who dare to interrupt their slumber!

In reality, it has been a common practice of fanatical priests to bind themselves to the temple, after their deaths. Thus, they become the guardians of their brethren's remains, existing in a dormant state until molested by intruders or sacrilegious visitors.

The cult of Ibis, with its practice of keeping huge mausoleums and ossuaries with the remains of their priests was famous for this practice but it is not uncommon to find temples of Set with their priests' crypts holding one or several bone guardians.

The bone guardians are a reanimated collection of bones raised by the protective intentions of dead priests' souls. They are not very intelligent but they will do their duty as long as they are physically able. Usually adopting a vague humanoid form, they are not restricted to it and will work with whatever bones are available (skulls, femurs and so on).

They are not strategists and will pound on trespassers; focusing on those who have disturbed (or are disturbing) the priests' remains. Large and Huge guardians also generate quite a lot of dust and anyone hit by one of their attacks must make a Saving Throw as if hit by Stygian Tomb-dust (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 281) or be blinded for 2d6 rounds (besides taking normal damage).

Small bone guardians are nothing more than incomplete (or rather old) skeletons that attack trespassers on sight. These malicious creatures are rather clumsy but can climb very fast, nonetheless. They are typical of temples of Set crypts and can easily gang up on unwary explorers.

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Hunting the Falcon

By Leo LaDell

Refreshed from a morning spent in Katia's Bathhouse, Cosimo Galbo strode eagerly along one of Messantia's alleyways heading for the Dockside Prefect. Walking the streets was a rare adventure for the merchant and perspiration bedewed his brow and moistened his curly black beard as his silken slippers expanded and strained beneath his rotund bulk. High spirits had brought him out on foot on this fine morning: high because of the meeting that would soon take place at his Dockside warehouse. 'Besides,' he reasoned inwardly as his keen eye darted from the captivating glimmer of his sapphire ring to the two stout swordsmen at his side, 'Tito and Drago will protect me from any importunity'.

As he approached the warehouse, Cosimo noted with approval that the door guard stood at dutiful attention despite the intriguing flow of passers-by on the wharf. On seeing his master, the guard drew his heels together and said 'they are inside – unarmed as you instructed'. Cosimo nodded curtly and entered the building with his bodyguards. In the torch-lit interior he saw that his rivals had dressed in predictable finery. The men played the game of The Thousand Faces, wherein every expression and word could be loaded with subtle meaning. Cosimo was not daunted by their regal appearance. This meeting was his play in the game and he had planned a masterstroke for House Anchises.

The two guests were merchants from the rival House Mazentius. Ever arrogant and abrupt, Paolo Verri spoke first. 'No doubt you have kept us waiting in this rat-infested hovel in a transparent attempt to seize some advantage. Let us dispense with the childish gestures. Show us this wonder you claim to possess.' Cosimo answered the insult with a benevolent, unperturbed smile.

'Impatient, are we?' he teased. 'Then wait no longer.' From the folds of his robe Cosimo produced a complex, intricately bejewelled brass key and held it before the eyes of his rivals for a moment. With a measured, ceremonial pace he approached a shelf mounted on the wall a few feet behind his guests. From the shelf Cosimo removed a plain wooden box the size of a man's head. He removed the unfastened lid and drew forth a small coffer fashioned of dark, resinous wood and ornamented with glittering red garnets set in silver.

As Cosimo inserted the brass key and held the box before his guests' faces, they could not completely disguise their curiosity and eagerness. Paolo licked his thin lips and complained: don't keep us waiting fool. Open it!' Cosimo's satisfied grin widened. He inserted the key and gently blew off the chaff that had cushioned the coffer.

As the key turned Cosimo whispered, 'Behold!' He opened the lid with a dramatic flourish and his voice boomed: 'a marvellous treasure of the East!'

The guests gazed into the coffer for a tense moment as their host studied their faces for signs of the amazement and bitter envy he hoped to find. Cosimo was perplexed to see the men look at each other with cool satisfaction and Paolo said: 'what think you, Aldo? A hawk? Or is it perhaps from a Zingaran bird? I wish my falconer were here. He would know.' Aldo chuckled and shook his head.

Cosimo's smile faded and he peered into the coffer. His worried eyes sought in vain for the priceless, gem-encrusted golden dragon whose clockwork innards caused its delicate wings and masterfully sculpted jaws to flutter and champ. In the jewel's place was a lone brown feather with white markings. Cosimo lifted his head, unable to speak.

Paolo and Aldo offered pitying looks to Cosimo and headed casually for the door. As he left the warehouse, Paolo turned to his companion and said, 'Poor Cosimo, a bird has flown with his wonder.'

Overview

A young and daring Zingaran who calls himself 'The Falcon' has pulled off three dazzling thefts of jewellery shipments from the warehouses and caravans of House Anchises of Messantia. The thief has targeted only the property of Cosimo Galbo, brother-in-law to House Lord Lino Anchises. The city Patrol's efforts have been fruitless and Galbo's public embarrassment and concern for his House Lord's displeasure are intolerable. Galbo seeks to hire the Player Characters to bring in the Falcon – dead or alive. Because he suspects a plot by the rival House Mazentius, the merchant would prefer a live thief and will reward the captors accordingly. Tangible rewards will also be available if the PCs uncover the connection between the Falcon and Galbo themselves.

Requirements

This scenario is designed for beginning Player Characters: three to five 1st-level PCs would be an ideal group. The adventure can be upscaled for a more powerful group with suggestions provided throughout the scenario. The Games Master and Players will need the *Conan the Roleplaying Game* book. The *Messantia, City of Riches* boxed set and the *Argos and Zingara* book would be useful for background but they are not required. Players who wish to suggest this scenario to their Games Master should read no further.

Challenges

The Player Characters will need cleverness and persistence to find the thief and his companions. Using intimidation, bribery, tracking abilities or whatever creative means they choose, the PCs' search will take them into the wilderness where the Falcon – and an unexpected, monstrous foe – awaits. Near the Falcon's encampment in the hills of western Argos a huge, aggressive boar has made its den. Grown massive and deranged from the influence of a strange artefact from a forgotten age, the beast will savagely resist any exploration of its

territory. Two of the Falcon's men have been lost to the creature in recent weeks.

Confronting the Falcon will also be perilous. He is a skilled swordsman and his henchmen are merciless cutthroats.

Cosimo Galbo may choose not to honour his agreement with the Player Characters. If the merchant is not impressed with the PCs' status or ability to strike back, he may attempt to cheat them of their reward. The scenario will provide details for determining Cosimo's actions.

Opportunities and Twists

Cosimo will offer a substantial financial reward in the form of silver and/or gems for the head of the Falcon. He will expect proof of the thief's identity and he will provide a bonus payment for a live captive. The Player Characters also stand to gain additional employment (at the Games Master's option) of this kind from Cosimo and other House Anchises merchants in the future. Connections in a powerful Messantian trading House can be far more valuable than a pouch full of silver.

Suspicious PCs might wish to dig deeper into the Falcon's connection to Cosimo. With some investigation of various clues detailed in the scenario, they might discover that the Falcon is Cosimo's illegitimate son, fathered on one of the Argossean merchant's visits to Zingara 20 years ago. The Falcon's mother had recently lost her husband to disease and instantly regretted succumbing to the foreigner's charms. Soon after the affair, Cosimo sent a letter demanding payment from the wealthy widow. If she refused, the Argossean promised to reveal their tryst, ruining her reputation and imperilling her fortune. Under Zingaran law, the widow's life could be forfeit as well. She cooperated but never told Cosimo of the son that Zingaran society assumed to be the legacy of her late husband.

The Falcon recently discovered a letter that his mother wrote to the Argossean.

The missive, written several years ago but never sent, was a request for a deal: Cosimo would receive a large final payment but his threats must cease forever. The young man confronted his mother and learned the truth of his ancestry. Disgusted and hurt, he fled his family manor and vowed revenge on the merchant.

The Falcon's plan is twofold. First, he will repeatedly embarrass Cosimo with a series of daring thefts. Such public humiliation is exquisitely painful to a prominent Argosian. When he deems the merchant's sufferings sufficient, the Falcon plans to remove the threat forever with a yard of Zingaran steel. High-strung and desperate, he will not hesitate to use deadly force to achieve his goal.

If they learn of the Falcon's intentions or background, the Player Characters may choose to abandon Cosimo and side with the Zingaran. Because of his recent loss of two men, the Falcon will gladly accept aid from those whose motives he trusts and he will offer payment in the form of a share of the merchant's stolen property and refuge in his family manor if desired. PCs that perform Cosimo's mission blindly will miss this opportunity. They will also forgo the additional coin that Cosimo will pay if the Falcon's identity is revealed.

Beginning the Scenario

To begin the adventure, the Player Characters must arrive in or already be in the city of Messantia, capital of Argos. The following suggestions should get the PCs started. The Games Master can choose one or invent a new intro to the adventure.

- The PCs arrive in the northeast corner of the city with a caravan that they have been guarding for the last leg of its journey from the North. This region of the city is called the Dustbiter prefect and is home to stables, a large caravan yard and several taverns catering to travellers and teamsters with dusty throats. After receiving their meagre pay (the PCs' 2d6-2 silver coins starting money as indicated in *Conan the*

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Roleplaying Game pg. 77), the Player Characters seek refreshment in the Last Stop tavern. If the Games Master is using the scenario with higher level PCs, the caravan was robbed by bandits, leaving the Player Characters with only a few silver coins, hidden or swallowed during the confusion of the attack. PCs who seek rumours will hear from voluble tavern keeper Gusme Bonolan the tale of Cosimo's recent embarrassment. Gusme has also heard that Cosimo is offering a bounty for the thief and can direct the PCs to the merchant's manor.

If the Player Characters are the strong (or sinister) and silent type, an agent of Cosimo's will approach them. The agent will mention the bounty and offer to lead the PCs to the manor.

- The PCs have just arrived in Messantia aboard a merchant ship (as guards or passengers) and are seeking a

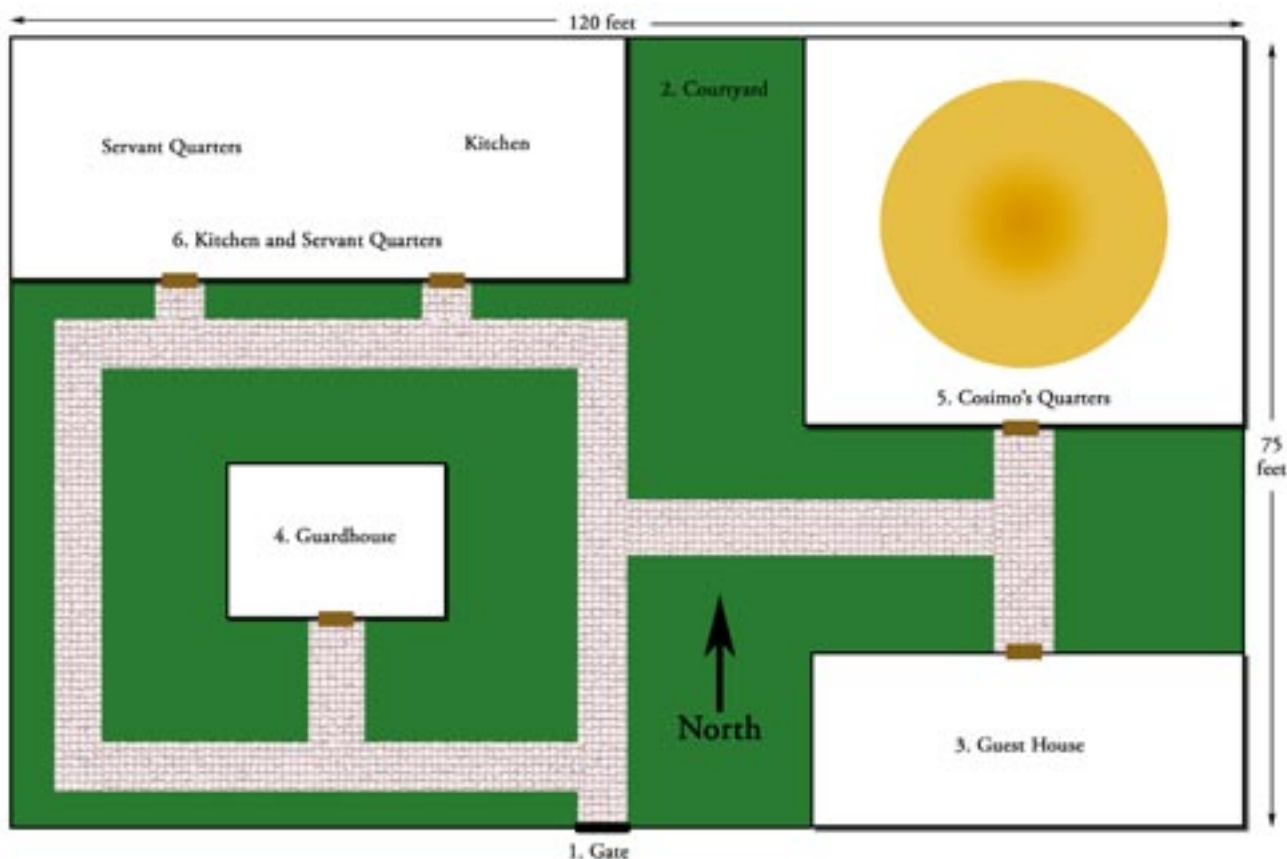
bed, company or a decent meal after weeks of salt beef and weevil-infested biscuit. Their ship berthed near the Dockmaster's office in the Dockside prefect of the city. As they near the office, the PCs overhear the Dockmaster telling friends the story of Cosimo's humiliation with great volume and gusto. If questioned, the Dockmaster will relate the story – he never tires of it – mentioning the reward and offering directions to Cosimo's estate.

- PCs who already reside in Messantia will have little trouble hearing of Cosimo's plight. The doings of prominent merchant house members commonly provide potent source material for gossip mongers in the City of Riches. Nobles or scholars might hear talk of the thefts and reward while relaxing in a bathhouse in the Bazaar prefect. Other PCs could overhear the rumour at a gladiatorial match in the

Arena prefect. Because of Cosimo's Reputation (40), native Messantians will have heard of the merchant and they will know (or guess) that his estate is in the King's prefect. Only 1 in 4 random citizens questioned outside the King's prefect can provide precise directions to Cosimo's estate. Assume that any Messantian questioned inside the King's prefect can provide directions.

At Cosimo Galbo's Estate

Cosimo's estate in the King's prefect consists of a courtyard/garden surrounded by several well-kept, white-columned buildings. The buildings and 10 foot high outer wall form a rectangle and all entrances face the centre of the courtyard. All buildings have one storey and white stone facades cover their stout timber frameworks. From the cobbled street the polished, bronze-domed roof of Cosimo's living quarters blazes on sunny days.



Consult the map and key for the Player Characters' arrival at the estate. During the daytime, Cosimo will be at home 70% of the time. After dark the chance increases to 90%.

1. Gate: During daylight hours, this large, gold-painted iron gate is manned by a tall, silent Kushite man in House Anchises livery: a long blue tunic bearing an eagle clutching 3 interlocking rings. House slaves are a symbol of status, so Cosimo seldom neglects an opportunity to display his property in public view. If asked for Cosimo, the Kushite will open the gate and wordlessly motion for the guest(s) to follow him to a small building across the courtyard (number 2), locking the gate behind him. If threatened the slave will produce a brass whistle from a tunic pocket and blow a triple blast. This will bring guards and dogs from the guardhouse (number 4) in 1–3 rounds. There is a 50% chance of 1–2 city Patrol (see Appendix) arriving in 2–8 rounds as well.

At night one of the guards from the guardhouse mans the gate and two guard dogs are left to roam the courtyard. Any uninvited visitors will be asked to return in the morning and deadly force will meet any attempt to enter. PCs can use Bluff, Diplomacy or Intimidate to persuade the guard to ask Cosimo to meet them at night.

2. Courtyard: Pale pink flagstone paths cross this tastefully groomed courtyard, lush with expensive plantings of rare herbs, flowers and fruit trees. One tree is of particular interest: by the north wall of the courtyard stands a robust Zingaran fig tree surrounded by a ring of mint plants. This tree grew from a seedling that Cosimo brought back from Zingara on his trip 20 years ago. It was beneath the branches of just such a tree (with an identical arrangement of mint) that Cosimo seduced the Falcon's mother long ago and the Argossean keeps the tree in his courtyard as a token of his conquest. If the Player Characters bring the Falcon to Cosimo's estate in daylight the Zingaran thief will recognise the arrangement on a successful DC 20 spot check. If he succeeds,

the Falcon must make a DC 15 Will save or fly into a fit of rage, attempting to break his bonds and get at Cosimo at any cost.

3. Guest House: This building features a large parlour, four bedrooms and a lavatory. Messantians take pride in their hospitality and the comfortable bedrooms and opulent decor reflect Cosimo's status as a powerful merchant. Guest can await an audience with their host on silk-cushioned couches as liveried servants serve wine and sweetmeats on gilt platters. Like the Kushite doorman, all of Cosimo's slaves and servants carry brass whistles to alert the guards and will attempt to flee if attacked (except where noted). Treat these harmless folk as Humble Peasants from pg. 355 of the *Conan the Roleplaying Game* book.

If Cosimo is not at home when the Player Characters arrive, a portly, smiling Argosian man in his 50s will enter the parlour from the courtyard within a few minutes of their arrival. He introduces himself as Ollo and explains that his master will return shortly. In fact, Cosimo will arrive in 30–180 minutes (3d6 x 10). While the PCs wait, a servant will remain in the parlour to attend to their needs. If the wait will be long, then after an hour Ollo will return with a slender young Argossean woman. From a slender wooden case the woman takes an aulos, the Argossean double flute and plays a variety of haunting folk melodies until her master arrives.

If Cosimo is home when the PCs arrive, he will enter the parlour in 2d6 minutes, flanked by his bodyguards Tito and Drago. See the Appendix for Cosimo and the guards' stats. Cosimo is a cheerful, obese Argossean of medium height. An unsubtle cloud of citrus-heavy perfume surrounds him and his ponderous frame is draped in colourful silk robes. Brightly-polished rings adorn his chubby fingers, including a particularly striking sapphire jewel on his right hand. His curly black beard glistens with precious oil. Carefully-trimmed black eyebrows dart above merry eyes as he speaks. Tito and Drago are former Messantian Royal Guards who have chosen

lucrative careers in private protection for their later years. Both are in their early 40s with sun-browned olive skin, black hair and leathery, proud faces. Drago is taller and more talkative. When Cosimo is in public or expecting visitors, his bodyguard is always present.

Cosimo will offer 2,000 silver pieces (or gems of equivalent value) to each surviving PC if they bring the Falcon to him with proof of identity (e.g., stolen goods). He also offers a bonus of 1,000 silver pieces per PC if the Falcon is brought in alive. Cosimo wants to know why the Falcon has singled him out and he will offer a bonus of 500 silver pieces to each Player Character if they discover and reveal the Falcon's history. The Games Master should adjust these figures to fit his campaign as necessary. The merchant will not provide any assistance in the form of equipment or mounts but at the GM's discretion, he may do so if the PCs return with evidence that they have made progress in their search.

4. Guardhouse: This sparsely furnished building contains just two rooms: a large guard quarters and a lavatory. In the quarters are one cot, a desk, several chairs and a dining table. There are two brass-bound trunks on the floor and in one corner a large bed of straw provides bedding for the two guard dogs. Cosimo employs off-duty Messantian Patrolmen and they use the trunks for their Patrol uniforms when they are working at the estate.

There are two guards on duty at all times. In the daytime both guards remain in the guardhouse. At night, one guard stands at the courtyard gate while the other is in the guardhouse. The guards wear leather jerkins and wield broadswords and poniards. Their statistics are available in the Appendix. For the guard dogs, use the wolf stats from page 375 of the *Conan the Roleplaying Game* book. If the Games Master is using this scenario with higher level PCs, the number of guards and/or dogs can be increased. In any conflict the guards will attempt to summon help with brass whistles if they fear for their

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lives. Tito and Drago, Cosimo's personal bodyguards, sleep in their master's quarters (number 5).

5.Cosimo's Quarters: The merchant's private living quarters are a study in conspicuous luxury. The marble-floored entryway is flanked by silken hangings and skylights allow sunlight to play on the gurgling water of an indoor fountain carved from snowy alabaster. Beyond the entryway is the great hall where Cosimo hosts decadent parties for House Anchises allies and other Messantian aristocrats. Ivory-limbed couches and tables line the walls and the sinuous patterns of lapis lazuli inlay decorate the floor. A half-flight of marble steps in the rear of the hall allow guests a breathtaking view of the sea through small windows cut in the bronze-domed ceiling.

Cosimo's bedroom is separated from the great hall by his bodyguards' sleeping apartment. Tito and Drago retire shortly after and wake shortly before their master each day. The headboard of Cosimo's massive, richly-furnished bed hides a sliding wall panel (DC 20 Search check to find it once the bed is moved). Behind the panel is a recessed cupboard that contains a locked strongbox containing jewels and gold lunas worth 2d4 thousand silver pieces. The lock is amazing (DC 40 Open Locks check) and the box has a hardness of 5, 15 Hit Points and a break DC of 23. Atop a nightstand is a small, unlocked ivory coffer that holds Cosimo's daily-wear jewellery while he sleeps. These pieces will be worth 3d6 x 100 silver pieces and never include his prized sapphire ring. Only death will separate the merchant from a bauble that cost him 5,000 silver pieces. When Cosimo is awake the coffer is empty.

6.Kitchen and Servant Quarters: Cosimo's kitchen facilities serve his prodigious appetite, delight in entertaining and love of good food. Two great ovens dominate the kitchen and the walls are lined with shelves full of fine spices, nourishing grains and rare treats imported from a dozen kingdoms. A well-designed cellar cool-room holds a variety of meats and fresh

seafood. The cook, an assistant and two servers are in the kitchen from dawn until an hour after dark.

Unlike many Messantian noblemen, Cosimo refrains from housing slaves or servants in basement quarters; he feels that such a segregated hideaway would encourage mischief. The servants' quarters consists of a large common room with 12 partitions separating sleeping areas for each servant and/or slave. In accordance with their master's wishes, the slaves and servants enjoy a clean, comfortable but sparse dwelling. During the day the quarters usually stand empty as the staff wait on their master but at night the servants are free to relax here unless summoned. A separate chamber for Ollo, Cosimo's valet, adjoins the common room. Ollo's attractively-appointed room, private lavatory and fireplace demonstrate the valet's status with his employer.

Finding the Falcon

After the Player Characters meet with Cosimo, they should develop a strategy for locating the elusive Falcon. If for some reason the PCs refrain from accepting Cosimo's mission, finding the thief could still be profitable; after all, some valuable merchandise is missing. The Games Master should reward creative ideas and clever use of skills with progress and a variety of approaches are available. Three such strategies follow.

1. Tracking. Although the Falcon has the aid of a competent tracker (see The Falcon's Camp and Followers), his trail is not perfectly concealed. Cosimo can direct the PCs to the warehouse where the Falcon struck most recently. Player Characters with the Track feat can begin following the trail with a DC 22 Survival check. This represents a DC of 15 for the firm ground of Messantia's streets, plus five for the Falcon's henchman hiding on the trail, plus two for two days since the last theft. The Games Master can increase the time elapsed if higher-level PCs are tracking. If the tracker fails, he can

retry after one hour. If none of the Player Characters has the Track feat, they can hire a tracker. Statistics are provided in the Appendix for Onestio, an Argossean bounty hunter (thief/borderer) who can be found seeking rumours of work in Messantia's taverns.

- i. Once the PCs set out on the trail, the tracks become obscure five times, necessitating five more Survival checks. The following chart provides a trail description and optional encounters for the trip northwest through Argossean hill country.
 - ii. To determine how long each leg of the journey takes, consult the *Conan the Roleplaying Game* book pages 214–216, keeping in mind that tracking reduces overland speed by half unless the tracker is willing to accept a hefty penalty to his Survival check (page 139). For example, a tracker's Speed is 30 feet. This gives an overland speed of 24 miles per day. Through hill country, this speed is reduced by half (12) and again by half for tracking for a final speed of 6 miles per day.
2. Talking. Player Characters who are more comfortable exchanging rumours and gossip with Messantia's citizens than combing the wilderness may choose to rely on their interpersonal skills to find the Falcon. The Gather Information skill is fundamental to this approach. The following list of rumours includes a Gather Information DC for hearing each rumour. If the PCs consistently fail to glean the required information, the Games Master may wish to allow a Knowledge (rumours) check in place of Gather Information. The DCs can be adjusted upwards for higher level PCs. A few misleading or false rumours are included. At the Games Masters' discretion, these can be offered to PCs who dramatically fail their Gather Information checks. Once the Player Characters obtain most of the accurate rumours, they should be able to locate

Location	Survival DC	Notes
Cosimo's warehouse	22	This is the initial check.
Messantia outskirts	20	The Falcon meets two followers here and the three leave on horseback.
20 miles NW of Messantia	20	Trail is broken by a stream.
48 miles NW of Messantia	20	Tracks from a group of horsemen break the trail. The Games Master may choose to insert the optional Pinar encounter here.
70 miles NW of Messantia	20	The trail runs perilously close to a vast oak forest. If desired the Games Master can insert the optional Ghoul encounter here.
75 miles NW of Messantia	N/A	The Falcon's camp is here.

the Falcon's camp. The journey should take approximately 6 days on foot, or 3 days mounted.

- a. Recently a group of young Zingaran noblemen have been frequenting the Lazy Dragon tavern in the Arena prefect. The tavernkeeper, Pasquino Tomas, can report that the young gentlemen never ask for a room for the night and always bear the dust of a journey on their fine, red leather clothing. DC 15.
- b. One of the Zingarans boasted of 'roughing it' in the wilderness to the Northwest of Messantia. Pasquino's wife Contessa overheard the Zingaran attempting to impress a barmaid. DC 20.
- c. A few nights ago two men in fine riding gear surprised and disarmed the guard at Rencius' stables in the Dustbiter prefect. They rode off with two of the stables' finest mounts. Minutes later two horses – one lame and both lathered from a hard ride – were found wandering riderless near the stables. The abandoned horses' tack and harness were fashioned from Zingaran leather. DC 15.
- d. Manolo Dio, a prominent Messantian nobleman known for his delight in hunting, recently returned from a boar hunt. According to his valet Grigo, Manolo became separated from his retainers during the pursuit of a large boar. When the group was reunited, the master was wearing an elegant red leather doublet instead of his buff riding coat. Grigo has never seen the garment before but he dare not question his master. DC 20. Grigo frequents the Pampered Prawn bathhouse in the Bazaar prefect in his rare off-duty hours. The PCs can question Manolo Dio about the doublet but the haughty nobleman will not offer any information without a successful Bluff, Intimidate or Diplomacy check at DC 20. Manolo found the garment stuck to a gorse bush near one of his favourite hunting grounds about 75 miles NW of Messantia. He can draw a crude map if the Player Characters are particularly persuasive or generous.
- e. This rumour will lead the PCs to the optional Pinar encounter. If the Games Master is not using the Pinar encounter, treat this rumour as misleading. A beautiful young Ophirean woman has been asking around Messantia's taverns to find the whereabouts of a Zingaran nobleman. DC 20. Pinar is staying at the Bronze Idol inn in the Bazaar prefect.
- f. (Misleading) Nuno Patreas of House Mazentius harbours a grudge with Cosimo Galbo because of the latter's merciless practices. This is true but Nuno is not involved in Cosimo's troubles.
- g. (Misleading) An off-duty Patrol officer was fired for being drunk on duty in Cosimo's employ. This is true but is irrelevant.
- h. (False) Durio Fulvas, a known but never caught thief, was seen watching Cosimo's warehouse.
- i. (False) A Vanir named Asrod has been attempting to sell exotic rarities in Messantia. Asrod is staying at the Dustbiter's Rest in the Dustbiter prefect. A Messantian noticed him explaining the purpose of his stag antler comb to an acquaintance and assumed that the red-bearded giant was attempting to sell the strange item. If aggressively confronted or accused, Asrod will gladly explain the misunderstanding with a few well-placed blows from fists the size and weight of a brick. Use the statistics for the Savage Cannibal on page 353 of *Conan The Roleplaying Game*, increasing the Str to 18, Con to 17 and Hit Points to 28. Asrod's only weapon

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is a battleaxe but he will fight with fists unless his opponent draws steel.

- j. (False) Cosimo has unpaid gambling debts with Brassus Arno, owner of the popular pygmy gladiator Kondo, the Boar's Bane. Brassus is away scouting new gladiatorial talent but Kondo (who was recently awarded his freedom) frequents the Last Stop tavern in the Dustbiter prefect looking for work. Kondo knows nothing of any debts but he will gladly regale new acquaintances with tales of the epic bouts against the ravening beasts that earned him his nickname. He may also be willing to serve as a hired crossbow for the PCs. Kondo's statistics are in the Appendix.

3. Sleuthing. Although many of the challenges of the Hyborian world call for mighty limbs and sharp steel, some Player Characters may enjoy a bit of detective work to challenge their wits. Scholars, for example, may wish to spare themselves an exhausting tracking expedition through the wilderness and Nobles may find nights spent associating with rumour mongers in low taverns unseemly. The following clues will allow such PCs to deduce the Falcon's location with sleuthing alone. The journey to the Falcon's camp should take approximately 6 days on foot or 3 days mounted.

- a. The feathers left at each robbery site by the Falcon come from an uncommon Zingaran bird called the Garrarojo. A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check is required to identify the feather and know that it nests near the Argossean/Zingaran border. A DC 15 Knowledge (falconry) check provides the same information. If the PCs are stumped, they can visit Porfirio the Falconer's shop in the Bazaar prefect. Porfirio can readily identify the feather and will cheerfully bore listeners with details about the bird's appearance, diet, hunting habits, locations and temperament.

- b. If the PCs check the warehouse where the Falcon struck last, they will notice an unglazed window high on one wall. With a successful DC 15 Search check, they will find a few thorns littered on the window sill. These gorse thorns were left when the thief's soft boots scraped the window frame as he entered the warehouse. Identifying the thorns requires a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check or a visit to Havrio's Fine Herbs and Tinctures in the Dockside prefect. Havrio will recognise the thorns and knows that western Argos is plagued by a vast growth of the tenacious, spiky bushes. PCs who make a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check for Argos will know this. Much of this growth is confined to a vertical band a few miles wide and 50 miles long where conditions are excellent for its spread. Havrio can draw a rough map and combined with the likely nesting sites of the Garrarojo, this will narrow down the search to a region of about three miles wide (east-west) and 25 miles long (north-south).

- c. Elso, the guard who was on duty at Cosimo's warehouse during the night of the most recent theft, has returned to duty with fresh red lashes decorating his back. While still smarting from his punishment, Elso was questioned by Messantia's Patrol and Cosimo himself. However, either from forgetfulness or spite the guard failed to divulge an important clue: when he checked the warehouse interior just before dawn, he caught a faint, peculiar odour in the still air. The odour had dissipated by full daylight, so Cosimo did not detect it. If questioned, the guard might reveal this clue if the PCs make a DC 20 Diplomacy check or offer a suitable bribe (e.g., 20 silver coins). An excessive bribe might scare Elso into silence and Intimidation is unlikely to succeed (DC 30), as he has friends in the Patrol.

1. Elso will describe the aroma as acrid, unpleasant and unwelcome as a reminder of a trip he took with his

stepfather ('Mitra curse his bowels!') as a youth. The boar hunting trip was meant as a coming-of-age ritual but Elso found the travel tedious, their prey terrifying and the stench of their pepperwood campfires nauseating. His stepfather forced him to chart their journey, so Elso can describe or draw a rough map of the region where pepperwood is plentiful. This clue should narrow the PCs' search by half.

- d. If the Player Characters hear that two horses were stolen from Rencius' Stables recently, they may find two more clues. When the thieves galloped away, a loose nail on the stable door tore a bag from one of the thieves' belts. The pouch contained a handful of black walnuts, which grow wild in western Argos. Because the nuts are a favourite among Messantians, any victualler in the Bazaar prefect can describe the general region where the walnuts are abundant. This should direct the PCs to a 20 square mile region just to the North of the Falcon's camp. When the PCs approach the stable, the stable boy Lupo is munching on the walnuts. If anyone draws close or addresses the lad, he will clutch the bag of nuts closely to his chest. A DC 15 Sense Motive check will inform the Player Characters that Lupo feels guilty about the nuts. With a DC 15 Intimidate or Diplomacy check, he will confess that he found the nuts the morning after the robbery and failed to tell Rencius. He will offer to share the nuts in exchange for silence.

- e. One of the horses left near Rencius' Stables by the thieves is lame. If the PCs examine the horse, a DC 20 Search check will reveal a small piece of black schist embedded deep in a crack in the animal's hoof. Rencius and his staff will be grateful for this discovery but they have no idea that the stone is uncommon. In the unlikely event that a PC has ranks in Knowledge (geology), identifying the stone requires a successful DC 15 check. However, any Argossean who has spent a considerable amount of time

in the wilderness can inform the PCs that such stones are found in stream beds in western Argos with a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check. Searching for streams in conjunction with the information gained from other clues should help the Player Characters locate the Falcon.

Optional Encounter:

Pinar

If the Games Master wishes to include an additional twist during the Player Characters' search for the Falcon, then Pinar may provide an interesting diversion. Pinar is an Ophirean temptress on a mission of vengeance. The young woman had been enjoying a life of luxury in Ophir: collecting gifts from admirers, delighting in the sumptuous comforts of her lovers' mansions and toying with men of power. Then she met Armando.

Armando Marron entered Pinar's life in a mundane way as a hired guard in the retinue of one of the temptress' admirers. The young Zingaran claimed to be an exiled rebel from his homeland and while he possessed no exceptional beauty, some indefinable aspect of the soldier captured her heart irrevocably. Pinar was disturbed by this turnabout; how could she have become a fawning admirer instead of the object of worship? Unfortunately for the Ophirean, Armando was well aware of the hold he had over his lover and exploited the situation mercilessly. The soldier launched a campaign of angry pressure balanced with piteous apology and contrition in an attempt to make his fortune. He wished to buy the nobility (or its trappings) that his commoner ancestry lacked and which he felt was his due. After several months the affair ended when Armando fled in the night with his paramour's valuables.

The flight of Armando was a costly blessing for Pinar, for time and distance have broken the hold the Zingaran had over her. Hatred now fills the heart that once loved the soldier and Pinar has used her wiles to trace him to Messantia. She

has also learned that Armando's new alias is Armand de Silva and that he has been seen in the company of young Zingaran noblemen. Unbeknownst to the Ophirean, 'Armand' now serves the Falcon as a hired blade. The Player Characters can meet Pinar in one of Messantia's taverns while they seek rumours of the Falcon, or they could encounter her in the wilderness on the trail of her former lover. Pinar will gladly aid any group whose purpose is to seek the Falcon, for she suspects a connection between Armand and the thief. If Pinar encounters Armand with the PCs, she will attempt to kill him if the opportunity arises. At the Games Master's discretion, Pinar could be required to make a Will save vs. a Bluff or Charisma check by Armand. Statistics for both are available in the Appendix.

If Pinar is encountered in the wilderness, she will be accompanied by the Argossian Bounty Hunter (Thief/Borderer) Onestio (see Appendix for stats), unless the PCs have him in their group. Otherwise, she will have an adoring off-duty Patrol officer with her at all times.

Optional Encounter:

Ghoul

This encounter could provide an extra challenge if the PCs' group is very large or higher level. As the group crosses the western Argossean wilderness en route to the Falcon's camp, they could become lost from unsuccessful tracking or a poorly-drawn map. If the Player Characters badly failed Survival or Gather Information checks in their efforts, for example, they could wander too close to the vast oak forests where Ghouls lurk, awaiting tasty human victims. At night one of these hideous creatures could venture forth in hunger. One Ghoul should be sufficiently formidable for beginning characters but the Games Master may wish to add more if the PCs are more powerful.

The Falcon's Camp

The Falcon's encampment consists of a group of tents in a clearing surrounded

by dense greenery near the Argos/Zingara border. Much of the fertile soil in the area has been taken over by thorny gorse bushes but a sparse growth of tall evergreen trees has gained a foothold as well. Most are the notorious pepperwood trees, which make excellent (if rank) firewood. From a distance the region appears as a blanket of yellow gorse flowers infrequently pierced by small copses of tall, green-needled trees.

The clearing has a large fireplace and roasting spit, a minimum of four tents and a horse for each person in the camp. The Falcon's group consists of Lord Dante de Respa (the Falcon), Armand de Silva, Rojelio Costa and additional Zingaran noblemen. For beginning PCs, the Games Master should include just one extra young nobleman but more can be added to challenge higher-level characters. Each member of the Falcon's retinue will have his own tent, so the Games Master should adjust the number accordingly. Statistics for the group are available in the Appendix.

Only Armand and Rojelio know the Falcon's identity and they will not reveal it unless doing so will spare their lives. As a pretender to nobility, Armand is deeply loyal to the Falcon; the soldier feels that his master's authentic rank bestows privilege and glory to any followers. Rojelio is the Falcon's outdoorsman, hunter and tracker, and his devotion is based on silver coins and a sense of professionalism. Any additional retainers at the site are hangers-on who have heard only that a fellow Zingaran nobleman has need of skilled blades in an honourable quest. These fledglings' overconfidence will betray them when they encounter serious danger; two have already fallen prey to the Great Boar.

The Falcon has great faith in his tracker's skills, so there is no regular patrol at the camp. However, a watch is set, so even at night at least one member of the group will be awake. Arrivals will be met with a confident challenge and if the guard perceives a threat, all will be quickly but quietly roused. If an attack seems imminent, the Falcon will challenge any who appear to be nobility to personal combat. He will

Hunting the Falcon

offer to surrender his group if defeated on the condition that his opponent's group will leave if their champion is unsuccessful. The Falcon's pride will not allow him to conceive of defeat, so if he is bested and survives, rage will overcome his sense of honour; his entire group will attack.

If the Falcon makes no personal challenge, he and his followers will defend themselves with steel. Attackers will notice that the Falcon's men are unnaturally quiet while fighting. If the number of assailants and defenders is even, the Falcon and his men will attempt to disarm their opponents, as they are quick to seize any opportunity to demonstrate their superior swordsmanship. If any are seriously wounded (greater than half of their Hit Points lost), rendered unconscious or killed, all of the defenders will fight to kill. Armand has devised a plan of escape to be used if the defenders are overwhelmed. If only two remain standing in the Falcon's group, they will flee down a narrow path through the gorse bushes to the Northwest. After 90 feet the survivors will reach a large pepperwood tree. They will attempt to climb the tree (DC 10 Climb check) and if they get the opportunity, they will stamp on the lowest three branches, which have been partially severed with Rojelio's axe. Without the lower branches, climbing the tree requires a DC 20 Climb check. After the Falcon's men break the branches they will climb higher for one round, gaining concealment and they will begin banging on a metal shield and large cooking pot tied to the tree's trunk. With this cacophony they hope to draw the attention of the Great Boar.

The Great Boar

Several years ago a large boar uncovered a peculiar object while rooting through the undergrowth near the clearing where the Falcon would later establish his camp. The beast's tusk caught on the edge of a green stone disc the size of a dinner plate etched with an ancient script. The totem was left when a coven of nature priests fled an approaching army centuries ago and

when uncovered the disc still possessed a vestige of the sorcerous power with which its creator infused it. When used with the proper ritual, the artefact enabled its possessor to heal the injuries of wild beasts and render them temporarily docile. However, prolonged exposure to the object without the rituals that controlled its power has dreadful side effects: the subjects of its power grow huge and suffer a raging madness. Because the hapless boar found excellent forage near the disc, it gradually grew larger and more aggressive before a chance blow from its plunging forefoot cracked the relic, rendering it forever inert. If the Player Characters search the area near the Falcon's camp, they will notice the object on a DC 15 Search check. It could fetch up to 200 silver pieces from a collector of antiquities.

The great boar's madness remains and it will attack anyone found in its territory. It ranges over several square miles just northwest of the Falcon's camp and the thief's men have discovered that the beast is attracted by noise. The boar killed two of his followers recently when the pair ventured north in search of kindling. The Falcon has considered moving his camp but Armand and Rojelio have convinced their master that if carefully handled, the huge animal could prove a valuable ally. The group maintains quiet in the camp and Rojelio leaves scraps for the beast well away from the camp. If anyone makes a noise equivalent to a loud shout, or if the Falcon's men bang on the shield and pot, there is a one in six chance of the boar crashing through the gorse within one to three rounds. The Games Master can repeat this check for each round in which such noise is made. Statistics for the great boar (taken from the *Conan Bestiary of the Hyborian Age* page 55) are available in the Appendix. Wise PCs will flee from this mighty creature. If the Games Master wishes to adjust the challenge of this encounter, he could use a normal boar instead (*Conan the Roleplaying Game* page 361) or include an additional great boar for increased difficulty.

Bringing Him In

All of the tents in the camp contain a bedroll, personal grooming items, clothing (including the retainers' preferred red leather) and a box of valuables for each follower. Each unlocked box contains 20–80 (2D4 x 10) silver coins. The Falcon's box is large, heavy and locked (DC 20) and contains 40 gold lunas and 100 silver coins. Under the coins is a dainty gold bracelet (worth 400 silver pieces) stolen from Cosimo that will provide the merchant with proof that the Player Characters have located the right man. A false bottom (DC 20 Search check) conceals the letter that the Falcon's mother intended to send to Cosimo. The thief plans to confront the Argossean with the letter before killing him. If the PCs find the letter, they will learn of Cosimo's extortion and understand why the Zingaran seeks blood.

If the Falcon survives the encounter with the PCs, he will not accompany them willingly. He will also initially refuse to divulge his reasons for targeting Cosimo's property. A successful DC 25 Diplomacy check or a successful Intimidate check against a d20 + 3 will cause the Falcon to reveal Cosimo's cruelty; he will produce the letter that is hidden in his strongbox. Only under threat of execution will the thief admit that Cosimo is his father if the PCs remain hostile. However, if the PCs offer to help the Falcon destroy Cosimo instead of completing their mission for the merchant, the Zingaran will reveal his parentage on a DC 25 Diplomacy check and he will offer a reward of 200 silver coins each for their assistance. He will also promise lifelong friendship from his powerful family and an open invitation to stay at the de Respa manor in Kordava. If the Player Characters ask for better payment, the Falcon will offer the latest treasure stolen from Cosimo: the jewelled mechanical dragon. The tiny dragon's wings were damaged in transport to the camp (DC 25 Craft (jewellery) to repair) but it will still easily fetch 500 silver coins. Once repaired, the item could fetch 10 times that price. The dragon is hidden in a 2-inch long, wool-wrapped box under

the saddlebow of the Falcon's horse (DC 20 Search check to find).

Conclusion: Return to Messantia

If the Player Characters intend to complete their mission for Cosimo, they will return to Messantia with a captive or corpse. At the merchant's estate the PCs will be received graciously and once again asked to wait for the master. If the Falcon is dead, two servants will come forth to bear the body away for Cosimo's later inspection. Once shown one of his stolen jewels or the live thief, the Argossean will honour the agreement and pay the characters as promised unless the Games Master wishes to provide an additional twist: Cosimo could decide to pay the PCs less than promised or nothing. If none of the group appears to be noble, or if all of them fail DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidation checks, their employer may decide that he can cheat them with impunity. If the check failures are close, he may offer half but otherwise he could offer nothing (perhaps claiming some trivial grievance against the characters' methods) and have his bodyguards eject the PCs. The characters could then consider the option of taking their payment by force.

The simpler option is to have Cosimo reward the group their full payment. If he is shown the letter hidden in the Falcon's strongbox, he will assume that the thief was hired by Madame de Respa (the Falcon's mother) to seek revenge. Once he seeks the Falcon, the merchant can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence check to recognise a slight resemblance between himself and the Zingaran. The PCs can also make this check to discover the facial similarity. The merchant will promise future employment for the PCs if they desire it and he will recommend them to House Anchises allies, providing a Reputation bonus of +1 as bounty hunters. He will also offer a few weeks' stay in his guest quarters. No matter how well-disposed Cosimo is towards the characters, he will warn them (with a kindly smile) that if they tell others of their findings concerning the Falcon, their lives will be forfeit.

If the PCs choose to side with the Falcon, then the Zingaran will ask for their aid in planning a raid on Cosimo's manor. The characters will have an opportunity to use stealth and guile to observe the estate and choose the best circumstances for a strike. The Games Master should remember to consider the response of the city Patrol (see Appendix) to a clumsy assault. If the Falcon succeeds in gaining lethal revenge, he will reward the Player Characters and offer emotional thanks for their part in restoring his family honour, revealing his true name to be Dante de Respa. If they wish, he will accompany them to his family manor in Kordava. This bestows a Reputation bonus of +1 as heroes. The Falcon will provide room and lavish board at his home for up to a month with a promise to receive future requests from the group favourably.

Appendix: Cast of Characters

Cosimo Galbo

7th level Argossean noble
Hit Dice: 7d8+14 (48 hp) DR –
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft.
Parry defence: 13
Dodge defence: 12
Base attack: +3
Attack: Poniard +5 (1d6/19-20x2/AP 1 plus poison – see description)
Special Qualities: Hyborian qualities, title, rank hath its privileges, wealthy, regional feature +2, social ability (smear others), lead by example +4, enhanced leadership +2
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +8
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 9, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 14
Skills: Appraise +10, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +7, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nobility) +3, Profession (sail) +3, Sense Motive +7, Use Rope +2
Feats: Diligent, Carouser, Negotiator, Persuasive
Reputation: 40 (Merchant Noble of Messantia)

Cosimo is a high-ranking Merchant Prince in Messantia's House Anchises. His excellent eye for precious stones and jewellery has led to riches and prominence in the city's aristocracy. His natural cheerfulness occasionally betrays him, as the fierce competition of Messantia's merchant houses calls for merciless struggle with any rival. Games Masters who own the *Messantia, City of Riches* boxed set may wish to assign Cosimo the Merchant Prince class. Cosimo avoids combat, relying on his personal bodyguard for defence. If he is unable to flee, Cosimo will use a poniard coated with the juice of an Apple of Derketa (*Conan the Roleplaying Game* page 279).

Tito and Drago (Cosimo's Bodyguards)

6th level Argossean soldier
Hit Dice: 6d10+18 (61 hp) DR 7
Initiative: +4
Speed: 25 ft.
Parry defence: 21
Dodge defence: 15
Base attack: +6
Melee: War sword +10/+5 (1d12/19-20x2/AP 3), heavy lance +9/+4 (1d10/x3/AP 3)
Ranged: Bossonian longbow +8/+3 (1d12/x3/AP 5)
Special Qualities: Hyborian qualities, formation combat (heavy cavalry), formation combat (heavy infantry)
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills: Balance +4, Gather Information +4, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Profession (sailor) +4, Ride +10, Search +6, Spot +10, Use Rope +4
Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Bossonian longbow), Mounted Combat, Spirited Charge, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (war sword)
Reputation: 10

Tito and Drago are Cosimo's personal bodyguards. As former royal guards of Messantia, they take pride in loyalty and service. Each wears a mail hauberk, breastplate and large shield and they are armed with war swords and Bossonian longbows with a quiver of 20 arrows. A

Hunting the Falcon

blue tunic with House Anchises' device of an eagle clutching three gold rings covers the guards' armour. Drago keeps an alert whistle on a cord around his neck and being the more outgoing Drago does the talking for the two.

Messantian City Patrol, Cosimo's Estate Guards

2nd level Argossean soldier

Hit Dice: 2d10+2 (15 hp) DR 4

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

Parry defence: 13

Dodge defence: 11

Base attack: +6

Melee: Broadsword +3 (1d10+2/19-20x2/AP 3), poniard +2 (1d6+2/19-20x2/AP 1)

Ranged: –

Special Qualities: Hyborian qualities

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Balance +2, Gather Information +1, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Profession (sailor) +2, Use Rope +2

Feats: Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (broadsword)

Reputation: 2

Whether they are on duty in Messantia or working off-duty at Cosimo's estate, the Patrol guards wear leather jerkins and caps. They enforce their employer's will with broadswords and poniards and each carries a set of manacles and a whistle as well. At night, each man carries a torch. When working for Cosimo, the soldiers wear the livery of House Anchises.

Onesto, Bounty Hunter

1st level Argossean thief / 1st level Argossean borderer

Hit Dice: 1d10+1d8-2 (14 hp) DR 5

Initiative: +7

Speed: 30 ft.

Parry defence: 9

Dodge defence: 13

Base attack: +1

Melee: Arming sword +4 (finesse) (1d10-1/19-20x2/AP 2)

Ranged: Hunting bow +4 (1d8/x2/AP 1)

Special Qualities: Hyborian qualities, trapfinding, favoured terrain (forest), sneak attack +2d6/2d8 (with Lightfooted)

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 9

Skills: Appraise +4, Balance +7, Craft (herbalism) +6, Disable Device +6, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +6, Hide +6, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Profession (sailor) +8, Ride +5, Search +7, Spot +8, Survival +8, Use Rope +9

Feats: Lightfooted, Track, Two Weapon

Reputation: 1

Onestio grew up expecting to adopt the life at sea common to his countrymen but after a year aboard ship he wearied of the floating. After a bit of thieving the Argossean missed the forest that had enchanted him as a child, so he sought work as a tracker and bounty hunter. Despite his youth, the 22-year old carries an air of cunning confidence. His possessions include a leather jerkin, steel cap, arming sword, net (not used in combat), hunting bow, quiver of 20 arrows and thieves' tools.

Kondo, the Boar's Bane

1st level Pygmy soldier

Hit Dice: 1d10+1 (11 hp) DR 4

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft.

Parry defence: 12

Dodge defence: 14

Base attack: +1

Melee: Short sword +4 (finesse, in left hand) (1d8+2/19-20x2/AP 1), dagger +4 (finesse, in right hand) (1d4+2/19-20x2/AP 1)

Ranged: Crossbow +4 (2d6 (+1 at point blank range)/x2/AP 4)

Special Qualities: None

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 13

Skills: Gather Information +5, Handle Animal +3, Hide +6, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +3, Profession (gladiator) +3, Tumble +9

Feats: Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Two Weapon

Reputation: 5

Captured by slavers as a small child, the pygmy Kondo remembers nothing of his life in the Black Kingdoms except his name. When the Messantian nobleman Brassus Arno noticed the quick reflexes and surprising strength of his diminutive teenage house slave, Kondo's fortunes changed; he entered training in the city's gladiatorial arena. Pitted against wild boars for the amusement of the crowd, the pygmy stunned the audience by executing a tumbling leap onto the back of one of the charging beasts. From this precarious position he killed the remaining boars, leaped to the ground and finished off his mount. An onlooker began the chant of 'Boar's Bane!' and the entire throng took up the cry. After several such bouts Brassus Arno freed the slave at the request of a new lover. Kondo is high-spirited, with a ready laugh and surprisingly deep voice. His possessions are a leather jerkin, leather cap, crossbow, a quiver of 25 bolts, short sword and dagger. He favours bright clothing. In melee combat he fights with a short sword in his left hand and a dagger in his right.

Pinar

2nd level Ophirean temptress

Hit Dice: 2d6 (10 hp) DR 3

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft.

Parry defence: 9

Dodge defence: 12

Base attack: +1

Melee: Stiletto +2 (finesse) (1d4-1/x4/AP 1)

Ranged: –

Special Qualities: Hyborian qualities, comeliness, savoir-faire, seductive art, compelling performance

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +5

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +11, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (rumours) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Perform (dance) +10, Ride +5, Sense Motive +8, Spot +6

Feats: Carouser, Persuasive

Reputation: 5

Pinar has left the comforts and familiarity of Ophir to search for the lover who dared spurn her. She will avoid combat if possible, relying on companions for protection. She is a striking, black-haired young woman of medium height. Her possessions include a superior quality quilted jerkin (worn while travelling), a stiletto, jewellery worth 200 sp and beautiful, revealing garments of blue silk.

Aramand de Silva (Armando Marron), the Falcon's hired sword

2nd level Zingaran soldier / 1st level Zingaran noble
 Hit Dice: 2d10+1d8+2 (22 hp) DR 5
 Initiative: +3
 Speed: 30 ft.
 Parry defence: 11
 Dodge defence: 15
 Base attack: +2
 Melee: Arming sword +7 (finesse, weapon focus, race) (1d10/19-20x2/AP 2)
 Ranged: Crossbow +5 (2d6/x2/AP 4)
 Special Qualities: Zingaran qualities, title, rank hath its privileges, wealthy
 Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2
 Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15
 Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +9, Knowledge (local) +3, Perform (act) +8, Ride +5, Use Rope +5
 Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Persuasive, Weapon Focus (arming sword)
 Reputation: 5

Armand is fop: his nobility is a pretence. After serving as a soldier in Zingara's civil war, he travelled to other lands seeking the fortune that he hoped could lift his status. In the Falcon he recognises the true nobility he craves. His elegant, lightweight, red leather clothing is partially covered by a mail shirt and in combat he wields his arming sword with style. His possessions are a mail shirt, an arming sword, a crossbow with a quiver of 20 bolts and a red leather outfit.

Rojelio Costa, the Falcon's tracker and outdoorsman

2nd level Zingaran borderer
 Hit Dice: 3d10+3 (25 hp) DR 5
 Initiative: +11
 Speed: 30 ft.
 Parry defence: 11
 Dodge defence: 15
 Base attack: +3
 Melee: Axe +7 (finesse, right hand) (1d8/x3/AP 1), Whip (finesse, left hand) (1d4/x2/AP –)
 Ranged: –
 Special Qualities: Zingaran qualities, favoured terrain (hills), combat style (two weapon)
 Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +3
 Abilities: Str 10, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 9
 Skills: Balance +6, Climb +2, Craft (herbalism) +3, Handle Animal +1, Hide +7, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Listen +9, Profession (sailor) +4, Ride +7, Search +7, Spot +9, Survival +7, Swim +2, Use Rope +7
 Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Exotic weapon Proficiency (whip), Improved Initiative, Track, Two Weapon, Two Weapon Defence
 Reputation: 2

The Falcon's trusted outdoorsman and tracker is Rojelio Costa. Rojelio is the one member of the Falcon's retinue with no interest in nobility. Payment in coin is all he desires from his service. He does not wear the red leather of the rest of the Falcon's men and Rojelio's mail shirt covers drab clothing in green and grey. In combat he uses a whip to trip or disarm foes before bringing his axe to bear in the other hand. His possessions include a mail shirt, axe, whip, several small animal traps, a coil of hemp rope and a rough turquoise pendant worth 40 sp.

The Falcon (Lord Dante de Respa)

3rd level Zingaran noble
 Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (21 HP) DR 4
 Initiative: +3
 Speed: 30 ft.
 Parry defence: 13
 Dodge defence: 13
 Base attack: +2
 Melee: Arming sword +6 (Weapon Panache*) (1d10+1/19-20x2/AP 4)
 Ranged: –
 Special Qualities: Zingaran qualities, title, rank hath its privileges, wealthy, regional feature +1, plus see description
 Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3
 Abilities: Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 17
 Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +7, Handle Animal +5, Hide +4, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (fencing: Zingaran school) +11, Listen +2, Ride +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +2, Use Rope +3
 Feats: Skill Focus (Knowledge (fencing: Zingaran school)), Weapon Panache (arming sword).
 Reputation: 10

Lord Dante de Respa is on a mission of vengeance against Cosimo Galbo. As the Falcon, he has bled his victim's coffers for many weeks and intends to end his quest with a fatal stroke. The Falcon has trained in one of the finest fencing schools in Kordava. The Weapon Panache feat is taken from the *Argos and Zingara* book and it allows the Charisma modifier to be used with attacks instead of the Strength mod. If the Games Master does not wish to use this feat, he can substitute Weapon Focus (arming sword), which will give the same attack bonus. The Falcon will be more deadly if the Games Master also includes

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some options from the Knowledge (fencing: Zingaran school) skill. With his total skill mod of 11, the Falcon could be given the bonuses Improved Disarm, Intricate Swordplay and Move Away from the Attack. Improved Disarm allows the character to use the Improved Disarm feat without the prerequisites with a successful DC 18 Knowledge (fencing: Zingaran school) check, made as a free action. With Intricate Swordplay, the character can use the Intricate Swordplay feat without the prerequisites with a successful DC 22 Knowledge (fencing: Zingaran school) check, made as a free action. Move Away From the Attack lets the character defend against critical hits; by making a Knowledge (fencing: Zingaran school) check against a DC set by the critical confirmation roll, the defender reduces a critical to normal damage. These bonuses should provide a greater challenge to the Player Characters.

In combat the Falcon relies on his superior quality red leather jerkin and 'Navaja', an heirloom Akbitanian arming sword. He typically attempts to disarm single opponents and enjoys humiliating them with his superior skills. Once wounded or when facing multiple enemies he strikes to kill.

Zingaran Nobleman (Followers of the Falcon)

1st level Zingaran noble
Hit Dice: 1d8 (8 HP) DR 4
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Parry defence: 10
Dodge defence: 12
Base attack: +0
Melee: Arming sword +4 (finesse, weapon focus, race) (1d10/19-20x2/AP 2)
Ranged: –
Special Qualities: Zingaran qualities, title, rank hath its privileges, wealthy
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +2
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14
Skills: Appraise +3, Balance +4, Bluff +6, Diplomacy +1, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Ride +6, Spot +2, Use Rope +4
Feats: Weapon Focus (arming sword)
Reputation: 3

It may be said that these young nobles who follow the Falcon have more silver than sense. These men were students at the same fencing school as the Falcon. Their awe at his skill and flair led them to readily accept his offer of adventure. The retainers receive modest pay from the Falcon but do not begrudge helping another of noble blood for little tangible reward. All are outfitted in red leather jerkins and arming swords. Despite their youth and seeming naïveté, they will fight to the death.

The Great Boar

Large Animal
Climate/Terrain: Temperate and warm forest
Organisation: Solitary, or hunting herd (5–8)
Initiative: +5
Senses: Listen +8, Spot +8, low-light vision, scent
Languages: –

Dodge Defence: 13
Hit Points: 52 (7 HD); DR 4
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +3

Speed: 40 ft.
Space: 10 ft.; Reach: 5 ft.
Melee: Gore +12 (1d8+8, AP 5)
Base Atk +5; Grp +17

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8
Special Qualities: Ferocity
Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will
Skills: Survival +11
Possessions: –
Advancement: 8–16 HD (Large), 17–21 HD (Huge)

This massive boar is larger than a stout bull and will aggressively defend its territory northwest of the Falcon's camp. Its ferocity allows it to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

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By Nick Robinson

On Patrol

You are riding past Coogan's Umpty Store on Took Avenue when you notice a citizen acting very strangely. Well, more strangely than normal. He is dressed in what appears to be a frog suit, hopping along in front of the store. There are occasional odd looks in his direction from the passing citizens but for the most part the locals are unimpressed, having seen many stranger things in the past.

On Closer Examination

A successful Street Perception Skill Test will allow the judge to spot that the man in the frog suit is hopping along, deliberately avoiding the cracks between the ped-way slabs. The suit is green and red.

The Truth

The man is a sugar pusher, preying on the customers of Coogan's who enjoy umpty and offering them something stronger.

The Act

Jeremiah Boggs pretends to be a harmless eccentric. He has no record and if checked, lives on his own nearby in Jerry Springer block, having a small apartment there. The judges might think a spell in the kook cubes might be appropriate but Jerry is not insane. If confronted about his behaviour he will reply 'I like to wear my frog suit, judge. It is just my hobby and nothing weirder than Batgliding. Ribbit.'

Search and Arrest

Technically, Boggs is guilty of loitering and can be charged with this immediately, if the judges so wish. They can also strip search the man, at which point he will cry out 'This is discrimination. You wouldn't be doing this to a bat!'

It is unlikely that Jeremiah's assertion will halt the search but he knows it is his only chance to avoid one. Once the search is conducted the judges will find dozens of small packets of sugar (called 'Tates' on the street), the stuff Boggs is peddling. He is

a non-violent perp and will not offer any resistance, co-operating in any way the judges request (he does not want to make things worse for himself, believing if the judges have found out what he is doing they will discover anything else once they set their mind to it).

In his apartment in Springer there is a significant haul of sugar – almost 50 kilos of the stuff. Jeremiah bought it from a Pan-Andes dealer who came to the city several weeks ago. He has been selling the sugar since then to pay off the costs he incurred (and to help fund his own sugar habit). The dealer has long since returned home to the (corrupt judge) protection it affords and Jeremiah only knew him by his first name – Oswaldo.

Although there has been a surge in sugar possession arrests in the sector Boggs is not the cause of this, although he has been profiting from it.

Jeremiah Boggs

A sugar addict for years Jeremiah has been able to avoid detection until now. With the large amount of sugar he has just purchased he was beginning to work his way up the criminal ladder.

Str 6 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Skills: Mega City Geography 1, Streetwise 3

Equipment: 37 'Tates', frog suit

Armour: None

Desperation: +4



Dim and Dimmer



By Nick Robinson

Control

++Item++

++Disturbance.Citizen reports disturbance on Bland Alley, off Gleebe Street. Units in vicinity respond.++

The Situation

Two large men wearing flesh masks and brandishing stump guns are banging on the side doors of the Natcit Bank branch located on Gleebe and are shouting their demands to be let in. They appear to be having no luck, unsurprising as the bank has closed for the day over an hour ago.

'Aw heck. Come on, open up, we's only wanna make a big deposit, don' we Irvin'

'Yesiree Jed! That's what we has come to do – so let us in boys!'

The Action

When the judges make their presence known/are seen by the perps:

'Gruddammit, it's the law! Let's get our tails outta here Jed!'

At which point the two would be robbers try to escape down the maze of alleyways in the area. They will put up serious resistance and shoot it out with the judges but one should surrender allowing the judges to find out what is going on here. The perps are both tough and stupid.

What and Why?

The two perps are new arrivals, having just flown in from Texas City. They have come to Mega-City One for the express purpose of robbing a bank and then planned to catch a return flight before the law could catch up with them. This is a good idea in theory but neither have taken into account the time zone difference and as a result

have arrived after the bank has closed and are desperately trying to gain entry to the building. They still carry their return tickets.

Perp Roster

Jed Bellows

Jed came up with the idea of robbing places and people outside of his native Texas City several years back. Mostly picking on small towns and mutant settlements in the Texas City Badlands when Irvin suggested there would be richer pickings in Mega-City One, Jed immediately rushed out and bought them both tickets.

Str 8 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 5 (–1), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Skills: Drive (wheeled) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1

Equipment: Hand Cannon, Mask

Armour: Shell Jacket

Desperation: –4

Irvin Mervin

Irvin normally follows Jed's lead, after all everything he knows about robbing he learnt from Jed. He feels very proud today, for it is the first time Jed has agreed with one of his ideas. Maybe if this continues he will start his own gang one day.

Str 8 (+0), Dex 10 (+1), End 10 (+1), Int 4 (–1), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)

Skills: Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Streetwise 1

Equipment: Spit Pistol, Mask

Armour: Shell Jacket

Desperation: –4



Food for Thought

By Nick Robinson

On Patrol

You are patrolling the main plaza outside of Clarence Thomas Block where several small stalls set out their wares for prospective buyers. Most of the stalls have few interested customers but one appears to be doing a thriving trade. It is virtually besieged by a small crowd of shoppers and there is some pushing and shoving going on. A small, dumpy black woman in her forties is trying to keep her customers calm and appears to be failing but she is managing to carry out a brisk trade.

The Stall

There are some 20 shoppers pushing towards the stall where a hand written banner 'Tinned Meat Stew – 15 creds per tin' proudly announces the product. The tins themselves are unlabelled and there are perhaps two dozen of them left on the stall, the small stock is probably causing the commotion. The vendor is limiting customers to two tins each, which is causing some arguments, with the ones in the back fearing they will not be able to buy any since there will not be enough to go around and the ones at the front wanting to purchase more.

Depending on how the Judges approach the stall they may have to deal with several unhappy citizens. It is unlikely they will need to resort to violence but in case a riot ensues use the following statistics.

Impatient Customers

Str 7 (+0), Dex 7 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Skills: Melee (unarmed or bludgeon) 0

Equipment: Bags of shopping, small change, possibly tins of meat

Armour: None

Desperation: +1

The Tins

These are cheap affairs which appear to have been sealed in a less than professional manner, probably a small time producer.

If shaken: The tins contain some sort of liquid.

If opened: Inside the tin is some sort of meat stewed to a greyish colour.

If tested: There is no dangerous bacterium. A proper analysis (requiring at least 20 minutes and decent equipment) will be able to reveal the ingredients but this would not be possible without returning a can to the sector house. Mobile tech teams do not carry equipment calibrated to the degree necessary for ingredient breakdown.

Crimes?: The cans have no labels or best before dates. As such they are breaking a couple of health codes as well as consumer law. Six months total should be appropriate.

The Woman

Lorna Brown is a resident of nearby Clarence Thomas, apartment 127dx. She has a minor criminal record, sparechanging and operating a stall without a license. She does not particularly like judges but will co-operate the best she can as she is aware that they have all the power in this situation and holding out would only make matters worse.

If questioned she reveals the stew is purchased from one Mickey Bourne, a fellow resident of Thomas and a drinking companion. He charges her 12.5 credits per tin, which she then sells on. Her income is declared and she does have a license for her stall.

Lorna Brown

Str 5 (–1), Dex 5 (–1), End 6 (+0), Int 6 (+0), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 5 (–1)

Skills: Deception 1, Gambling 1, Streetwise 1

Equipment: Tins of unidentified meat, 216 credits

Armour: None

Desperation: +4

Mickey Bourne

Resident of apartment 52cg of Clarence Thomas. Lived in the sector all his life and has a long history of petty convictions, mostly stemming from his alcoholism. Offences range from sparechanging, public

health violations, petty theft and drunk and disorderly. There are no outstanding warrants for this citizen.

Tech Report on Tin Ingredients

Once the results are in the techs will immediately contact the judges as the stew is made from human remains, they should immediately discover the source of the food and arrest whoever was responsible.

Tech Winstone here. Just had the results through on the stew you sent to me to analyse. Thought you should know the main ingredient is people. From the DNA recoverable in the stew I think there are at least two bodies which have been prepared. Other ingredients are a mixed bunch, nothing illegal and pretty much irrelevant from here on in.

Mickey Bourne's Apartment

The Judges should look to investigate Mickey Bourne's apartment. When they do they will uncover heinous activity as Bourne and his two lowlife associates prepare the next batch of tins to sell to Lorna.

The apartment is a mess and the smell of cooking food pervades the entire level (to the annoyance of other residents). Mickey is busily stirring a large pot of stew being boiled on top of his stove. His friend Josh Wiles is ladling out a cooled, earlier batch into empty tins whilst Dedrick Dewson is butchering a pair of victims, two past drinking associates of the duo. The three are not smart and will resist arrest.

The Perps

Mickey Bourne

Once a pretty good short order cook Mickey was replaced with a robot years ago and began his decent into alcoholism from that point. Recently things have taken a definite turn for the worse...

Str 8 (+0), Dex 5 (-1), End 6 (+0), Int 5 (-1), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 5 (-1)

Skills: Deception 1, Melee (blade) 1, Streetwise 1, Trade (chef) 1

Equipment: Tins of meat, bottle of munskey, dagger

Armour: None

Desperation: -3

Josh Wiles

A recent drinking buddy of Mickey and the 'genius' who came up with the scam. Josh has had continual run-ins with the law over the years and is a well known down and out amongst the local Judges.

Str 7 (+0), Dex 6 (+0), End 9 (+1), Int 4 (-1), Edu 5 (-1), Soc 5 (-1)

Skills: Melee (blade) 0, Streetwise 2

Equipment: Tins of meat, 84 credits, dagger

Armour: None

Desperation: -3

Dedrick Dawson

Dedrick always has been a vicious drunk and dumb with it. He likes what he is now doing and no judge will stop him.

Str 8 (+0), Dex 6 (+0), End 11 (+1), Int 3 (-1), Edu 4 (-1), Soc 5 (-1)

Skills: Melee (blade) 2, Streetwise 1

Equipment: Cleaver (treat as cutlass)

Armour: None

Desperation: -6

Mickey and Josh will surrender once it becomes clear they are outmatched and if one of the others has been taken out (either killed or knocked unconscious). Dedrick is pretty much a subhuman who is too dumb to give up.

Aftermath

Lorna Brown can be charged with some extra crimes if the judges come up with anything relevant. However, she was unaware of the contents of the tins, believing them to be stewed rat (which is not a good thing either).

Personal effects in Bourne's apartment will clear up a dozen missing person cases and will also identify at least the same number of additional victims who Justice Department were unaware had disappeared. The victims, on the whole, were an unmissed bunch, consisting of other drunks and down and outs.

A Friend in Need

Patrons for Traveller

By August Hahn

The galaxy is really big. There are hundreds upon thousands of known worlds, many of them explored to some degree or other. From balls of rock to gas giants, corporate colonies to toxic jungle worlds, they all have one thing in common. No matter where people go they always have needs. Some are small and easily handled. For the bigger tasks a helping hand is sometimes required. Need and conflict are the driving forces behind adventure. Conflict creates itself once players get involved.

Need is what patrons are for. A patron is anyone or anything with a direct need and the means to both communicate that desire to others and a way to reward them for the task's completion. This can be as simple as a gourmand ordering a meal and paying for it or as complex as a distraught noble hiring freelance operatives to infiltrate a war zone and rescue his captured son from an enemy stronghold. Patrons provide both the source of an adventure and the benefit for undertaking it.

This article series presents a pair of patrons each issue, providing all the background needed to incorporate them into an existing campaign and the details required to use them in several different ways. Patrons may not always be forthright or even honest in their dealings with players but in every case they serve to get the ball rolling on a memorable adventure!

Hlyueiwdfer, Aslan Negotiator

Requires: Diplomacy, Persuade, Gun Combat, Spaceship

Rewards: Cr. 10,000 plus open purchasing access to Aslan goods.

Player's Information: Hlyueiwdfer is a big cat in big trouble. As a trader for Khtularoihowa, he has been empowered by his company to trade with humans along many of the border worlds. For years he has

done so quite successfully and many of the bargains that have netted Khtularoihowa ownership of entire worlds can be laid at his feet like trophies of economic honour.

His influence has grown with his financial holdings, allowing him to range his goods farther afield and that is how he has gotten into his current predicament. While all of his shipment caravans are armed and escorted, the increase in his business has forced him to thin down the number of ships per convoy in order to keep up with demand. As powerful as he is, it never occurred to Hlyueiwdfer that anyone would be bold enough to attack trader ships bearing his great seal.

Obviously he was mistaken. Now he has been given a ransom demand for one of his convoys and its goods. He can either pay it or doom both goods and crew to the vacuum of space. He is hoping there might be a third option.

Referee's Information: Unfortunately, with great success comes great pride. Though the company made a literal and figurative killing off the Border Wars, there are soldiers in that part of space that survived the conflict and have never forgotten the manipulations of the Aslan. The Forgotten have been laying low, rebuilding their forces and waiting for the day when they could strike back against the corporation in any way they can.

That way came recently when one of their outrunners spotted a small merchant caravan with hull markings they recognised. They moved in fast, a small armada against one convoy. The pilots of the outmatched merchant group surrendered and were taken hostage. It was a good first strike but the rebels want more. The ransom demand is just the next step in a much larger plan.

1. The Forgotten have no intention of returning anything or keeping their word. Why would they have any honour in dealing with backstabbing Aslan and their pawns when they were betrayed so often in the past? If the players come to the space station meeting in good faith, they will find an ambush waiting for them and a blockade if they try to leave.

2. Though the Forgotten are furious and want revenge, they have a few pragmatists in their leadership. Those cooler heads know that a war cannot be waged without resources. The ransom demand is a genuine one but it is also a test. If Hlyueiwdfer submits this once, the Forgotten will see it as a sign that the entire Khtularoihowa megacorporation is weak and can be bullied into financing the coming rebellion. Whether they are right or not, paying this ransom will set off waves of brutal piracy in the region for months to come.

3. The attack was legitimate as is the ransom demand but there is a further complication. The Forgotten in charge of the assault are working as a rogue unit without the support of their leaders. They think that coming back with the payoff will be a great coup but the head of the Forgotten will not take kindly to it. Afraid their actions will bring down Aslan wrath upon them, the rebel leaders will have no choice but start their war early.

4. The Forgotten are nowhere near as large as they are trying to pretend. The 'armada' that intimidated the convoy into surrendering is mostly derelicts with skeleton crews and a few ships in good shape up front for appearances. This ransom demand is not the first action of a prepared army but a desperate attempt to start building one.

5. While the Forgotten exist as a rebel organisation, they are not behind the piracy. One of the planetary lords in the Border Worlds has learned about them and chosen this as a covert way to strike at them while they are still forming. Unless his deception is discovered, the Aslan will move against the blameless rebels and he will have secured his world without taking any personal risks. A nice profit from the ransom exchange just sweetens the deal.

6. There is no Forgotten. The entire situation is a set up by Hlyueiwdferr, a bid to finally be free of his parent corporation. He intends to do this several times, luring private groups to their doom and taking their goods to add to his own. When he has enough, Hlyueiwdferr will break away from the company and go into business for himself.

Klizhzariepr, Zhodani Intendant

Requires: Computer, Investigate, Stealth or Deception, Streetwise

Rewards: Cr. 1,000/day (limit of three days) plus Zhodani Contact

Player's Information: The Zhodani rarely ask anyone for help. When they do it behoves those with a taste for adventure and profit to listen. Klizhzariepr has a reputation for open mindedness and generous pay when he must contract for aid. These facts have quickly led him to become one of the most notable ambassadors for his people. When he speaks, people listen. When he makes a job offer, people leap at the chance.

This mission is a case of serendipity, of being in the right place at the right time. According to the handsome, swarthy psychic, there is a stolen item in another city on this world that he needs retrieved. He has a few details about the thief but no time to see to its recovery himself. He needs this done surreptitiously and

quickly, so much so he is willing to pay a cr. 5,000 bonus if the matter is handled in two days or less. All travel expenses will be covered as well.

Referee's Information: Klizhzariepr is on the level and making an honest offer. The item he needs returned is a small metal case roughly the size of a clenched human fist, cold to the touch. The case is atmospherically sealed and needs to be returned to him still sealed. A sensor in the box revealed that it has not been opened yet and if it is, the mission is failed and the only payment will be cr. 500 to cover the time spent tracking it down.

1. The thieves, city toughs working for a local crime lord, had no idea what they were lifting from that transport. The only reason they have not opened the box yet is because they cannot pop its telekinetic lock. The mission is a race against time between the players trying to locate the thieves and the thieves trying to find a metalworker with a laser cutting torch.

2. When the box was taken from its special container, a countdown was started inside it. Klizhzariepr has to have the box in hand so he can send a telepathic code word to disarm the small explosive inside. If he does not do so the box will probably survive the detonation but the sensitive materials inside will not. The diplomat will warn the players about this possibility, not wanting to expose them to danger without at least informing them of it.

3. As for the previous option, there is an explosive in the box but two key things are different. One, Klizhzariepr does not know it is any threat at all and so does not warn the players. Two, the device is not a small one. If it detonates, it will inflict as much damage as a charge of TDX. This will, of

course, be a serious diplomatic incident if it occurs in a populated area so both the ambassador and the players have a vested interest in finding the box fast.

4. The box contains a set of biological solutions in small, refrigerated vials. These vials are strains of enhanced human DNA with psionic markers, the result of a secret project between the Zhodani Consulate and Hiver scientists. Though the Consulate paid for the project in full, the Hiver involved in the research feel they should be entitled to more and arranged for the theft. When the human thieves are tracked down, Hiver soldiers will be lying in wait.

5. The box is a diversion, a ruse by enemies of the Zhodani in an attempt to get the ambassador to send away some of his entourage to retrieve it. The would-be assassins want to thin down their opposition and when Klizhzariepr sends freelancers instead, the plan changes. Almost as soon as they begin the mission, the players are dogged by agents looking to take them out fast so the ambassador will have to send his own men.

6. Klizhzariepr is a very honest man and would never do anything to compromise or betray the trust of those who work for him. Unfortunately, the man offering the job is not Klizhzariepr. He is actually a psychic agent named Echo, a telepath skilled in mental mimicry and disguise and the real ambassador is being held captive nearby. Retrieving the box is a legitimate mission and the freelancers will get paid but once 'Klizhzariepr' has it, he leaves the planet and takes it to his employers. Finding the ambassador and freeing him could be the start of a whole new adventure.

Treacherous Tomes

Corrupted knowledge degrades the mind

By Maurice de Mare

Knowledge is power, but like power, knowledge corrupts. Dilemmas, haunting descriptions and even dementia lurk patiently between the pages of disreputable tomes, waiting to strike at inquisitive minds. These threats take the form of mental disorders.

Mental disorders

When a character exposes himself to a corrupted source of knowledge, by reading its contents, he must make a saving throw. If he succeeds, the mental disorder fails to take hold. If he fails, he takes damage after a processing period. Once per day afterward, he must make a successful saving throw to avoid repeated damage. Two successful saving throws in a row indicate that he has fought off the mental disorder and regained his composure, taking no more damage.

All mental disorders are extraordinary in nature.

Initial DC: the DC of the check or save to prevent the mental disorder from taking hold on the reader's mind.

Processing period: the time before damage begins.

Damage: details of what effect the mental disorder has on the reader.

Regain Composure: what it takes to recover from a mental disorder.

Doubt, the knowledge worm

Books are wonderful, educative tools but not every volume is a boon. Some knowledge can destroy an untried mind,

challenging it so, that uncertainty about, and eventual rejection of all, previous instruction on the subject is the only outcome. Such an accursed volume is tainted with doubt, the knowledge worm.

Doubt, the knowledge worm [Mind-Affecting]

Initial DC: Knowledge (field of study) check DC 15+.

Processing period: 4 days minus Intelligence modifier.

Damage: -1 penalty on all Knowledge (field of study) checks, the penalty is cumulative. Maximum penalty is equal to number of ranks in the affected Knowledge skill.

Regain composure: Succeed on two consecutive Knowledge checks with a DC equal to the initial DC.

Special: Anyone who suffers from doubt can hire a more experienced mentor (someone with more ranks in the subject than the PC) to reeducate him on a particular subject. The PC can use the mentor's Knowledge check results if they are higher to regain his composure.

Horror

Illuminations and evocative descriptions can instill haunting visions in a reader. Exposure to horror is worse. The tainted knowledge buries itself in the mind of the reader, always occupying his idle thoughts and, while asleep, he experiences vivid nightmares that leave him fatigued.

Horror [Fear, Mind-Affecting]

Initial DC: DC 18 Will save.

Processing period: 2 days minus Intelligence modifier.

Damage: the subject starts to suffer from night terrors: a sleeping character wakes after a few (1d4+1) hours of sleep, usually screaming in terror. Pulse and breathing are rapid, pupils are dilated and hair stands on end. The character is confused and hard to calm down. Night terrors are similar to ordinary nightmares but much more intense and disruptive. The night terrors leave the subject fatigued and unable to regain arcane spells for the next 24 hours.

Regain composure: Succeed on two consecutive DC 18 Will saves.

Special: the mind slowly adjusts to horror. Every month the DC of the Will save decreases by one.

Madness

Scribbling quill strokes translate the voices from beyond and thoughts from beneath the waves into words, providing insight into an alien mindset and their tainted knowledge. For some this insight proves a burden they cannot bear, they spiral into madness and are lost to, and oblivious of, the world.

Madness [Mind-Affecting]

Initial DC: DC 13 Wisdom check.

Processing period: 7 days minus Intelligence modifier.

Damage: The character gains a Madness score equal to half his or her class level. For all purposes, such as skills and saves, use Wisdom minus Madness in place of Wisdom.

Once per day, the character can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Use the character's Madness score as a positive rather than a negative modifier on a single

roll involving Wisdom. Choose to use this power before the roll is made.

Regain composure: Succeed on two consecutive DC 13 Wisdom checks.

Special: clerics with access to the Madness domain are not affected by this mental disorder.

Magical treatment

Magic is often used to restore victims of mental disorders back to their former selves. *Greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* can be used to cure a victim of a mental disorder. *Modify memory* is used to cure a victim of horror and a modified *mnemonic enhancer* cures a victim of doubt, the knowledge worm.

Codices of Corruption

The Art's Ebb and Flow

Description: 512 pages of high quality vellum are bound together, producing a sturdy tome. A thick leather cover completes the book.

Content: the book describes eight-school theory as understood by mages of a previous era. It prescribes which schools of magic are to be ignored when one specialises in a school of magic, for example: a diviner should not use the conjuration school. The book explores the reasons for these strict guidelines: certain schools strengthen each other while others cancel each other out. This is the ebb and flow of magic.

Disorder: Doubt, the knowledge worm, Knowledge (arcana) DC 18 check saves.

Knowledge (forbidden lore) ranks gained: 1.

Special: careful study of the tome allows the reader to gain access to the Specialised Negation feat.

Value: 100 gp.

Specialised Negation [general]

Prerequisites

Must be able to cast 2nd level spells.

Benefit

When counterspelling, you may use a spell of an opposing school to counter a spell. The counterspell must be of a higher or equal level. Schools oppose each other as follows: Abjuration-Alteration, Illusion-Necromancy, Enchantment-Evocation and Conjunction-Divination.

Normal

Without this feat, you may counter a spell only with the same spell or with a spell specifically designated as countering the target spell.

The Scroll of Nah-Kitir

Description: 39 papyrus pages are attached to two darkwood rollers.

Content: the scroll documents the meticulous investigation of Nah-Kitir, an infamous necromancer, into the subject of necromancy. Detailed descriptions of the vivisection of halflings, dwarves and gnomes, accompanied with sketches by Nah-Kitir's hand, make this a prized asset to any necromancer's library.

Disorder: Horror.

Knowledge (forbidden lore) ranks gained: 2.

Special: the scrolls hold the secret of creating onyx skeletons.

Value: 500 gp.

Onyx Skeleton

Submerging an unanimated skeleton in an alchemical bath, critical ingredients are shadowstuff and black bile, for 11 days and then animating it, results in the creation of an onyx skeleton, so named because the skeleton's bones take on a dark hue. An onyx skeleton is extremely flexible, its reach increases by 5 feet. It loses damage reduction 5/bludgeoning but gains damage reduction 3/-. CR increases by one.

The Luminous Path to the Boundless Self

Description: an unadorned chapbook of 64 pages. On the inside of the front cover, a small sheet of polished brass serves as a murky mirror.

Content: the chapbook details several mind expansion techniques and meditative positions.

The techniques and positions are used in the pursuit of the luminous state of the boundless self, when the mind understands all.

Disorder: Madness.

Knowledge (forbidden lore) ranks gained: 1.

Special: a popular technique is the veil-piercing trance.

Value: 25 gp.

Veil-piercing trance (Ex)

Your focused mind rends apart the walls of common understanding and seeks an answer beyond that boundary. You gain a +5 insight bonus on the first knowledge check you attempt within one hour of leaving the trance. You suffer 1d6 points of Wisdom damage when exiting the trance.

Treacherous Tomes

Corrupted knowledge degrades the mind

Title	Subject	Mental Disorder	Knowledge (forbidden lore) ranks gained	Value
Darkness defined: the Invidu campaign	History	Horror	1	10 gp
The Theovian method	Architecture and engineering	Doubt, the knowledge worm; Knowledge (architecture and engineering) DC 20	1	50 gp
The empire beneath the waves	Dungeoneering	Madness	1	75 gp
Maruvian death rites	Local	Horror	2	125 gp
The Lost. Children of the First Folk	Geography	Doubt, the knowledge worm; Knowledge (geography) DC 25	1	200 gp
The games we play	Nature (fey)	Madness	2	400 gp
The Xian-Jue dynasty	Nobility and royalty	Doubt, the knowledge worm; Knowledge (Nobility and royalty) DC 15	1	750 gp

The Black Tome of Zin-Zhatorim

Description: The hide of a silver dragon serves as the cover for 1,000 coal black pages that hold millions of bone slivers, the slivers are arranged in an infernal script. A withered demons claw holds the tome shut, prying the fingers of the claw open requires a DC 8 Strength check.

Content: the tome details the hierarchy of Hell and holds the true names of nearly five dozen barons of Hell. It bears detailed descriptions on how to make an infernal pact and describes in full, several vile and corrupting incantations. All of this makes the black tome of Zin-Zhatorim one of

the most sought after books in history, diabolists and paladins alike have quested for this tome.

Disorder: Horror and Madness.

Knowledge (forbidden lore) ranks gained: 4.

Value: 6,000 gp.

Forbidden Knowledge

In games that have adopted the variant sanity rule set, with the Knowledge (forbidden lore) skill, the mental disorders operate differently and reading the listed tomes incurs a cost of its own. Reading

a tome still triggers one or more of the mental disorder but with the following changes:

Doubt, the knowledge worm: while a character suffers from this mental disorder she adds 3 to any Insanity Point loss she suffers.

Horror: make a sanity check, you lose 2d6/4d6 points of sanity. If this results in a bout of indefinite insanity, you automatically suffer from night terrors.

Madness: make a sanity check, you lose 2d4/4d4 points of sanity. If this results in a bout of temporary insanity, you automatically suffer from one of the long-term insanity effects.



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BY SIMON BEAL

LEGACY OF WAR

EPISODE 13: THE LION'S DEN

Episode Date: July–August 2268

"Some must be sacrificed if all are to be saved."

— G'Kar

Background

After announcing their newly developed cure, members of the Legacy Group in high-ranking positions used their influence to begin construction of a new facility on Mars. This facility will be used to manufacture the bio-tech needed to cure everyone on Earth. The facility is almost complete and will soon begin manufacturing the technology to be implanted into every man, woman and child on Earth.

Although the Legacy Group have not revealed their use of Shadow technology in developing the cure, elements within the ISA have their suspicions and have requested to inspect the technology before any treatments begin. If it can be proven that Shadow technology has been used it will be a violation of the ISA treaty – this could have political repercussions but that fact that it has been used to save humanity is a strong argument for its use.

Whatever the political outcome may be, Earthgov believes there is no choice but to use the cure even if it means embargos or expulsion from the ISA. The survival of humanity must come first.

A New Cure

Continuing on from the previous episode, the Excalibur and players' ship are travelling through hyperspace to a safe destination. The Excalibur is continuing to make repairs, whilst Dr Chambers and Galen modify the organelles to work as an anti-virus to the Drakh plague.

At a convenient point, Gideon will contact the players and ask that they come to the Excalibur to discuss their next move. Once onboard the Excalibur, the players will be escorted to the briefing room where Gideon, Galen and the other command staff are already waiting. Gideon will explain the current situation.

'We've taken a lot of casualties and damage but we now have the organelles we need to develop the cure. Dr Chambers and Galen have been working on this for a while now so it will soon be ready to use.'

'Once the cure is complete, the difficulty will be in administering it. Recipients all over Earth will need to be injected with the organelles, so it can spread and eliminate the virus. Since we are all currently fugitives this will not be easy.'

'We also have the problem of the new bio-tech facility on Mars. Even with our cure, there is no guarantee that the Legacy Group will not use theirs. That tech remains a threat to Earth as long as it exists, so we need to deal with that too.'

'I suggest that my people take care of the cure and your group looks into the situation on Mars.'

Allow the players to discuss their options. If questioned, Gideon will explain that he has some ideas for administering the cure but they are risky and would probably be the last roll of the dice for his crew most likely resulting in their capture. However, he still has contacts on Earth that could aid him.

The players may suggest contacting Garibaldi to get the ISA to intervene. Gideon also has contacts in the ISA including President Sheridan but at this stage he

would rather not involve them as there would be political ramifications for doing so. Once the new cure has been proven to work, they will be in a better position to call in some favours.

There is little Galen can do to help here in administering the cure either but he needs to be present with Dr Chambers to ensure it is deployed correctly and is on-hand should anything go wrong.

Little is known about the facility on Mars so it will need to be investigated. If any of the players have a previous history on Mars, they might have contacts there that could help them. If not, one of the NPCs will know somebody that might help them. Once they have a better understanding of the facility and the security there, they can hopefully figure out a way of putting the factory out of action.

If the players question Gideon on why it is so important that the bio-tech in the facility should be destroyed, he will explain that it is based on technology used to create mindless slaves. Both Gideon and Galen witnessed this on Legacy Base #2 six months ago. If this technology is implanted

it could potentially give the Legacy Group control over everyone on Earth.

Once some preliminary plans have been made, the Excalibur will part company and the players must devise a way to get to Mars without being captured.

Infiltrating Mars

Since Earth was quarantined 18 months ago, Mars has become more important to Earthgov and a significant defence grid has been deployed around the planet, supported by a number of warships. As the largest uninfected human population, planetary security is now a major concern for the future of humanity.

The first obstacle the players must overcome is getting to Mars. Their ship is too well known to enter Earth space so they will need to find a different way to get there. There are several ways of doing this.

Fake ID

However the players decide to get onto Mars, they will most likely need some sort of fake ID if they are to pass through a customs checkpoint. From their adventures

in previous episodes, the players should know a few places where they can obtain what they need including Toren's Rift, Fendimir IV, Freedom Outpost and Zafran VII – most of these locations are detailed in Episode 10 and Zafran VII is detailed in Episode 2.

To avoid attracting attention, the players might decide to split up and travel in small groups; if a large number of fugitives all turn up at once, there is a greater chance they will be recognised. The players should also work out a cover story for who they are and their reason for visiting Mars in case they get questioned upon their arrival.

Transport

When the players fitted out their alien ship in Episode 10, they may have obtained a shuttle of some kind that will not draw the same attention as their unique alien craft. If this is the case, they can use the shuttle to enter the Sol system via the Io transfer point and from there they can make the two day journey to Mars.

If the players do not have a suitable ship they are left with two other options. Firstly, they can book passage on another vessel

and arrive at Mars under the guise of normal civilians. Alternatively, the players can attempt to obtain a ship by other means. This will most likely involve stealing it unless they have contacts that would loan them such a vessel – this could potentially form a scenario of its own.

Having their own ship could potentially draw more attention but it does mean that the players will have a better means of escape if the situation requires it. A civilian ship of Earth origin would draw less attention than an armed or alien vessel.

The size of the ship will dictate how many people can go to Mars and how many must remain on the alien ship. The more people that go, the higher the chance that their true identities are spotted but also this will increase their chance of success.

Hunted

To make things even more difficult for the players, they might still have a bounty hunter on their trail. You can use any of the personalities detailed in Episode 10 or create your own. The bounty hunter will most likely strike when the players are obtaining false IDs or a ship but you can just as easily have the hunter tail them to Mars.

Destination Mars

Once the players have fake IDs and appropriate transportation, they can set course for Mars. Once they reach Mars, the usual procedures will apply for docking and landing. When the players pass through customs, you can add some suspense by pausing as the customs official carefully studies each player against the records of the fake IDs.

Some of the players will be asked their reason for visiting and this will be verified as much as possible against their false identities. In addition to this, you can make it so one of the cards is not read correctly, causing some concern for the clerk and the player. However, after a short delay and a rescan, they will be passed through.

Although the players will make it safely through the customs check, they should

be aware that it could have just as easily gone badly for them. Their faces have been plastered all over the media and someone will eventually recognise the party for who they are. To minimise the chance of this, the players' should split up when possible and exposure should be kept to a minimum by staying out of the most civilised and highly populated areas.

If the players' fail to take any kind of precaution against this then they will be spotted and reported to the authorities. With the heat on, carrying out their mission will be much more difficult, as will their departure from Mars.

Contacts

Once the players arrive on Mars, they will need someone who knows their way around and can get any equipment or supplies the players might need to complete their mission (weapons and the like are not permitted to be brought through customs). Some of the players might know some people from their past but if not, one of the NPCs will have the necessary contact. Alternatively, you can make it difficult for the players by not having them know anyone, so they must find a suitable contact and either earn that person's trust or pay them a sufficient amount for their services.

A number of personalities are listed here that can be used as appropriate or you can use an existing NPC from one of the players background. If necessary, you can modify the personalities that follow to better fit the situation.

Bobby Wishmore

Str: 8 (+0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 9 (+1), **Int:** 8 (+0), **Edu:** 6 (+0), **Soc:** 9 (+1)

Skills: Deception 2, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 1, Melee 0, Persuade 1, Stealth 2, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 0.

Equipment: PPG (3d6–3).

Information: Bobby Wishmore, or just 'Wishmore' to his friends, was part of the Mars resistance during the Earth civil war. When Mars was finally recognised as an independent state he was invited to join the Mars Provisional Government but he freely admits he is no diplomat. Mars continued to suffer at the hands of Earth

bureaucrats and Wishmore helped out by working behind the scenes in an unofficial capacity. Wishmore now lives in Mars Dome 1 and his services can be easily bought if it involves undermining Earthgov. He has considerable knowledge of many domes on Mars, as well as contacts and the best way to travel unnoticed.

Flint

Str: 8 (+0), **Dex:** 8 (+0), **End:** 9 (+1), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 7 (+0), **Soc:** 8 (+0)

Skills: Demolitions 3, Gambler 1, Melee (blade) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 1.

Equipment: Knife.

Information: Flint is an explosives expert. He was in the same resistance cell as Wishmore where they became good friends. Flint has a good knowledge of the tunnel networks and criminal hangouts in Mars Dome 1.

Lucas Longmore

Str: 7 (+0), **Dex:** 8 (+0), **End:** 7 (+0), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 8 (+0), **Soc:** 10 (+1)

Skills: Broker 2, Deception 1, Drive 0, Gambler 1, Persuade 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Zero-G 0.

Information: Lucas is a trader who occasionally deals in black market equipment. He has many contacts with the Mars underworld but spends most of his time in Bethesda where he lives and works.

Gearing Up

With the right contacts and information, the players can now plan a trip to the bio-tech facility. They may wish to do a reconnaissance mission first or just head there and improvise as they go. Either way, the party will need to get the appropriate equipment, which will include EVA suits, weapons, tools and any other items they might need.

With the right contacts, getting the equipment they need should not be too difficult as long as no exotic items are required. The players will of course have to pay for the goods so if they are short on funds they will have to sell existing items, steal or take on some illegal contracts with the underworld community.



Bio-Tech Facility

The bio-tech facility is situated in the Noachis Terra region, between Mars Dome 1 and Bethesda. It is being built specifically to manufacture the bio-tech needed for the cure developed by the Legacy Group. Work is near completion, at which point the facility will begin to manufacture the cure to be administered by specially trained surgeons.

Security at the facility is obviously high – the future of Earth lies within these walls. However, since it is still under construction, the security is not at peak efficiency. Also, any perceived threat is believed to come from rival governments or even the Drakh. Humans are considered less of a threat here than any alien race but gaining entry will still be difficult.

The Approach

The bio-tech facility has no direct connections to any other dome on Mars and it has been built on the Noachis Plain with very few places to hide. The plains surround the facility for some distance so any vehicle or person approaching the facility would be spotted before they get anywhere near it, especially if such a

journey was made during daylight hours.

Travelling at night is the best option but even this has risks. Any type of light source would be an obvious give-away but without illumination a vehicle might hit a rock or hit rough terrain. Vehicles are also noisy and might be heard if too close to the facility, so the last part of the journey would have to be done on foot to reduce the chance of being seen. The players would obviously need to obtain a vehicle if they are to use this approach.

Travelling by foot in EVA suits would simply take too long. The EVA suit air supply would run out before they get anywhere near the facility. However, another option is available if the players' have the right contacts or have a way to obtain the information.

Decades ago, there was an aborted attempt to link some of the major domes via underground tunnels. One such attempt was a tunnel between Mars Dome 1 and Bethesda. The tunnel was never completed but would have passed near to where the bio-tech facility has been built. With a guide or map, it is possible to use the underground tunnel network in Mars

Dome 1 that link to the partially completed Bethesda tunnel. This would get the players within a few kilometres of the bio-tech facility through one of the surface maintenance hatches located along the tunnel.

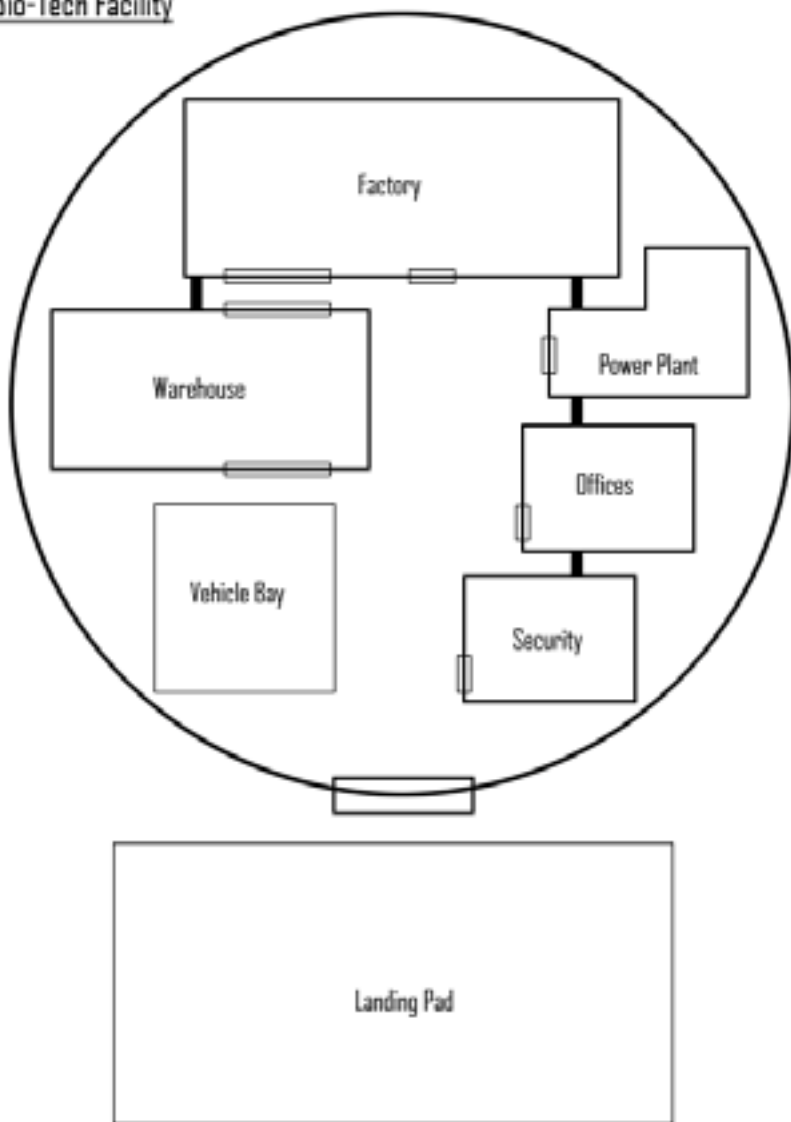
There is an airlock from the main tunnel network to the Bethesda tunnel so EVA suits will be required. The tunnel has long since been abandoned and there is always the risk of rock fall, especially if there are any loud noises or heavy movements.

The Dome

The bio-tech facility comprises of a number of buildings, all housed within a Plexiglas dome. A large airlock provides the only way in and out of the dome. Just south of the dome and adjacent to the entrance is a landing pad where the implants will be shipped out but for now it provides access for the construction workers and their vehicles.

During the day, the facility is a hive of activity. Construction workers can be seen working everywhere except the security building and power plant. Vehicles come and go as new materials are delivered

Bio-Tech Facility



and waste is removed. A small number of blue collar workers can be seen checking equipment and preparing some of the facilities for when the factory goes online. White collar workers remain in their offices for most of the day, leaving only to liaise with technicians and fill out status reports.

Access to the dome requires a security pass and anyone entering the facility has their pass card checked by one of the guards stationed by the airlock. Everyone working at the plant also wears a uniform according to their job. The security guards have the standard Earthforce grey uniforms, the factory workers wear dark green uniforms and the construction workers wear blue coveralls bearing a 'Lombard Construction' logo.

Security

The security building is located just by the entrance and is divided into several rooms. The first room is where the standby guards are stationed, ready to be called to action if necessary. Behind this is the control room, which has a variety of video and communications equipment. However, the security cameras are not currently operational. Also leading off the main room are facilities and rest rooms for the guards.

The control room also has direct access to local law enforcement should the security team be overwhelmed. Backup from Mars Dome 1 will arrive in 1d3+3 minutes.

There are two patrols of three guards that walk the dome. Two guards and the

security chief are usually found in the control room and a further six guards are on standby. The standby guards rotate with the patrolling units every hour. In addition to this, there are a further three security guards stationed by the airlock to check the pass cards of anyone entering the dome. Throughout each day the watch is changed three times – new guards arrive by shuttle and relieve the current watch.

Any vehicle wishing to enter the dome is checked by the security guards. Pass cards are always checked and cargo is inspected at random but in-depth searches are rarely carried out.

Security Guard

Str: 9 (+0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 10 (+1), **Int:** 8 (+0), **Edu:** 6 (+0), **Soc:** 6 (+0)

Skills: Gun Combat (energy pistol) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 1.

Equipment: Flak Jacket (6), PPG Rifle (5d6).

Vehicle Bay

This is a large open area with the edges marked by yellow stripes and red lights. Within its borders are loaders, forklifts and several construction vehicles. Maintenance and repair equipment is situated around the southern and western edges but none of it is currently operational.

Warehouse

Situated between the factory and vehicle bay is a large warehouse. Boxed implants will be taken from the factory to be stored here until they are transported to the landing pad for shipment to Earth.

The warehouse currently has half of the storage racks installed, some of which have already been stacked with large crates. If the players inspect these crates they will find them packed with glass cylinders – these are imported and used to store the organic tech as detailed in the Factory section. Tools, materials and detritus litter the warehouse floor, making it an ideal place to hide should the need arise.

Offices

The offices are where the managers and white collar workers run the facility. Although the building is not complete, it

is operational. It has a number of offices, a conference room and a canteen.

Power Plant

The power plant is a small reactor that is capable of powering the entire facility. Conduits run out from the building and connect to each building within the dome. The door to this building has a security lock that requires an Engineer (electronics) check DM-4 to override. Inside the building is the main reactor and cooling system, both of which are computer controlled and monitored.

Factory

Located at the far end of the dome is the main factory. It is mostly operational with the equipment installed and undergoing rigorous testing. There are numerous machines that form a production line. The eastern side of the building is sectioned off and contains large vats where the organic tech is artificially grown. When it reaches a certain stage of development the tech is then moved to fluid-filled glass cylinders (not unlike those found in the Zener space station in the previous episode) that are suspended above the vats. Although only a few are currently being tested but there is room for hundreds of cylinders.

Once the organism completes its maturation cycle, conveyers carry it in the cylinder to the main manufacturing area. In this section, various components are constructed and bio-genetically fused with the organic tech to complete the implant. The implant, still inside the glass cylinder, is then packed and transported to the warehouse.

Infiltrating the Dome

After performing the necessary reconnaissance, the players can determine the basic layout of buildings within the dome – by monitoring the activity, the function of each building can be determined by watching who or what enters it. Careful observation will also show the daily activity of the security guards, facility workers and construction crew.

If the players want to gain more information before devising their plan to break in, they can attempt to gain more information

from the construction workers. The facility employees will not reveal any information unless under duress.

The construction company, Lombard Construction, is one of the largest construction companies on Mars and has been contracted by Earthgov to do most of the building work. However, even though the workers are not Earthgov employees they have all signed non-disclosure agreements and various other legal documents for security reasons.

Many of the workers live in Mars Dome 1 and Bethesda, so finding where they go after work will not be too difficult – most will head to their local bar for a few drinks before they go home. The players can either try to befriend them and gain information that way or covertly listen in to conversation and ‘shop talk’ between workmates.

The construction workers do not know much about the bio-tech facility beyond what they need to do their jobs. The factory equipment is installed by the facility technicians without any interaction from the builders. However, the workers will know the basic security procedures and the fact that the cameras are not currently operational.

Whether the players gain additional intelligence or not, it should be clear from observation that security is currently a little lax. Combined with the ongoing construction activity, the players can take advantage of these temporary weaknesses in a number of ways to gain access to the facility.

Deception

With the correct pass cards and uniforms, the players can attempt to gain access to the facility as if they are employees. However, observations will show that there are no aliens working for Earthgov or Lombard Construction so only humans will be able to gain access this way.

Pass cards and uniforms can be stolen from the appropriate individuals but this would be reported to security unless the victims were subdued or held captive while the players execute their plan. Alternatively, these items can be acquired temporarily so

forges can be made – this would arouse less suspicion but obtaining the items and returning them without anyone’s knowledge is not an easy task.

Smuggling

Construction vehicles regularly enter the dome to bring in materials and personnel. If the players can hide themselves inside these vehicles they would gain easy access to the facility but this approach will require careful planning and preparation. First of all, the players will need to find out that the construction vehicles travel from the Lombard Construction depot in Mars Dome 1. There are various types of vehicle here including hover wagons, flatbed trucks, cranes and diggers. The players would then need to break into the depot or board the vehicles en route.

The Lombard Construction depot is essentially a large garage with an adjoining parking zone. The entire compound has a wire fence standing four metres high with a security camera placed in each corner. There are two security guards who monitor the camera feeds and patrol the area every few hours.

Boarding the vehicles on their way to the bio-tech facility is very difficult – the players must not only gain access to the vehicle but do so without being spotted by the driver. One of the easiest methods of doing this is to stage some sort of deception that forces the vehicle to stop, allowing the players to hide inside it. If the players hide inside a locked compartment, someone else will need to lock them in to pass the security inspection.

Hijack

An alternative method to smuggling onboard a vehicle is to hijack one of them en route to the bio-tech facility. The same strategies apply for determining the vehicle’s route and making the attack. Even with possession of a construction vehicle, the players will still require pass cards and uniforms to pass the security check. The latter can be taken from the workers but the pass cards must match the person using it so forgeries will have to be made.

Depending on the morality of the players in this high-stakes operation, they will

have to decide what to do with the driver and passengers (if any). The victims could be held captive somewhere safe for the duration of the mission or dealt with on a more permanent basis. However, it is important to remember that these are innocent civilians and murder should not really be something that the players partake in.

Stealth

Sneaking past the security guards at the bio-tech facility is one of the more difficult approaches. The greatest obstacle is the airlock – there is no activity during the night and if the dome's airlock is opened during this period, the sheer size of the doors moving will be seen or heard by the security guards.

The only chance the players will have of entering through the door is if it is opened for a legitimate reason, such as a vehicle entering (during the day) or some type of emergency that forces the airlock to be opened. Even if a way is found to open the airlock, the players must still pass through it unnoticed with Stealth checks.

Assault

By far the most risky approach is an all-out assault. Not only is this dangerous but the guards and any other personnel onsite will be immediately alerted to the players' presence. In addition to this, the party will have to kill the guards, many of whom are loyal Earthforce security and innocent civilians.

Destroying the Factory

Once the players get inside the facility, they must then proceed to find a way of shutting it down. The only real solution here is to destroy the factory. Although a new one could potentially be constructed, the cure being implemented by the Excalibur should negate the need for the bio-tech cure and a new factory.

There are a number of options for destroying the factory as detailed here. With any solution that involves the destruction of the entire dome, the players might want to reduce the loss of life by evacuating or otherwise warning the security guards

and construction workers before the facility is destroyed. However, this adds another level of risk and increases chance of failure should the players get caught in the process.

Reactor Overload

Destroying the power plant will create an explosion big enough to wipe out the entire dome. This can be done by shutting down the coolant system to cause a reactor overload. This requires a Computers check DM –6 or an Engineer (power) check DM –6. If the result is a Marginal Failure then the time before critical mass is reduced by 1d3 minutes (minimum of 1 minute), an Average Failure means that the fail-safes prevent an overload and an Exception failure means that the reactor will go critical in 1d6 minutes or half the planned time, whichever is less.

If the power plant does explode, it will destroy the entire facility. If the players wish to exit the dome without being detected they will need to allow enough time to do so before the reactor blows. Any unforeseen delays could be fatal but if they leave it too long there is a chance their sabotage will be discovered and prevented.

Explosives

Explosives can be used in a number of ways. Careful placement in the power plant would have the same results as an overload but can lead to unpredictable results. Once destroyed, the reactor will overload quite quickly so it can only realistically be done by using timed explosives and requires a Demolitions check DM –4. A Marginal Failure results in the explosives detonating in half the required time, an Average Failure will damage the plant but the fail-safes will prevent an overload, an Exceptional Failure causes immediate detonation but will not do enough damage to cause an overload.

A slightly less destructive option is to set explosives in the factory to destroy the maturation and manufacturing equipment. A successful Demolitions or Engineer check will determine the best placement of the explosives. Once the explosives have been set, the players have the option to make their exit before the factory blows or leave during the chaos that is bound to follow.

Alternatively, explosives can be set on the outside of the dome to cause a breach. If successful, all personnel will have to evacuate and the change in atmosphere will kill off any of the organic tech currently being grown in the vats (the factory safeguards have not been completed). Whilst this approach is relatively easy and removes the need to get inside the dome, its effects on shutting down the facility are only temporary.

Sabotage

A more subtle approach is to simply sabotage the equipment in the factory. This can be done with Computer and Engineering checks as appropriate. The Effect of these rolls will determine how badly the equipment is damaged and how long it will take to repair. A Moderate Success will only put the factory out of action for a day, an Average Success will put it out of action for 1d3+1 days and a Critical Success will cause permanent damage requiring the equipment to be replaced.

This approach will only delay the production of the implants and the success of the mission will be difficult to determine. The main advantage of this method is that there is no loss of life to the workers inside the facility.

Aftermath

Assuming the players are successful, their first objective will be to leave the dome (if they have not already done so) and get back to their base of operations without being seen or followed. Most of the methods for shutting down the factory will result in enough pandemonium that should provide a distraction to aid the players escape.

Leaving Mars

Once the players have returned to the relative safety of the main domes, they will need to make arrangements to leave Mars and return to their ship. If the players escaped from the dome without being spotted by the guards, this should be easy and the players can leave by the same means they arrived.

If any of the party were identified during the mission, Mars security will be on the lookout for them and leaving the planet will prove to be very difficult. If this does occur, the players may be forced to lie low on Mars until the heat dies off.

News Report

At a convenient point after the mission, the players will see the following news report on ISN.

'And this just in. The renegade Earthforce vessel, Excalibur, has finally been captured. The details surrounding this are unclear but it has been confirmed that Captain Gideon and his crew have been arrested and detained. More on this breaking story as it happens.'

This will obviously come as a blow to the players. The uncertainty of whether Gideon was able to successfully administer



the cure should weigh heavy on their minds – if the organelles do not get used or have been destroyed, the players have just destroyed the only remaining cure to the Drakh plague!

Ending the Episode

The episode ends when the players are safely back on their ship and they have heard the ISN report. The party has lost a strong ally and are alone once more.

NEXT TIME

IN THE LEGACY OF WAR

In the final instalment of the Legacy of War saga, the players will discover the fate of the Excalibur, her crew and the cure to the plague. Plans are made to expose the Legacy Group and finally put an end to their secret operation but can the players exonerate themselves in the process?

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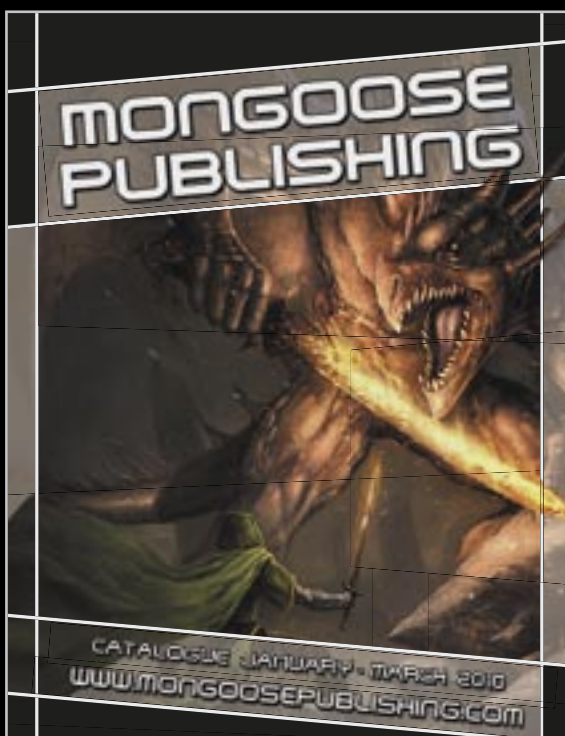
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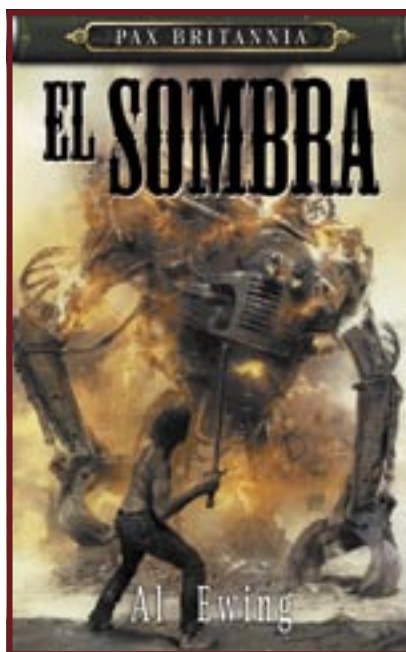
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