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ADVENTURE

A low-level module

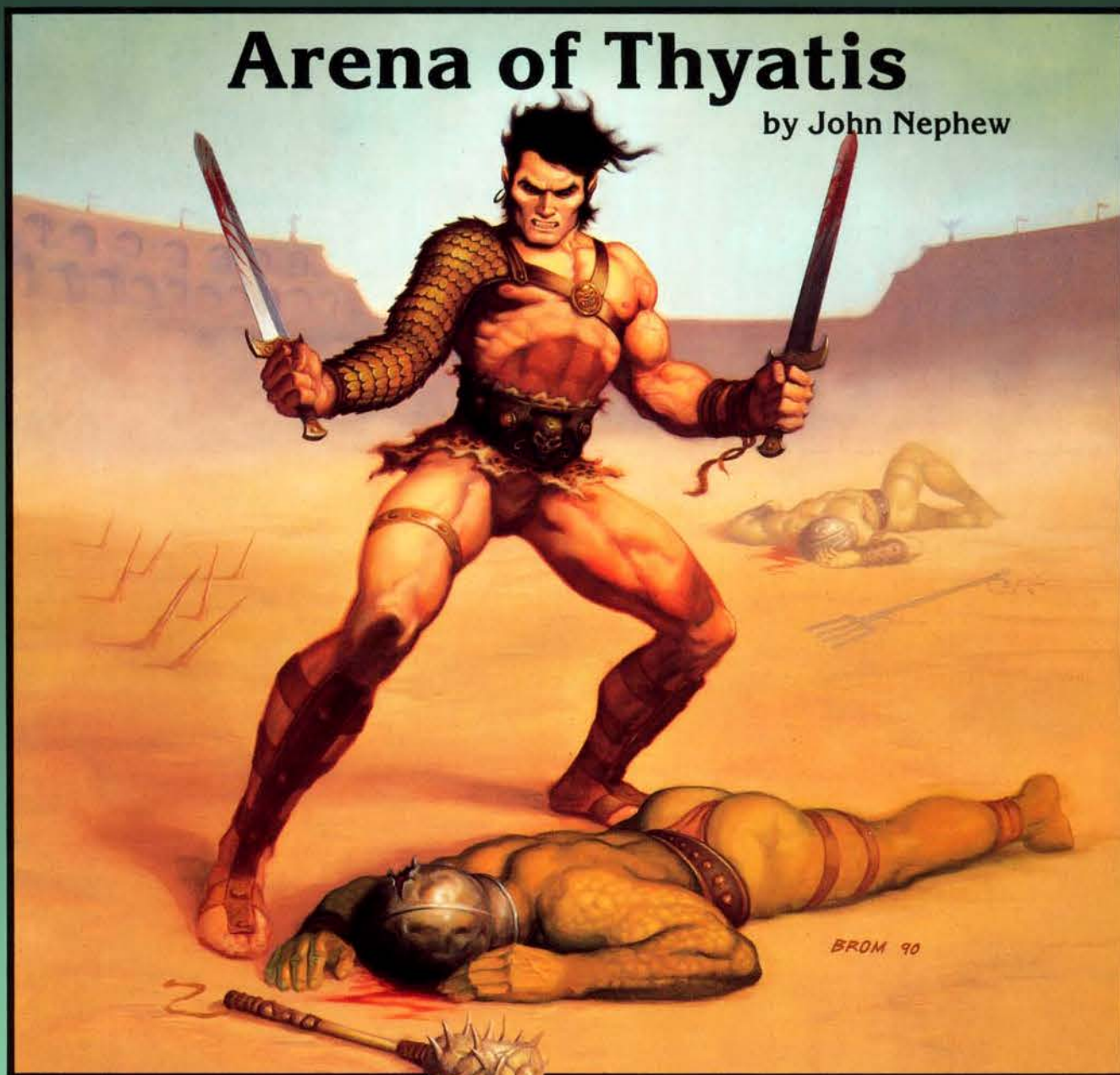
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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Official Game Adventure

Arena of Thyatis

by John Nephew



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Basic Game Adventure

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by John Nephew



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To Matthew Pozos, who introduced me to role-playing.

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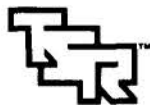
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INTRODUCTION

DM's Background

(For the DM's eyes only!)

It was 3 A.M. and a warm night in Thyatis City. An old man lay awake on a luxurious divan by the window of his urban villa. His name was **Helenites Osteropolus**, and he was an Imperial Senator. Thousands of souls, sleeping and awake, were in every direction around him; but only a night watchman's steady footsteps could be heard, fading away as he passed down the street. Helenites knew that not all Thyatis was so quiet; but with his riches, he could afford an oasis of peace in a wealthy district of the teeming metropolis.

Beside him lay his mistress, a young woman of the Pearl Islands. He had just that evening promised her freedom—when the time came that he was tired of her. But at the moment his thoughts were on another woman, a lover from his past.

Elemaledai was her name. Elemaledai, flame-haired and fair-skinned, a stormy-tempered Alpathian sorceress. The affair itself was short-lived, but its consequences have been much more interesting. And profitable, thought Helenites with a gleam in his eye. Of all the myriad pleasures and vices with which Helenites was familiar, none pleased him more than plain old greed.

One of the vices he knew was *zzonga*, the exotic Alpathian drug to which Elemaledai had introduced him. He did not personally care for its languid euphoria; active avarice gave him greater satisfaction, so he never became an addict, like Elemaledai.

He did see uses for the substance beyond mere personal gratification, however. Senator Osteropolus was, like many rich men, a patron of the Arena. And, like many of his peers,

he did more than just sponsor the public spectacles. He was also a gambler, placing large stakes on the outcomes of gladiatorial battles. Corruption and rigging ran rampant in the arenas anyway, but Helenites recognized that *zzonga* could provide him with a new way of controlling what would happen on the sands. A heavy dose could impair a great hero, and addiction could destroy the career of the most promising gladiator—or at least bind him to the will of the source of his precious narcotic.

With Elemaledai, Helenites built a network, over which he held nearly absolute control, to import and distribute *zzonga* among gladiators and other key figures of the arena. None of these people realize that he is their real supplier, since Helenites is careful to keep himself away from direct contact in the matter. But they are in his sway, for he is the only person who can satisfy their addictive cravings.

Through judicious use of *zzonga* and careful manipulation of the burgeoning group of addicts in the arena, Helenites seemed to acquire a Midas touch. He almost always knew where to place his bets. There was an occasional setback (some planned purposely, to diffuse suspicion of his "lucky streak"), but he was amassing a considerable fortune.

Elemaledai benefitted considerably from the arrangement herself. She could live in comfort (though she was careful not to flaunt too opulent a lifestyle, lest she attract unwanted attention—especially since she is Alpathian) and, most important to her, she could afford as much of her beloved toxin as she had the time to take.

Elsewhere in the city, the machinations of Helenites brought considerably less happiness. **Maximitus Chrystatarius**, a sponsor of gladiators (among other less reputable pursuits), brooded over his recent losses. Not only had he lost seriously in the arena betting, his own gladiators had done increasingly poorly,

many were now dead or crippled, and still others had given up the sands in uncharacteristic apathy. Why this poor luck? he wondered. Has Vanya cursed me? I need new gladiators, he thought; gladiators who will win, and who will capture the fancy of the city crowds. Something exotic, foreign. . . .

And deep beneath the Coliseum, there was a loud clamor at that moment. Two gladiators were found dead at their posts, guarding the entrance to the deep caverns that had been discovered when the Coliseum's basements were dug centuries ago. A hastily formed contingent of guards and gladiators scoured the Coliseum dungeons until the murderer, a marauding monster that had broken in from the caverns, had been found and killed.

It was the second such incident in the week. At this rate, thought some, there will be more deaths from subterranean incursions than from the games themselves.

"Initiate all gladiators into the secrets of the Coliseum," commanded the respected trainer, **Yalag**.

All the while, Helenites lay gloating, unaware of the effects of his actions except how they vainly filled his insatiable greed. Wealth meant power . . . power that might go beyond the petty formality of paying to have his reelection rigged (as his family had done, literally, for centuries).

The feast he was throwing the following night would be most satisfying, he thought. A chance to bask in the jealousy of his peers and those beneath him, parties like this were proof of their host's importance and wealth.

Helenites cast a momentary glance to the woman at his side before closing his eyes, but his gloating dreams were of the upcoming feast, and the sweet, inevitable success of his careful plans. He slept well.

Arena of Thyatis is a D&D® game adventure for four to six characters of levels 2-3. The total party level should be between 10 and 15; 12 would probably be ideal.

To play this adventure you will at the very least need the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Basic Set rules; the Expert Set rules are also highly recommended,

but you should be able to get by without them. Since this adventure is located in the Empire of Thyatis, a copy of the Thyatis and Alpathia boxed set *Gazetteer, Dawn of the Emperors* by Aaron Allston, would be most valuable to better understand the setting.

This module contains a complete, ready-to-run adventure, including detailed

maps, floorplans and descriptions that can serve beyond this adventure, both as locations for future adventures and as examples of Thyatian architecture.

Finally, *Arena of Thyatis* has a sequel: *Legions of Thyatis*. The two stand alone and can be played entirely separately; or, if you own them both, you can run them consecutively as a campaign.

This adventure is a tale of intrigues, lies, secrets and crime. A storm is brewing within—and *beneath*—Thyatis. The full extent of the gale will be felt in *Legions of Thyatis*, but here the player characters are first involved in a very personal way.

Senator Helenites Osteropolus, with the help of the sorceress Elemaledai, has been using the Alphatian drug *zzonga* to manipulate the arena gladiators, on whose matches great sums of money are bet. As far as Osteropolus is concerned, the plan works excellently; but he does not realize all its implications.

The gladiators are the bearers of an ancient secret: That there exists a dungeon of unknown, but immense, proportions right beneath the teeming streets of Thyatis. Gladiators who are members of the Order of the Sands are sworn to the guarding of this dungeon's entrances, to prevent the inhabitants of the underworld from ravaging the city; the greater Order assists in this project, particularly by supporting the legal and financial interests of gladiators.

Since the *zzonga* drug entered the Coliseum, chaos has followed. Besides skewing the arena contests, it has led to the general degeneration of the gladiators and guards. Addicts are virtually enslaved to Elemaledai, who provides them with their drug; in exchange, they are instructed to introduce specific individuals to the drug—preferably before crucial matches. This often results in a new addict; or in the gladiator's death, when he attempts to defend himself on the sands.

What has caused more concern among the gladiatorial ranks, however (since most remain naive about *zzonga*'s abuse), is the increase in monstrous incursions from below. Many recent deaths attributed to monster attacks have been *zzonga*-connected as well, but there has in fact been much more activity beneath the coliseum. Some gladiators fear that the restiveness indicates an impending invasion from below.

One person who has lost a lot of money and gladiators is Maximitus Chrystatarius, a man of many talents, who some would call a criminal. Maximitus is actively seeking vigorous new gladiators to



recoup his losses and replenish the ranks of his sponsored fighters; and he is increasingly willing to transgress laws even more than usual.

Adventure Synopsis

The characters begin in Thyatis City; most (if not all) of the party are likely to be foreigners or at least from somewhere other than the city. They are invited to a lavish feast thrown by Helenites Osteropolus, the head of one of the most wealthy senatorial families in Thyatis.

Willingly or not, they are impressed into gladiatorial service by Maximitus Chrystatarius. The Thyatian is certainly breaking the law—but he has the connections to give it all the appearances of legality.

The first task that the new gladiators must surmount is their own initiation, which consists in depositing them in the caverns beneath the Coliseum, to see if they can find their way out alive.

After this the party is accepted into the gladiatorial ranks, and they see the day-to-day life in the Coliseum: training, the games, and the odd incursion from below. When a fellow gladiator falls ill, the PCs must take his place—and they win!

That night the characters find their cell left open: they are given the opportunity to escape! In fact it is a plan to have them captured and punished as runaway slaves, in retribution for their arena suc-

cess. The gladiator who was ill was meant to take a fall, and the characters' success caused Helenites Osteropolus to lose a healthy wager. Thugs hired by Elemaledai (on Helenites' behalf) subsequently waylay the party.

Things come together at the *domus* (house) of Maximitus Chrystatarius. Elemaledai is to be found there, working out plans to double-cross Helenites, swayed by Chrystatarius' promises of greater wealth and power, and a chance to grow the precious *zzonga* drug in Thyatis itself . . . beneath the Coliseum.

When the character party cleans up at the Domus Chrystatarius, they have no reason not to think that they've wrapped things up. Senator Osteropolus remains in the background, however, shrouded at the root of all the intrigue. He may emerge again in the sequel, *Legions of Thyatis*, or in follow-up adventures of the DM's devise.

DMing Tips

The most important rule for DMing this adventure is this: BE FLEXIBLE! Highly interactive play requires more effort than dungeon adventures, for DM and players. There are a lot of characters and situations to role play; some are vital, other add color. The city setting is more free-wheeling; unlike a dungeon, with its options limited into flowchart-like logic by the stone corridors, a city is

filled with boundless possibilities. A module this size cannot describe all of Thyatis City, let alone adequately cover an adventure therein, nor should it! Understand this fact and be prepared for its consequences.

You must be prepared to change plans as characters do things you didn't expect. This adventure is *written* in a linear fashion, for narrative and structural reasons, but it need not be *played* that way. You should be ready to depart from the text, and actively practice just that, for this is the best way to become a superior DM. Recognize just what is important in carrying one scene to the next, or providing resolution for the conflicts that emerge; and improvise until the players are back on track.

In playtesting, for example, the adventure wound up starting in a very different way than the DM expected. No sooner had the DM announced, "You're all in Thyatis . . ." than a thief in the party was caught pickpocketing. One thing led to another, and soon the PC thief was in jail, a convicted criminal sentenced to slavery. The other PCs tried to buy him at the auction, but they were outbid—by Maximitus Chrystatarius. The party therefore went to Helenites' feast with hopes of arranging to buy back the thief. They subsequently awoke in a cell with him and thus commenced Chapter II, The Initiation . . .

Why should you not simply force the players to do or not do certain things, for the sake of preserving the "plot"? Simply because it won't be as fun, and you're sure to lose their interest. A module is designed as much for reading as playing, but your players don't want simply for the adventure to be read to them. They gain pleasure from thinking and deciding on their own. Give them that freedom, even if it substantially changes the story that this module presents.

As the Dungeon Master, you may find this adventure as challenging to play as the players themselves will. We hope that you will rise to this challenge, and improve your playing skills in the process.

Zzonga

(adapted from p. 58 of Book I of *Dawn of the Emperors*)

Zzonga is a drug that comes from the fruit of a plant, the zzonga-bush. It has short, spiky green leaves and a large fruit that looks like a pale pink strawberry. The fruits give off a strong, sweet, distinctive odor.

It's impossible to disguise the odor of the zzonga-fruit: One can't introduce it into someone's food without that person's knowledge, for instance. (Of course, this supposes that the person will recognize the scent—which is rarely true of educated Thyatians, let alone most gladiators.)

The fruits can be eaten raw, made into preserves and jellies, or fermented and distilled into wines and liquors. In any form (and Elemaledai has distributed them in all different shapes, according to what she could acquire), they are delicious.

They also have a potent and detrimental effect. One dose of zzonga-fruit (a dose constitutes one fruit or the equivalent amount in jellies or preserves, one glass of zzonga wine, or one shot of distilled liquor) will drug the consumer if he does not make a saving throw vs. poison at -6. The effects will last 1-4 days.

During that time, the drugged party is pleasant and happy, but utterly and completely unambitious: He has no interest in furthering his career, earning a living, and so forth.

Gladiators don't want to fight (but will do so grudgingly, especially under threat of bodily harm), and when they do will suffer -4 on all combat rolls each round they fail to rouse themselves by making a Wisdom check.

A spell-caster casts magic with difficulty while under the effects of zzonga. To cast any spell successfully, he must make an Intelligence check at -6. (Clerics must make a Wisdom check at -4.)

A second dose in the same day en-

ures that the zzonga effect will last a full 4 days, instead of the unreliable 1d4 days. More doses in the same day have no further effect—except that the drugged person likes them a lot.

One dose on each subsequent day will extend the duration of the drugged condition by one day. Subsequent doses on days when the zzonga has already been taken have no effect—except, again, to please the partaker.

In the Alaphatian Empire there are many zzonga-addicts, but until now they have been virtually unknown in Thyatis. One reason for this is that the bush can only grow in special conditions (mostly underground greenhouses with phosphorescent domes) set up in mainland Alaphatia; it is extremely expensive in that empire, and even more costly to import. The plant is not native to this area and cannot survive here without special care.

Addicts waste all their money acquiring zzonga; and, under its effects, they do not desire to work, and even if forced, cannot work effectively. Even mighty magic-users among them cannot reliably defend themselves with their magic. The life of an addict revolves entirely around his zzonga; it becomes more important than friends, family—or even life itself, if by risking it he thinks he may get another dose.

Player characters who experiment with zzonga will not become addicted like NPCs; they always have the option to stop (although a heavy user would have difficulty doing so, and this should be role played). This may seem permissive—but of what use is zzonga for player characters? It's not exciting to role play ("Well, your character is in a blissful stupor for four days; then what?"), and all it does is inhibit their activities ("In the course of his otherwise blissful stupor, thugs attack your character, take all his possessions, and he is nearly helpless to defend himself, if he even wanted to"), as is demonstrated by the fate of Elemaledai. In this adventure, as in real life, drugs are a dead end.

The DM's Guide to Winging It

"Winging it" means running an adventure without a detailed script or area key. Like all skills, doing it will be easier after you've tried it a few times.

The two keys to winging it are: 1) know the background material and 2) quickly combine this with player actions to develop the plotline.

When winging a plotted adventure, just identify the main turning points of the plot; how the players get there is less important than the fun they have doing it. Reviewing the possible results of each encounter before running the scenario will help you avoid many pitfalls.

Often, problems occur when players lose sight of their goals, or get distracted by another plotline. Your basic job is to keep your main plotline strong enough so the players want to follow it and see where it goes. Having identified a turning point, you can use seemingly random events, omens, accidents, and the secret plans of NPCs to steer the party in the right direction.

The single most important rule of winging it is **KEEP THE GAME MOVING**. This depends on good communication between the players and DM. You and the players should let each other know when you are speaking as DM or players, as opposed to speaking in character. Even a simple preface such as "Player to DM . . ." will prevent a lot of confusion in play.

Another way to keep the game moving is to have stock characters. Special voices, mannerisms, or a single physical feature can be used to identify an NPC the characters will run into again (it's a lot easier to remember "the fighter with the big nose" than the "fighter who is 5' 2" tall, weighs 145 pounds, and has brown hair").

One quick way to characterize an NPC is to visualize him as an animal, and picture that animal as you describe and play him.

Another way to create stock characters is to use *foils*, or opposites. One example is the wimpy, fast-talking thief teamed up with a hulking mountain of a thug.

Stock situations also can be used to occupy the party. The tavern brawl, the public contest (from archery to poetry), the official

procession, an NPC being pursued past the party, the wandering seer or gossip, the merchant who haggles prices theatrically, and more, can not only entertain the players, but can be used to sneak subtle clues into play.

These devices work best if each has a little routine. That is, each has its own plotline that ends if the party doesn't participate. The players have more fun if their actions make a difference in the outcome. Don't worry at first if the encounter sends the party away from the main plotline—you can practice steering them back to it!

For example, an NPC runs past the party, pursued by the city militia. If the party does nothing, the NPC gets away and the encounter ends. If the party helps the militia, their leader invites them to Helenites' party. If they help the NPC, one or more will probably be captured by the militia and end up in the Arena. The party at Helenites' is shortened to get everyone back into play faster.

If you use a stock character or situation more than once, add variations so the players don't get bored with them. Two ways to keep situations fresh are *running gags* ("that alchemist *always* blows up his lab") and *reversal of expectation* ("It **WORKED!**"). When using these, be sure to set up the players with a basic pattern the first few times around.

Another useful method is using our history as a general background. For example, Thyatis City is like Byzantium. If you read something about ancient Byzantium, you can use those details to fill out your descriptions of Thyatis City and the lives of its citizens.

When you wing it, you are replacing concrete dungeon maps with abstract plot twists. Thus, players depend on you dropping clues to guide them and can easily get lost if they miss something vital. Don't panic, keep giving them chances to get on the right track until they connect. If they don't connect, you can decide after the session whether you want to get them back on track or modify the adventure to go in their direction.

For example, in this adventure, the PCs should eventually end up in the Arena. Besides the drugging plot, any number of things could happen to get them there: framed for a crime, picked up for vagrancy, answer an advertisement, agree to participate in exchange for a favor, and so on. Nothing even requires characters to go together (except that it is a

bit more convenient).

When you make up new material, take enough notes so you can add it to your background information. Reviewing each game session and noting what went right and what went wrong is also useful.

If the party looks like it will split up, you can introduce an *attractive nuisance*, an encounter interesting enough to capture the players' attention and bring them back to group interaction. Examples include various stock characters and situations, or the arrival of a powerful neutral NPC they can interact with.

If the player characters scatter anyway, think ahead to the next point in your plot at which you can bring them all together. Try to do this as soon as possible—playing every given encounter is not nearly as important as having all the players in the game.

If a critical NPC is killed before his part is played, and if the players don't know about his role in the plot, *substitute* another NPC in his place—if Maximus dies, another petty noble, Fabinius, hatches the same plot.

If the adventure is farther along, the opposition may still carry on its plans. They will have to compensate for the absent NPC, and you will have to decide if they still have the resources to continue, or whether they will abandon the plans but seek revenge, go into hiding, shift their attentions to a less dangerous activity, or maybe even try to recruit the characters!

Finally, you may have a situation where things have gone out of control—the players are mad, the plotline has completely outrun their ability to cope with it, you made a mistake that completely destroys the adventure and you can't think your way out of it. Everyone has bad days. In such cases, stopping the game for a few minutes to sort things out is perfectly okay. At this point relations among the players and you are more important than the game. Often a little time off will solve the problem. Sometimes (rarely) you and the players might decide to "rewrite" history so the unfortunate event never occurs. As you gain experience, this type of problem will happen less and less. And you will be well on the road to mastering the art of "winging it."

Dramatis personae

Because numerous characters appear across the whole adventure, they are gathered together here for easy reference. Also here are all of the named characters of Chapter I. Each character description includes: general description (history, personality), appearance, combat notes, and magical items (if any).

Carolus Anthemion, Gladiator

4th level fighter (werewolf); AL C

Carolus is a rookie gladiator, who has trained for months and fought in some group battles; he has not yet fought alone. Carolus is friendly, spontaneous, and popular among the gladiators and fans.

Unfortunately, Carolus is a werewolf. He is ashamed of his lycanthropy, and has managed to keep it under control. Only on nights of the full moon does he automatically transform—or in situations of high stress. He has not realized that a deadly arena duel could be exactly the thing to trigger the transformation.

In arena combat, Carolus fights normally until hit. If struck a blow, however, he will lose control and transform to wolf shape, shedding his armor and attacking with the natural weapons of that form.

No werewolf has been known to be a gladiator before; it's not certain how the Arena will deal with Carolus, if he survives. Is he to be considered a monster? or a special gladiator? Certainly the civilian authorities will not be pleased to know of a werewolf free in the city. . . . The DM will have to decide on behalf of the various concerned authorities—though they may be influenced by the actions of player characters.

Appearance: In human form, Carolus is tall, slim, and tawny-haired. His eyes are flashing blue.

Combat Notes: AC 5; HD 4*; hp 18; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1; THAC0 16; Dmg 2-8 (werewolf) or by weapon type; Save F4; ML 8; AL C.

Maximitus Chrystatarius

5th level Rake (see p. 10); AL N

Dabbling in many areas for personal profit, Maximitus is involved with the Arena as a *lanista*, a trainer of gladiators

(he doesn't have the wealth to sponsor games himself, though), and he has sometimes used his considerable clout in the Coliseum to influence the outcomes of games, for gambling profit.

Though entirely unscrupulous in business matters—willing to bend, twist, or break laws as it suits his needs—Maximitus is devoted to his family; and he is friendly, gregarious, and even graceful in society (as befits the rake Maximitus was in his youth).

Appearance: A man in his late forties, with graying black hair and a clean-shaven face.

Combat Notes: AC 6; Rake 5 (new class); hp 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 + 1 (dagger + 1) or by weapon type; THAC0 17 (16 with dagger + 1); Save T5; ML 8 (10 if defending his family); AL N; OL 35, RT-30, MS 40, CL 91, HS/D 30, HN 1-3; S 11, I 14, W 11, D 15, C 13, Ch 13.

Magical Items: A ring of protection + 2, dagger + 1. Besides his magical dagger, Maximitus is particularly fond of fighting with the rapier.

Phaedra Daphnorakenzes

6th level Cleric; AL L

Phaedra is the resident cleric of the Osteropolus household, attending to the spiritual needs of the senator, his family and servants. She is a serious woman, but not dour, and she knows too well that the senator rarely heeds her advice. Nonetheless she perseveres, trying her best to educate as well as minister. She is intelligent, articulate, and an expert on myths and historical accounts of various mortals. Her special interest is Vanya, the favorite Thyatian immortal, reputed to have been a Thyatian woman herself.

Cleric characters will surely attract the interest of Phaedra at the party, especially if they are of a foreign or esoteric sect. She has no prejudices against other beliefs and their clerics; she herself performs the rites of numerous immortals, though her personal patron is Vanya. The decadence of Helenites' parties is objectionable to her, but she tries to see them as a perfect opportunity to talk with people personally.

Appearance: Phaedra is about 50

years old, though it hardly shows. Before deciding to serve the faithful directly, she spent many years in cloistered religious order, so her skin seems much younger and smoother than one would expect at her age. Her bright, piercing green eyes leave an impression on all who meet her.

Combat Notes: AC 9, C 6; hp 21; MV 120' (40'); #AT none (see below); Save C6; ML 10; AL L; S 9, I 13, W 17, D 9, C 9, Ch 14; Spells: *cure light wounds, light, hold person, know alignment, cure disease*.

Phaedra objects to combat on moral grounds. If attacked, she will use spells such as *light* (to blind an opponent) or *hold person*. As an absolute last resort she might turn to reversals of her cures.

Magical Items: None. Phaedra renounced worldly possessions, including magical items, years ago. She keeps only a bare minimum of clothing and a small devotional amulet of Vanya.

Elemaledai

8th level Magic-User; AL C

Elemaledai was a promising young sorceress in Alpathia, but her magical career was stunted by her involvement with zzonga, which began in school. In fact, she was expelled for neglecting her studies, preferring to spend weeks at a time in drugged bliss. Even her parents, both wealthy magic-users, grew tired of her habit, and its considerable financial drain. Still, she refused to quit the drug, refused to continue her magical studies, and refused to take up any other useful vocation.

Finally, after a great fight, her parents disowned her. She cast about the Empire's capital for a time, selling what magical services she could for survival, and then decided to leave the Empire entirely, and find her fortune in Thyatis. After all, she reasoned, sorceresses are much more in demand there—and they should be even more so when, like her, they are young and beautiful!

She was careful to keep connections so that she could acquire her precious zzonga fruit in its assorted forms, and she was quick to find a lover who could give her the money she needed to buy it.

She soon decided that she'd rather be pampered than earn her own money anyhow.

After a few trysts with wealthy and known figures in Thyatis City, she worked her way into the highest social echelons. There she met Pulcher Osteropolus, who she used as a stepping stone to his father, the senator Helenites, and then dropped. The matter left Pulcher quite sore, and led to his estrangement from his mother and father.

Helenites was not enamored of zzonga, and soon found Elemaledai burdensome (especially her expensive habit). However, he found a way to turn her addiction and connections to his own benefit, as explained in the DM's Background.

Elemaledai's current lover (she and Helenites parted on friendly, professional terms) is Galatio Kelephorios (see below). It may be that, in spite of her front of sophistication and cynicism, she has come to feel something true for the young man.

Appearance: Red-blond hair, pale skin. Age 28.

Combat Notes: AC 9; M 8; hp 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 or by spells; Save M8; ML 9; AL C; S 9, I 16, W 9, D 8, C 10, Ch 16; Spells: *charm person, light, protection from evil, ESP, invisibility, phantasmal force, fire ball, fly, confusion, dimension door.*

Be sure to note the effects of zzonga on Elemaledai's magic use whenever she is under its influence (see p. 4).

Magical Items: A *potion of ESP*, a *potion of human control*, and an *amulet vs. crystal balls and ESP*.

Galatio Kelophorios

2nd level Rake; AL L

Elemaledai's current lover, Galatio Kelophorios, is the naive young son of a prominent yet surprisingly virtuous senator, honestly elected by a backwater district. Since Elemaledai is financially stable on her own now, this is probably the first sincere relationship since her arrival in Thyatis.

Unfortunately, it seems not so healthy for Galatio: He is blissfully reveling in the delights to which the Alpathian sor-

ceress has introduced him. The young man has taken a liking to Elemaledai's favorite vice (much to the dismay of his father), and zzonga addiction will do nothing to improve his life.

Galatio is wavering on the edge of a problem with zzonga; the player characters may pull him back from the brink, and thereby win themselves a reliable friend and steadfast ally.

Appearance: Short brown hair, brown eyes, tall and well-built. Age 22.

Combat Notes: AC 6; Rake 2; MV 120 (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon +1; THAC0 18; Save T2; ML 7; AL L; OL 20, RT 15, MS 25, CL 88, HS/D 15, HN 1-2; S 13, I 9, W 9, D 14, C 10, Ch 11. Wears leather armor, carries a dagger and short sword.

Friedrich Lagmann

5th level Fighter; AL L

A citizen (freed slave, in fact), Friedrich Lagmann, is the Hattian major domo/steward of Helenites' villa. He is a hardened bigot, rather blatant in his discrimination against and even abuse of household slaves and hired servants who are of non-Thyatian blood. (While very lawful, in the Hattian tradition, Friedrich is not what most people would label "good"!)

Friedrich is entirely ignorant of the zzonga conspiracy and arena meddlings of his employer. He snubs both Elemaledai and Saralasu for their "inferior" ethnic roots (being Alpathian and Pearl Islander, respectively), as much as he can without angering his employer.

Appearance: Friedrich is defined, facially and bodily, with straight lines. His short hair is black, with peppery gray starting to appear around the sideburns, and his age is 39.

Combat Notes: 5th level fighter; AC 7 (leather armor); hp 23; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 +2 (*short sword* +1, strength bonus); THAC0 17; Save F 5; ML 9; AL L; S 14, I 10, W 11, D 9, C 11, Ch 9.

Marcus the Beastmaster

4th level Fighter; AL N

Marcus is the man in charge of train-

ing and handling animals at the arenas. Other gladiators sometimes dislike him, and whisper that he prays his beloved animals will defeat their human opponents. This charge is untrue, though Marcus does sometimes feel sad when he sees a favorite beast fall to a gladiator's sword.

Combat Notes: AC 6 (leather armor, dex); F 4; hp 22; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (whip or short sword); THAC0 17; Save F4; ML 9; AL N; S 12, I 9, W 11, D 13, C 13, Ch 7.

Mustafa the Rat

Normal Human; AL C

Mustafa is a Thyatian citizen of Alasiyan blood, though few of the proud Ylari people would want to claim him as kin; born in Tel Akbir. He is a leech who hangs out at all Helenites' parties, and is an ardent flatterer of the senator (or anyone else he thinks might give him something). By the same token, he is a good source of information and gossip, though he rarely parts with anything for free.

Mustafa has played a double role in the zzonga plot of Helenites and Elemaledai, serving as a courier and spy for both. For reasons of self-preservation rather than honor, he would prefer not to betray either employer.

Appearance: Mustafa has a hooked nose, beady black eyes, black hair and a sparse beard that never seems to grow longer, yet never has been seen clean-shaven.

He is about 25 years old.

Combat Notes: AC 9; Normal Human; hp 4; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (dagger: 1-4); THAC0 20; Save NH; ML 6; AL C; S 9, I 11, W 9, D 8, C 11, Ch 8.

Saralasu Nuar

Normal Human; AL L

A Pearl Island woman, Saralasu is Helenites' current mistress. She has been a slave since early childhood, when her parents were forced to sell her into bondage to pay their debts. She was taught to be quiet and subservient, and she taught herself how to retain dignity and self-respect, despite the constant wear of the debauchery of which she has

been forced to be a part.

Helenites has promised Saralasu her freedom (when she will be freed, of course, has not been specified—presumably it will be when the senator has tired of her). In the meantime, she tries to keep out of the way. She is particularly eager to avoid Fabia's hostile glances and occasional blows.

Helenites has offered her zsonga, but she has not become involved with the drug.

Combat Notes: AC 9; Normal Human; hp 2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; THAC0 20; Save NH; ML 6; AL L.

Fabia Osteropolus

Former Cleric; AL C

Years ago, Helenites killed his wife's best friend in a jealous rage. Since that time, Fabia takes no joy in her existence (except when she can make her husband's life, or that of his current mistress, miserable). She is suicidally depressed whenever she is not drugged on zsonga (and sometimes even then); so, for the sake of decorum, Helenites tries his best to keep her well-supplied.

Appearance: 5'6", 284 lbs., graying brown hair, hazel eyes; olive skin; wears expensive clothes of the latest fashion, but is generally unkempt and negligent; age 45.

Combat Notes: former 2nd level cleric (no spell ability); AC 9; hp 9; MV 60' (20'); #AT 0 (unarmed); Dmg by weapon (if any); Save C 2; ML 5; AL C; S 7, I 8, W 13, D 8, C 13, Ch 11.

Magical Items: Fabia owns a pair of magical earrings, shaped like crescent moons, that Helenites purchased for her on a trip to Alphatia two decades ago. They will perfume her body however she pleases; she need only speak a magic word and name the particular perfume or scent she desires.

Helenites Osteropolus

Normal Human; AL C

Helenites has been a Senator for almost thirty years, succeeding his father. He is gregarious and outgoing, bubbling with friendliness and generosity, a baby-

kissing politician through and through. His illusion of honest openness makes him seem almost to verge on the naive, but the truth is far from that. He is in fact ruthless, calculating, and greedy—he makes few gestures that will not in some way serve his larger schemes and ultimate self-interest—but even in the midst of the most underhanded operations he retains his almost magical aura of altruistic innocence. His charisma and unique charm are such that even partners in his questionable activities have often been swayed.

Helenites will not directly oppose the adventurers in this module, but he is really the force that leads to all their ills. The DM can continue to use him to shape events in Thyatis after this adventure is finished.

Appearance: 5'8", 213 lbs.; gray, thinning hair and gray eyes; olive skin. He typically wears a senatorial toga, unless he does not wish his station to be known (e.g., when engaged in illicit dealings); age 53.

Combat Notes: Normal Human; AC 7 (dexterity, *ring of protection* +3); hp 3; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; THAC0 ; Dmg 1d4 +1 (*dagger* +2 with strength penalty); Save NH; ML 6; AL C; S 8, I 15, W 12, D 6, C 7, Ch 18; Languages: Thyatian, Alignment (Chaotic), Alphatian.

Magical Items: A *ring of protection* +3 and a *dagger* +2.

Pulcher Osteropolus

4th level Rake; AL N

Pulcher is the estranged son of Helenites and Fabia Osteropolus. The family rift resulted from jealousy over Elemale-dai (Fabia is indifferent to this, as everything). Pulcher still hates his father, but now is jealous of Galatio Kelephorios as well. He may challenge the latter to a duel when he makes an unwelcome appearance at the feast.

Appearance: 5'9", 168 lbs.; light brown hair, full beard (neatly trimmed), and hazel eyes; olive skin; dresses foppishly in whatever fad is current in Thyatis; age 22.

Combat Notes: 4th level rake; AC 7 (leather armor, dexterity); hp 6; MV

120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1d6 (short sword) or 1d4 (*dagger*); Save T 4; ML 7; AL C; OL 30, RT 25, MS 35, CL 90, HS/D 25, HN 1-3; S 12, I 12, W 8, D 14, C 10; Ch 12.

Magical Items: A pair of *elven boots*.

Yalag

Orc gladiator; AL N

Yalag is a pragmatic orc. He was captured in the Altan Tepes mountains. Enslaved in the mines for three years, he distinguished himself as an extraordinary fighter. His owner offered him as a contestant in the Arena of Markrast, where he beat the best local human gladiator—and, to the surprise of his owners, he won the loudest cheers from the crowd.

Yalag has a surprisingly flamboyant personality, an almost roguish charm that serves him well in the sands, despite his race. His successes eventually brought him freedom and, after seven years of scars from the arenas, he finally retired from actual fighting. He still serves as a trainer for gladiators, known for emphasizing showmanship as much as genuine martial skill. Most gladiators of the arena recognize Yalag as their spokesman.

Despite his close ties to the arena, Yalag is not a member of the Order of the Sands (though he is an initiate of the Coliseum gladiators who ward the caverns below). He was long denied membership, mainly because of his race, so when his membership finally was approved, he turned it down. Few are more devoted to the rights of gladiators than Yalag—especially those of the minorities (women and nonhumans).

Combat Notes: Treat Yalag as an orc chieftain (AC 6; HD 4; hp 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon +2; THAC0 16; Save F4; ML 9; AL N); or, if you have the humanoid creation rules from *Gazetteer 10*, *Orcs of Thar*, you can use him as a 5th level orc.

adventure setting: thyatis city

Built where the Mesonian River flows into the Sea of Dawn, Thyatis City is the center of the Empire—its greatest city, most powerful port and trade center, and seat of its navy and trading fleet.

The wealthy quarters of Thyatis have been constructed with soaring stone walls, broad streets of concrete, huge public works and buildings, the magnificent Coliseum, and lavish villas.

At the center of Thyatis is The Heart, a great merchant district where goods from throughout the Known World are bought and sold.

In the poorer districts there are huge tenement areas, with city block after city block of three-to five-story tenement dwellings, known as *insulae* (singular: *insula*). Here people live crowded together, and there is much filth, disease, and occasional violence. Other problems in the insula districts are fires and even the collapse of poorly-constructed buildings. Unemployment is high, but people can hang on because the government provides free bread for all.

The most popular entertainment in Thyatis is the games, held in the Coliseum. (More information on the games is provided in subsequent chapters.) Admission to the games is free; they are paid for by wealthy patrons, such as merchants, victorious generals, senators, and even the Emperor himself. The free “bread and circuses” are one of the main reasons the bulk of the Thyatian population remains peaceful, despite their often abysmal living conditions.

People of Thyatis

As can be expected in any cosmopolitan metropolis, people of virtually every race in the Known World are to be found in Thyatis. The majority are Thyatian, followed by peoples subject to the Empire (Pearl Islanders, Ochaleans, Hinterlanders, Alasiyans from Tel Akbir, and Alphatians from the Isle of Dawn). There are persons from other nations, in Thyatis for business or pleasure.

Money

The Empire of Thyatis mints four coins: The platinum **Emperor** (worth 5 gp), the

gold **Lucin** (equal to 1 gp), the silver **As-terius** (equal to 1 sp) and the copper **De-narius** (equal to 1 cp). Coins of electrum are not minted by the Empire.

Everyone is supposed to use Imperial currency in Thyatis City; money-changers will trade for other currency at a cost of 5-10% of the coins' value. However, many merchants are willing to accept equal value in genuine foreign currency, since so many foreigners come through and spend their wealth here.

In this module we will refer to coins by their Thyatian names unless they have some other origin.

Gambling

All sorts of gambling are both legal and popular. The favorite form of gambling, naturally, is betting on the Arena.

Challenges and Duels

When one Thyatian is offended by another, he typically challenges the other to a duel. The challenged party may dictate the terms of the duel—how many parties, which weapons, where and when, whether it's to first blood or the death—and then the challenger may reaffirm his challenge or withdraw it.

Naturally, duels between popular or well-known people attract crowds, unless they are fought in absolute secrecy. Duels are fought between hated rivals, people who just want to find out who is the better fighter, military officers who disagree on some matter, people who bump into one another on the street and choose not to apologize, people with long-standing grudges, etc. Most are to first blood, but quite a few are to the death, or result in death even if they're not supposed to.

If carried out properly, a duel is perfectly legal, and even encouraged by some magistrates as a means of settling disputes. If not done properly, it may be considered murder (see below).

Crime and Punishment

Characters sometime run afoul of the law; therefore, it may be useful to briefly summarize the Thyatian legal code and the punishments it suggests.

Criminal charges are classified as *lesser* or *greater*, and crimes in each category are divided by intent.

Lesser charges include: Assault; Disturbing the Public Peace; Flight to Avoid Arrest; Flight from Owner (a charge brought against slaves); Lying to An Official; Petty Theft (up to 100 gp value); Vagrancy; Weapon-Carrying violations; and other lesser crimes.

Greater charges include: Grand Theft; Murder; Mutiny; Perjury; Tax Evasion; Treason; and the like.

Suggested punishments according to intent are as follows:

Accident/Unknowing. *Lesser:* None; or fine 1-6 lucins. *Greater:* None; or fine 10-100 lucins; or 1 week imprisonment.

Good Intentions. *Lesser:* None; fine 1-6 lucins; or 5 lashes with a whip. *Greater:* Fine 10-100 lucins; or 1 week imprisonment.

Error in Judgment. *Lesser:* Fine 2-12 lucins; or 5-10 lashes. *Greater:* Fine 50-500 lucins plus 1 month hard labor; nobles' titles and dominions may be stripped at judge's discretion.

Temporary Madness. *Lesser:* 1-6 months probation under supervision of a court cleric; plus either fine 3-18 lucins or 5-20 lashes. *Greater:* Fine 50-500 lucins, plus incarceration until court clerics are certain the madness will not recur.

Self-Interest/Unsociability. *Lesser:* 1 week imprisonment; plus either fine 3-18 lucins or 5-20 lashes. *Greater:* Borydos (prison island) for 5-10 years; or death.

Chronic Self-Interest/Unsociability. *Lesser:* 1 month hard labor, fine 3-18 gp, and 5-20 lashes. *Greater:* Life sentence to Borydos Island; or stripped to Slave status; or death—property impounded by Empire in all cases.

Inhumanity. *Lesser:* A year on Borydos Island. *Greater:* Stripped to slave status, property impounded by the Empire, and death.

Whippings are performed in public. Where property was lost or damaged, the defendant must also repay the loss. When a defendant cannot pay a fine, he must take either the corporal punishment or incarceration sentences.

Players' Background

Players can be thrust into this adventure with very little background. The characters don't even need to know each other at the outset; they might even remain strangers until the beginning of Chapter II! The starting point of the adventure is just that the PCs are in Thyatis City. Give them a chance to explore the city, interact with a few minor NPCs, hear a few rumors, and so forth; then start events rolling.

The events should flow naturally. It should be fairly easy to steer the party toward Helenites' feast; here are some suggestions of how it might happen:

- * The party members are up-and-coming adventurers; the senator hears of their exploits, and thinks they would make interesting guests. Invitations are delivered to them at the place where they are staying.
- * A character makes a name for himself through a duel or other fight in

the street (ideally role played beforehand). As a celebrity for a day, the character receives an invitation for himself and his companions. Chrystatarius also hears of the duel or fight, and plans to invite or coerce the character into the Arena.

- * A player character(s) is from the region of the Empire that "elected" Helenites. (Note that Helenites' place of "origin"—which in fact he may well never have visited—has not been specified in the module, precisely so that you can tailor it to suit your campaign.) In the course of his stay in Thyatis, the character seeks help or information from the senator's staff. He receives worthless bureaucratic run-around and red tape, plus an invitation to Helenites' feast. (The character may go to the feast with hopes of meeting Helenites and asking personally for the assistance he needs.)
- * A rumor is going about that Helenites Osteropolus, extraordinarily successful in arena betting lately, has a

fortune-teller to advise him. Maximitus Chrystatarius offers a player character 100 lucins (Thyatian gold pieces) for the identity of the senator's games-minded soothsayer. Of course, no such fortune teller exists; but this device is enough to get the player characters to the party and poking about Helenites' business. Maximitus also decides that the characters could improve his own luck, were they gladiators . . .

- * Characters are simply walking along the street one evening when they are attracted by the noise of the party. The night is yet young, and they are free, even invited, to join the reveling.

If another option linked with the personality, station, background or activities in Thyatis of a particular PC presents itself, by all means make use of it! The more experienced DMs will customize these suggestions, adapting them for the specific characters playing in the adventure.

Optional Thyatian Class: The Rake

One type of character found among Thyatians is the *rake*—a thief-like swashbuckler. This class developed among the people of the Pearl Islands, whose culture is very opposed to theft; but which encourages the trickery, agility and cleverness of thieves. Rakes have all thief abilities except Pick Pockets and Backstabbing. Player characters can be rakes, if the DM approves.

Across the centuries, the rake class has spread across the Empire. It is particularly popular among noble or senatorial families, whose members are

above petty thievery and (literal) backstabbing as a matter of honor. (Grand-scale thievery, corruption and treachery are still, paradoxically, perfectly permissible to some of these people—such as Maximitus Chrystatarius.)

A rake character, is created exactly like a thief but with no Pick Pockets or Backstabbing skill. Instead, the rake gets a +1 bonus to his Charisma (18 maximum) and will be generally recognized by NPCs as a "gentleman" (or lady).

A rake with initiative can dodge (D) one melee attack by rolling his "Hide in Shadows" percentage. If he declares no attacks, he can try to dodge *each* incoming melee attack in the round.

Ranged spells, area effect attacks, and missiles cannot be dodged, and the maximum chance to dodge never exceeds 90%.

Rakes earn experience, gain levels, wear armor and carry arms, and so on exactly like thieves. However, they do not belong to Thieves' Guilds (thieves do not consider them to be in their profession). Many rakes are Lawful.

A rake cannot later become a thief, nor may a thief become a rake. When the choice is made, it's for life.

The rake class is a good choice for players who want their heroes to be lightly-armed swashbuckling types.

Recommended Reading

A great deal of literature exists on the culture of Rome and the Byzantine Empire, and I unreservedly recommend that players and DMs alike visit their local library or bookstore, to delve into the reams of fascinating knowledge of

history, mythology, art, architecture, literature. Much of the information (especially floorplans) is easily adaptable to the Empire of Thyatis.

Some of the books that first excited me about Roman times were actually cartoons—*Asterix the Gaul*, by Goscinny & Uderzo.

In researching *Arena of Thyatis*, I particularly studied Roman and Byzantine architecture. The books I relied most on were *Houses, Villas and Palaces in the Roman World*, by A.G. McKay; *Roman Architecture*, by Frank Sear; and *Byzantine Architecture and Decoration*, by J. Arnott Hamilton.

chapter 1: dinner with helenites

In this first chapter the characters come together at Villa Osteropolus, Helenites' luxurious mansion. They might first meet here (if they don't already know each other) and they will meet various characters who will be important later.

Chrystatarius makes his move here, drugging the characters later in the evening. He does this with the help of Mustafa the Rat, a shady character who survives by freeloading at parties like this one (in return, he flatters his hosts), and by performing odd (and often unpleasant) jobs for people like Maximitus and Helenites.

People

Many of the characters described in the *Dramatis Personae* will be at the party, namely: Maximitus Chrystatarius, Phaedra Daphnorakenzes, Elemaledai, the rake Galatio Kelophorios, Friedrich Lagmann, Mustafa the Rat, Saralasu Nuar, Fabia Osteropolus, Helenites Osteropolus, and Pulcher Osteropolus.

You, the DM, should expand the cast to include as many colorful NPCs as you can role play, to make the feast a memorable event. Some additional characters that may be interesting to include (all described in Book I of *Dawn of the Emperors*) are Helena Daphnotarthius, Dylan son of Penn, Theodosius Kantinomeiros, Senator Angelarian Canolocarius, and even Demetrium (Emperor Thincol's magist) in the guise of "Stefanious."

Besides these "name" characters, there are the many guards and servant slaves to be found in the villa.

The typical guard wears chain mail, and carries short sword and dagger. He does not bear a shield, unless expecting trouble. All of the guards in Helenites' house are of Thyatian blood, because no others have been able to tolerate the very xenophobic Hattian, Friedrich Lagmann, as a commander.

Combat Notes: Normal Human; AC 5 or 4 (with shield); hp 3; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword) or 1-4 (dagger); THAC0 20; Save NH; ML 7; AL L.

Slaves are not permitted to carry weapons, and are not prone to join in fights anyway. If forced to defend themselves, they will grab anything nearby that may serve as a weapon (kitchen knife, fire poker, small furniture, or whatever).

Combat Notes: Normal Human; AC 9; hp 2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; THAC0 20; Save NH; ML 5; AL N; average ability scores, no special abilities, appropriate general skills (cooking, groom, etc.). Languages: Thyatian, Alignment, plus possible native tongue if of non-Thyatian blood.

Events & Activities

This is the most free-wheeling, free-form chapter in the adventure. You are given a location and a cast of characters; the PCs have a reason to be there; and you know the final outcome: The characters will be drugged unconscious by the dastardly Maximitus Chrystatarius. Within these bounds, do what you will; let your descriptive flair and the characters' raucous activities go wild.

Of course, we do have some suggestions . . .

When the characters arrive, they aren't even asked if they have an invitation. The guard at the door just asks: "Have you been to one of the senator's parties before, or would you like a guide?" Of course the characters haven't been to one before, so unless they lie they will be provided with a young slave boy, Lucio, to be their guide.

Lucio can show the party around the grounds, lecture them on the history or function of this or that building or room, provide the names and occupations of various guests (plus related tidbits of juicy gossip), and help the characters get anything they might desire. "A pack of hungry dogs to fight over the discarded bones of your leg of pork? It may take us a while, m'lord, but I'll see what we can do. Do you prefer domesticated dogs, or the wild sort that roam in the streets?"

There's to be role playing aplenty with the numerous characters to be found at

the party. Maximitus will eagerly latch on to brawny PCs, eager to show them a good time, introduce them around, and try to talk them into risking their lives on the sands. Elemaledai is eager to converse with new people, especially foreigners; and she'll offer zsonga to everyone new she meets. The senator is too busy playing the host to pay much attention to anyone, but he will greet the characters at some point, especially if they are a popular topic of discussion among the other guests (due to appearance, rumored activities such as adventures, etc.). Mustafa simply lurks, as is his wont.

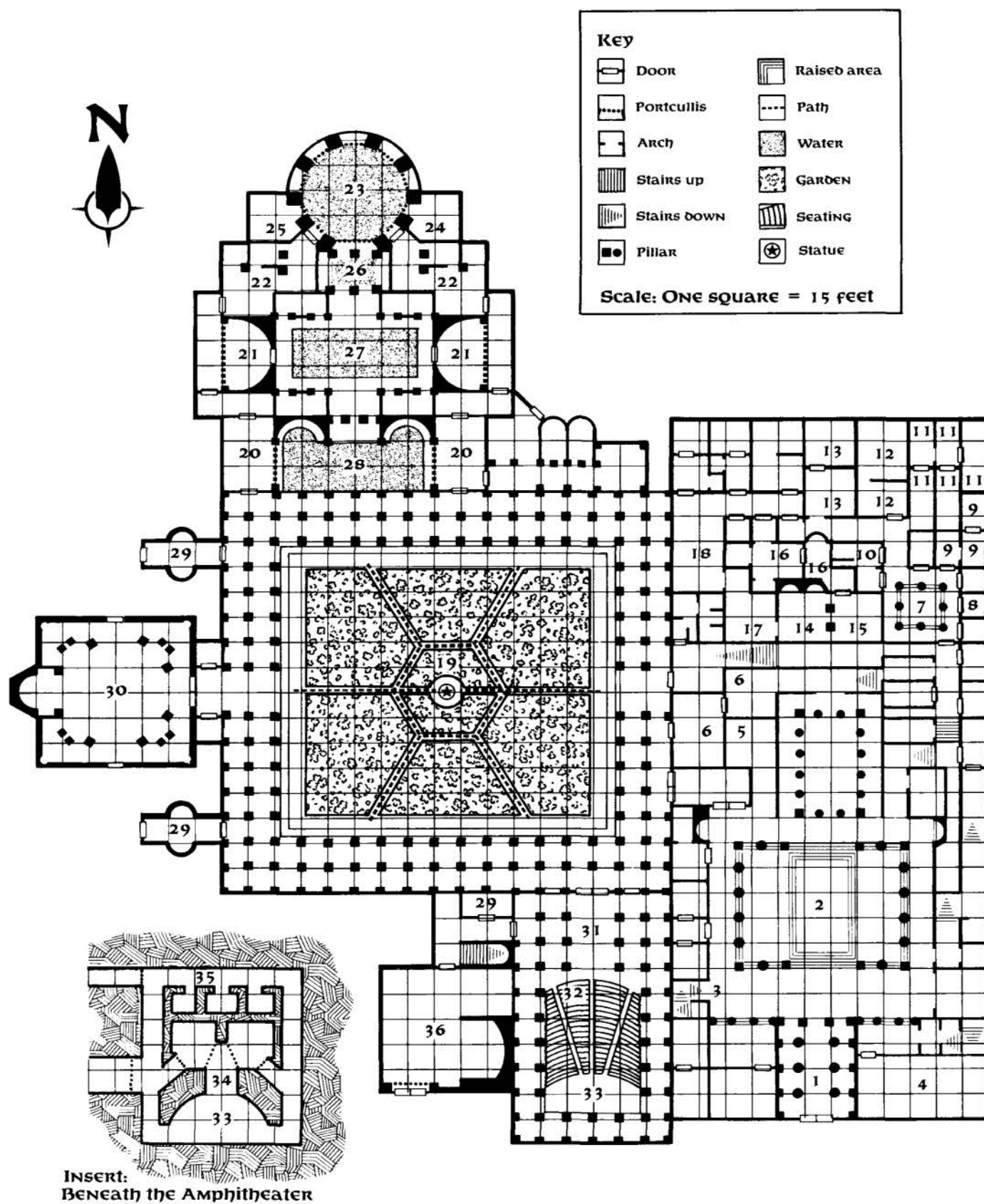
As the evening goes on, Maximitus becomes convinced that the party is gladiatorial material. Whether they want to or not, he is determined to get them on the sands. With the aid of Mustafa, he sets out to drug them; then he can have them taken to the Coliseum and made into gladiators.

If the character party is actually willing to enter the arena, this will have a minor effect on the next chapter—specifically, they will be in a room more comfortable than a cell. Maximitus will still try to have as much control as possible over the PCs. If he can't forge documents to make them slaves, he will at least draw up one of those notorious Thyatian contracts with pages of complicated fine print, the essence of which is that the characters are virtually the property of their arena "sponsor" (they can't travel without his approval, they must fight in matches as he says, he is their beneficiary, etc.).

Setting

This chapter takes place in Villa Osteropolus, an opulent, palatial complex built in the midst of Thyatis City's upper class district. The family calls it a "villa" (though the term properly designates a country mansion) because they see it as an oasis of rustic serenity in the middle of the bustling city. The word also conveys more than a little boasting about the luxury of the complex.

Map 2 Villa Osteropolis



Four distinct buildings make up the Villa Osteropolus. They are clustered around a great *peristyle*, a garden surrounded by a colonnade. These buildings are: the *domus* (house), the baths, the temple, and the amphitheater.

Villa Osteropolus is depicted on Map 2. A numbered key to that map follows; it will be useful as you referee this chapter. (Characters might also return here in the future, as well, in the course of their investigations.) In general, character descriptions are omitted from this key; full details on the villa's regular inhabitants and guests of the evening are to be found in the *Dramatis Personae* section.

Not every room in the villa has been detailed; many of these will contain little of interest to the adventurers. Should the characters want to explore such rooms, make up contents as you go. Some possibilities for the use of the rooms: guest rooms, servants' and guards' *cubacula* (bedrooms), storage, or unused.

The Domus

Rooms 1 through 18 are all in the main house, or domus.

History: The domus is the oldest structure in the Villa complex. It has been the home of the Osteropolus family since the family patriarch (and first of many senators), Gabrian, built the original building nearly four centuries ago, in AC 606. As the family grew in wealth and power the domus was expanded; nearby pieces of land were purchased and their buildings demolished to accommodate the additions.

1. Vestibulum

The columns that line this hall are *caryatids*; that is, they are carved in the shapes of standing women.

Mosaics on the walls and floor depict distinguished ancestors of the Osteropolus family.

This being the main entrance to the Villa, there are always at least two guards here. Late at night the great double doors are locked as well (unless there is an all-night party, as when the characters first come here).

2. Feast Hall

This huge room is the focal point of such feasts as the characters will attend, although characters are welcome to wander most anywhere else in the villa that they please.

During the party this hall is filled with tables, heaped with every type of food, common or exotic, to be found in the city. There are whole roast pigs, sides of beef, chickens and turkeys, numerous sauces, meat and fruit pastries, bread, exquisite cheeses, garlands of garnishes around each dish, plus additional trays of fruits and vegetables . . . More exotic dishes include birds' tongues, caviar, and perhaps tender edible morsels from fantastic beasts.

Gallons of drink are here as well: wines, cider, beer, distilled liquors, vegetable and fruit juices, milk of cows and goats, and even iced water. Describe the cornucopia as enticingly as you can—the players' mouths should water.

If there's something you don't mention that a PC would like, it's probably somewhere to be found, or a servant could be sent out to search Thyatis for it.

3. Stairs/Roof

The domus is single-storied, but much of the roof is flat or terraced, and open for people to walk upon. It is also well patrolled, as precaution against thieves and thrill-seeking rakes; two guards (with lanterns at night) will be invariably found here.

4. Odeion

This is a small theater designed specifically for musical entertainments. At one end of the room (farthest from the door) there is a small stage, and the rest of the floor is covered with couches upon which the audience may recline.

5. Andron

An andron is properly a room reserved for men, particularly for dining. In practice it is effectively reserved for small, private, business-related gatherings. Helenites, being a pragmatic man, would not hesitate to ignore tradition and permit an important woman guest, such as Elemaledai, entrance.

6. Kitchen

This is typical for the house and social rank of a Thyatian senator.

7. Private Atrium

In traditional Thyatian architecture, the atrium is the center and focus of the domus. It is often open to the sky in the middle, but this one is roofed. The atrium also plays a lesser role in a building of this size. It is the center of the private rooms of the family—the chambers of Helenites, his wife and their children, his mistress, and his chief servant, the major domus.

Because of the importance of the people in this part of the house, and the valuables kept in the rooms, there is invariably an alert guard in the atrium or adjacent hallways.

8. Friedrich's Cubiculum

Friedrich Lagmann, major domus of Villa Osteropolus, has this room for his private use. Besides normal belongings, it contains his personal wealth in a locked iron box (4 emperors, 34 lucins, and 15 asterii, plus five small gems worth a total of 612 gp). He also has a copy of a curious little book, a political tract of some sort, that purports to explain how far superior the Hattians are to other human nationalities (to say nothing of the obviously inferior demihuman and humanoid races). Underlining marks the passages that Friedrich considers particularly profound.

9. Fabia's Suite

Fabia has three rooms to herself, and she rarely emerges from them. Whenever she needs anything, she sends her personal servant, a beautiful, demure Ylari slave girl named Jasmine (normal human, age 15) for it. Fabia is very protective of Jasmine—especially against her lecherous husband. She is afraid that Helenites may turn his gaze the girl's way when he tires of Saralasu. Jasmine also reminds Fabia of her own daughter, who died at a young age.

The suite is luxuriously adorned, befitting the wife of someone as wealthy and important as Helenites Osteropolus. Fabia cares nothing for the trappings,



however, and were it not for Jasmine's constant tidying, the rooms would be a disaster area.

Besides rich dress and decor, the room contains a strong, iron safebox, with a complicated lock (— 15% to thieves' *open locks* roll), which contains Fabia's jewels. Keys to the box are carried by Jasmine and Helenites, but not Fabia. (Her person would be the first place robbers would look, goes the reasoning.) The pieces are too many and too varied to be described here in detail. Their total value is about 8,000 gp.

10. Pulcher's Suite

These two rooms were formerly occupied by Pulcher Osteropolus. Since he has been thrown out of the household, however, they are bare and unused.

11. Helenites' Suite

The four rooms of Helenites' suite are truly opulent. The floors are covered with extravagant mosaics, the walls with elegant frescoes. Helenites does not keep cash or jewels in his private chambers (apart from the spare change he might

carry—say, no more than 5 lucins total), but some valuable items are to be found: a couple of tapestries, four painted vases, a luxurious Ylari rug, a couple of obscure artifacts of the Thanegioth Archipelago, etc. Their total value is surely no less than 10,000 gp. They are also, as a rule, bulky and/or fragile, so PCs who were somehow in the position of looting the room would have a difficult time of it. If the situation arises, the DM should arbitrate it as he sees fit; in no case should low-level characters get as much treasure as there is here. There are numerous ways to relieve characters of their prizes: mishaps ("oops! you dropped the priceless vase!"), other thieves, and of course the pieces, being unique and thus recognizable, are difficult to exchange for cash or other useful things.

12. Saralasu's Suite

Saralasu, as Helenites' current favorite, has been given this adjoining two-room suite as her private quarters.

13. V.I.P. Guest Suite

The most honored of Helenites' guests are offered use of this suite, including a personal servant, for the duration of their stay.

14. Lararium

A small shrine devoted to Asterius, the patron immortals of the Osteropolus family, and Vanya, most popular of Thyatian immortals.

15. Vestiary

Vestments and paraphernalia for rituals and services are kept in here. Included among them is a gold altar service set worth 500 gp.

16. Phaedra's Suite

These rooms are the private quarters of the household cleric, Phaedra.

17. Library

The walls of this room are stacked to the ceiling with shelves of books (some of which might be rare or valuable). In truth, the priestess and servants make more use of the volumes than the Osteropolus family members.

18. Diaeta

This is a type of living room, where residents of this wing of the domus come to relax, socialize, read books from the adjoining library, and so forth.

Peristyle

History: The Osteropolus family gradually acquired the land on which the peristyle now stands over the years AC 712-839. In 843, Eusebius Osteropolus demolished the buildings that stood on the site (previously they had been leased to various tenants) and built the great garden to connect the domus and the newly-acquired baths.

The Baths

Rooms 20 through 28 are all part of the Osteropolus private baths.

History: These baths, completed in AC 744, were originally public, open to any resident of the city (as many baths still are). One of Helenites' ancestors, Eusebius Osteropolus, purchased the building and land from the Imperial treasury for a surprisingly paltry sum in AC 842. (Any historian who looks closely into the transaction will see that it was a kickback for political favors.)

To connect the baths and the domus, Eusebius demolished the various buildings that stood on the site of the peristyle, and had the great, private garden built in their place.

20. Apodyteria

One *apodyterium* (changing room) for each sex; east—male, west—female.

21. Exercise Rooms

These contain padded mats and other equipment.

22. Massage Rooms

Expert masseuses and masseurs, slave and free, work here to ease the aching muscles of residents and guests.

23. Caldarium

This is the hot bath; it contains a pool of water that is kept hot by furnaces below, tended by servants.

24. Sudatorium

This hot, steamy room is for sweating; it is similar to a sauna.

25. Laconicum

Hot and dry, this room is similar to the hot and wet sudatorium opposite.

26. Tepidarium

Warm-water bath.

27. Frigidarium

Cold-water bath.

28. Natatio

Swimming pool.

29. Guard Building

Each has two guards' bunks; one guard, awake, is always stationed here or nearby.

Chapel

This small, private temple incorporates five smaller shrines and a central, main chamber, the *cella*, over which there is a great dome. A hole at the top of the dome lets in sunlight. Around the hole are painted local constellations, with images of the immortals and legendary creatures painted over appropriate stars.

The inner sanctuary (*adyton*), directly opposite the temple entrance, is dedicated to Asterius, patron of trade, commerce and thievery. Asterius is the traditional patron immortal of the Osteropolus family. The four corners of the building contain lesser shrines, devoted to four other important, traditional figures of Thyatian religion (clockwise, from Asterius' sanctuary): Vanya, patroness of war and conquest; Koryis, patron of peace and prosperity; Valerias, the patroness of love and girder-on of weapons; and Thanatos, fearsome patron of death. This last, destructive immortal is granted a shrine out of fearful respect; only in desperation would a normal person make an offering at it.

Each of the five shrines includes a statue of the immortal, a small marble altar, votive candles (in gold candlesticks, worth 100 lucins in the lesser shrines, 200 in Asterius'), and a cushioned kneeler for prayer.

Phaedra, the household priestess, holds regular prayer services and inspirational sermons, as well as more formal religious ceremonies, in the domed cella. She is often served by lay assistants (servants who she has trained in the rudiments of the religious ceremonies).

History: The chapel was built by Flavian, grandson of Eusebius and grandfather of Helenites, in AC 901. He built it to honor Vanya for his safety and success in the campaigns of conquest led by Emperor Gabrionus IV against the Traladarans (whose land is now known as the Grand Duchy of Karamaikos). Its construction was financed by spoils of the war. Flavian was undoubtedly the Osteropolus most accomplished in the martial arts, as well as, the most pious. He seems to have been surprisingly honest in his political activities, as well.

The Amphitheater

The last six areas described are part of an arena/amphitheater complex, where Helenites stages gladiatorial shows for private audiences. It is also used for plays and other performances.

History: Helenites himself, being a great fan of the Arena, arranged the construction of the amphitheater when his father died and he fully inherited the family fortune 18 years ago.

32. Seats

33. Stage

34. Large Cells

35. Small Cells

36. Enclosed Practice Field

chapter II: the initiation

This chapter presents a straightforward little dungeon adventure, a gauntlet of sorts that the party must run as an initiation into the ranks of the gladiators. Normally only experienced gladiators would be given this trial, before being admitted into the inner circle of those aware of the Coliseum's secrets, and the dangers of the caverns below. Now, however, with the problems that have been arising, there is greater need. All gladiators must share in the duty of guarding against the caverns. The initiation that the characters will undergo is intended to demonstrate to the gladiators just how important that duty is.

After being dragged at Helenites' party, the characters awaken to find themselves together in a dark, damp, underground cell. They have been stripped of most possessions (which can be found at the house of Maximitus Chrystatarius, their new "master").

The next thing you are aware of is the throbbing pain in your head, like all the Emperor's legions are wearing steel boots and marching heavily on the inside of your skull. As your consciousness returns, you notice that the rest of your body, cold and aching, feels none too well either. You have been stripped of all possessions save minimal clothing.

Venturing to open your eyes, you see that you are in a dark place, a cell most likely, with walls glistening from cold moisture. A vague flicker of torchlight comes through the small, barred window on the door. Around you are several other people, beginning to get up, like you. You can't remember what you did, but it must have been something awful if you wound up here.

A shadow crosses the bars, and a loud voice (*too* loud, complain your ears) comes from it.

"Ah, the heroes awaken! Welcome to the Arena of Thyatis, my friends!" The voice is familiar; is it someone you met at the Osteropolus party?

"I'm terribly sorry that we couldn't

find more suitable accommodations on such short order—but with your obvious talent, we could hardly miss the chance to offer you the fame and fortune of the Arena, no? I'm sure you'll all make *fine* gladiators, and as you do, we'll all profit. You may even win your freedom!"

"Well, I must be going. Soon enough your trainers will be here to see you. They'll give you food, and maybe something for those nasty pains you must be suffering after last night's . . . excesses. And then they'll teach you to fight like proper Thyatian gladiators, rather than barbarians. Good day, my heroes!"

The voice is that of Maximitus Chrystatarius. His words could be simply read from the passage above, or paraphrased to players. It would be better to role play it out, however. The player characters will no doubt be angry and confused, and will demand some answers of their apparent captor. Play out the interaction. At the suggestion that they are slaves, characters may protest that they are free, perhaps even Thyatian citizens. Maximitus just laughs at this. He is arrogant and scornful, knowing that he is perfectly safe from the party, and trusting that his trainers will forge them into proper gladiator-slaves in due time.

After Maximitus leaves, a servant comes to provide a meal of stale bread and lukewarm beef broth. (It is delivered through a special hatch, which should foil escape attempts.)

The party is then left alone for several hours (though, in this underground cell, they have nothing by which to gauge the passage of time or the time of day). Give the players time to discuss their plight, if they wish. Then proceed to the next event:

Later—who can say how long? it is so hard to judge time's passage in this miserable pit—your attention is attracted by the sound of footsteps and a growing glow outside your cell. You

then hear the sound of a key turning in the lock; slowly the door opens.

In step seven cloaked figures, hoods over their faces. Four hold ready short swords, two hold bright torches, and the seventh stands before the rest, enshrouded in his coarse, brown cloak.

This last one speaks; his voice croaks hoarsely as he names each of you. "You are gladiators, by the will of your master, Chrystatarius," he says, "but we of the Arena have yet to test you ourselves, before you will be one of us."

At the raising of his hand, which seems particularly gnarled, twisted and discolored in the torchlight, the four figures with swords come over to you, and pull you to your feet.

One by one the characters are blindfolded, then all are hustled out of the cell.

The cloaked figures are gladiators. The one with the croaking voice is Yalag, the orc. Carrying torches are Marcus the Beastmaster and Carolus Anthemion. These three characters are described in the *Dramatis Personae*. The other four gladiators are named Tremanov the Traladaran, "Red" Fergus, Karolobi, and Adrianus (stats for all four: AC 5; F3; hp 16 each; MV 90'(30'); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 + 1 (short swords and strength bonus); THAC0 18; Save F2; ML 10; AL N). All of the gladiators are wearing chain mail (AC 5) under their robes, and carrying short swords (damage 1-6).

The cloaked gladiators will answer no questions, and should be capable of keeping the party firmly in line (especially considering that the PCs are unarmed). If characters are resolute in wanting to try a break for freedom—let them try. The gladiators will fight to incapacitate rather than kill, unless the scene turns really ugly (e.g., a PC gets ahold of a weapon and kills a gladiator). If characters somehow get past the cloaked gladiators, they still have the maze of the coliseum basement and lower depths, and plentiful guards above. They'll surely be caught and returned to their cell, in a worse state of

health than when they left. And the gladiators will just be intent on their initiation again.

After a long time of walking, punctuated by the rare opening of a door or descent of a stairway, your blindfolds are removed. Looking around you, you see that you are in a large, natural cavern, the dimensions of which cannot be fully ascertained in the torchlight. Near you is a small pile of armor, weapons, a couple of sacks and some torches. Behind you is a door, through which you came.

The croaking figure speaks again. "We are now far beneath Thyatis City, directly below the Coliseum. This may seem to you to be the very bowels of the earth, but I assure you—we have hardly even penetrated her skin. This is your initiation. We have here for you armor, weapons, as suit gladiators; torches, for light; and some water to ease your thirst. We will close and lock this iron door behind us. You have but this one task: to find your way back up to the level of your cell—alive.

"Here is some advice: At all costs, never go down deeper than you must. We have never found the limits of these caverns—if any there are—and things of the depths are left well enough alone. To go deeper is to invite certain death.

"I can tell you no more until you succeed—if you succeed."

The cloaked figures hand one of you a burning torch. They go back through the doorway, closing the heavy, iron portal with a mighty crash that echoes in the subterranean distances. The final sound you hear from behind it is the clicking of a key.

The Coliseum Caverns

The characters have been deposited in Room 1 of the Upper Caverns (see Map 3), beneath the Coliseum. These caves are natural, though they have in places been altered by human hands. The Thy-

atians discovered the caverns as they dug the Lower Basement (Map 4), and meant to take advantage of the natural spaces, whose extent is to this day unknown, in expanding their complex. The onslaught of monsters, both those who had escaped from the arena and others who came up from within the earth, led to the abortion of those plans. The caverns have largely been sealed off. All possible points of entry are guarded, and the fact that the Coliseum Caverns exist at all is a secret kept among the gladiators and staff of the Arena.

Points of interest on the maps are numbered; keys to these numbers follow. The order of the numbers and maps goes from the bottom upward, since the party begins moving freely at the lowest level described. (There are lower levels, but characters of the party's level would not long survive there.)

Wandering Monsters

Very few creatures make their homes in the Upper Caverns and the reaches of the Lower Basement level. The reason is simple—anything that set itself up in a permanent lair would soon be driven out by the gladiators, who are sworn to protect Thyatis from the menaces below. The Upper Caverns are, in effect, a sort of "no man's land" between the territory of the Coliseum and the subterranean dominions of monsters, shadow elves, and so forth. There is an unspoken, and sometimes uneasy, truce here: The gladiators have no intention of publicizing the caverns' existence, so neither they nor adventurers penetrate the depths and disturb their inhabitants; nor do the creatures from below sally forth to raid and pillage the surface.

This "no man's land" does afford the place where paths may cross. Scavengers and outcasts come up from below; gladiators (including initiates, such as the characters) and the occasional escaped convict or monster come down from above. Anyone passing through is thus likely to encounter wandering monsters rather than monster lairs.

These wandering monsters are the

substantial encounters of this chapter. The maps provide the setting, and the keys the description; but the inhabitants are found moving about.

Thus, unlike other adventures, there are no random encounters.

Describe the PCs' pathway through the caverns in vivid detail, judge the various actions of the exploring characters as they go along, and when the time is right: strike! with the encounter you think would add the most of whatever element you want—from suspense to humor—from the list given here. You need not use all of the encounters, just enough to keep the plot moving.

1. Wolves: As wolves are among the most popular animals in the Coliseum battles, so too are they frequently found in the caverns if they escape their captors. They are vicious, ravenously hungry, and have long lost any fear of humans they may once have had. Number encountered: 1d4 + 1.

Wolves: AC 7; HD 2 + 2; hp 11 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; THAC0 17; Save F1; ML 8; AL N. They have no treasure.

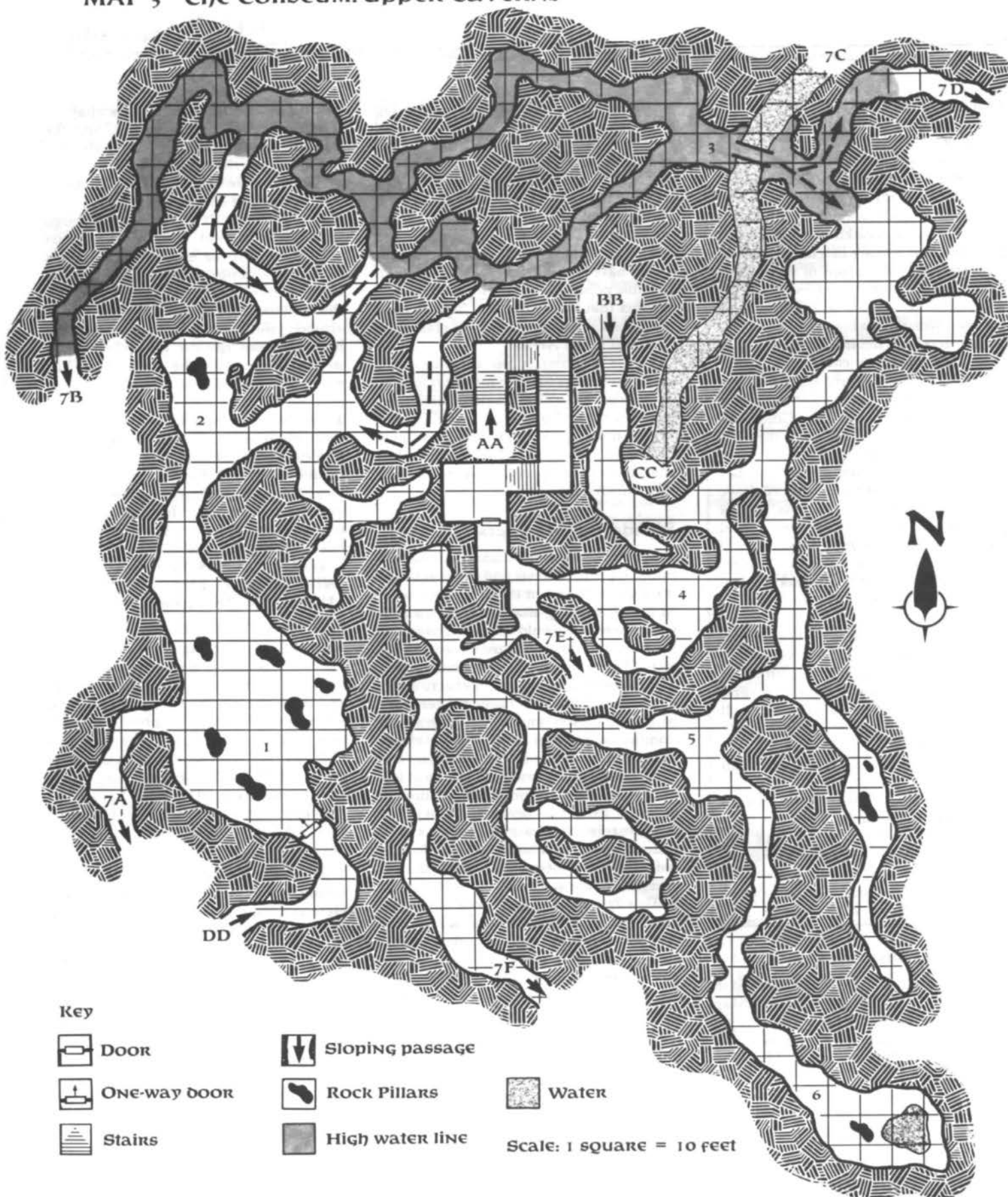
2. Shrews: These giant mammals are native to the subterranean world. Quick, vicious predators, giant shrews always gain the initiative on their first attack, and have +1 on their initiative rolls in subsequent rounds of combat. Their attack is so ferocious that any victim of 3 Hit Dice (3rd level) or less must save versus Death Ray or run away in fear. Number encountered: 1d4 + 1.

Giant Shrew: AC 4; HD 1*; hp 4 each; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; THAC0 19; Save F1; ML 10; AL N.

3. Kobolds: Explorers of the Upper Caverns come from below as well as above. Here is a band of seven kobolds, similar to human adventuring parties, searching for trophies, fame and treasure. They will probably regard the party as nasty, hostile beasts to be slain.

Normal Kobolds (6): AC 6; HD 1/2; hp 3 each; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 - 1 (short swords); THAC0 19; Save NH; ML 8; AL C. These kobolds are wearing leather armor and carrying

MAP 3 The Coliseum: Upper Caverns



spears and shields.

Kobold Leader (1): AC 4; HD 1 + 1; hp 6; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 + 1 (short sword); THAC0 18; Save F2; ML 9; AL C. Bears chain mail, shield and a *short sword* + 1.

Each kobold carries 1d6 gp, 1d10 sp and 1d20 cp. The coins are a motley assortment from throughout the Known World; some may be entirely unfamiliar to the party. The leader also wears a thick bracelet of silver and mother-of-pearl, worth 105 gp.

4. Giant Centipedes: Number encountered: 2d4; AC 9; HD 1/2; hp 2; #AT 1; Dmg poison (causes violent illness for 10 days; victim can only move at 1/2 speed, cannot fight, etc.); THAC0 19; Save NM; ML 7; AL N.

5. Rurtifus: A gray-furred wererat, always in man-rat shape, Rurtifus lives primarily by scavenging remains left here in the upper caverns.

He first entered the caverns thirty years ago, as a gladiator initiate. He fought and killed a wererat in the course of his initiation. He survived the ordeal, but contracted lycanthropy in the process. Soon after becoming a member of the Order of the Sands, he discovered his new nature. Rather than face public humiliation at his changing personality and shape, he fled into the caverns, deep inside the earth, to places no one of the surface had ventured before.

Rurtifus made many strange discoveries as he explored the unlit realms, and found some kinship among its inhabitants. Still, something deep within him led him back toward his surface home. Thanks to the *cursed ring* that he found in his subterranean travels, he appears constantly in man-rat shape. This prevents him from getting out of the caverns through the Coliseum, and he knows of no other exit that leads to the exterior of the planet. (He has found exits to the Hollow World interior, however. . . .)

Ring of Rurtifus (cursed): This magical ring, which its current wearer has named after himself, is a curious and singular item. Its wearer must save versus spells each round that it is worn or fall

prey to its cursed effects: namely, the incontrovertible conviction that the wearer has been turned into a normal-sized rat. The wearer is prone to behave as though he were of rat size, fur-covered, etc. This leads to problems at times; as when, for example, the deluded character hides behind a bushel of wheat. Something actually the size of a rat would be hidden, but of course a human remains perfectly visible. (Wearers of this ring have an understandable impression that they suffer from bad luck—"Dang! How'd they know I was hiding here?") Those deluded by this ring do not notice that they can still speak and wield tools, though rats cannot.

Rurtifus does not present a serious physical threat to the party (although, given the chance, he'd love some fresh meat). This encounter should focus on role-playing rather than combat. Rurtifus is certainly chaotic, but not thoroughly evil. He also may seem more than a little bit silly, being deluded into thinking he is many times smaller than he is in fact. Ham up and exaggerate the humor of Rurtifus' delusion, while making sure to bring in the darker side of his wererat tendencies (culinary drooling over party members' limbs, etc.). Rurtifus also remembers being a gladiator, and retains a bit of the gladiator's bravado.

Thanks to his travels, Rurtifus may provide the party with some interesting, incidental tidbits of information; and the fact that he knows the caverns so well may make him even useful in steering clear of hazards and finding a way out. At the same time, if the party members seem gullible, he might try to lead them into a trap. . . .

Wererat: AC 7; HD 3*; hp 14; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword) or 1-4 (bite); THAC0 17; Save F3; ML 8; AL C.

6. Carrion Crawler: This creature is going along its usual rounds—cleaning out whatever it can find in whatever underground place it finds itself—and it is likely to recognize the party as something to incorporate into its menu.

Carrion crawler: AC 7; HD 3 + 1; hp

15; #AT 8; THAC0 16; Dmg paralysis; Save F2; ML 9; AL N.

The Upper Caverns

1. Great Cavern

This is where the characters are left by the gladiators. The iron door to the south through which they think they came is locked, and there is no keyhole (or any other feature) on the cavern side.

As mentioned previously, here lies a collection of items left for the party members to improve their chances of survival. It includes five torches, a day's water (but no food), plus weapons and armor. These last items are the types used by gladiators: broad swords, short swords, nets, tridents, cesti, etc. (see p. 22 for damages). There will be daggers for magic-users and clubs or staves for a cleric. The armor is no better than leather, but there is a shield for each character. The characters are hungry, sore, and pretty miserable.

2. Fungus

A light gray mushroom-like fungus growth covers much of this area. The stuff is nutritious, if not delicious, and if the characters do not eat here, they will attack with a -1 to hit penalty until they do eat something. The passages north of this chamber all slant downward slightly and smell damp past the high water mark.

3. Bridge

The underground river is here crossed by a bridge of Thyatian construction. Treacherous footing and a sheer rise at CC makes upstream travel hazardous, and those going northward (down) risk an unknown fate. When the Coliseum is drained, water will fill this level to the high water marks; note that the passages east of the bridge slant sharply upward.

4. Graffiti

Scratched here on the wall, in clear, modern letters, is: "Vanya save us from the beasts."

5. The Ring

Examination of a glint of light reveals a gold ring (worth 10 gp) lying on the ground. It is engraved with unknown

MAP 4 The Coliseum: Lower Basement

Key



Door



Portcullis



ONE-way door



Stairs DOWN



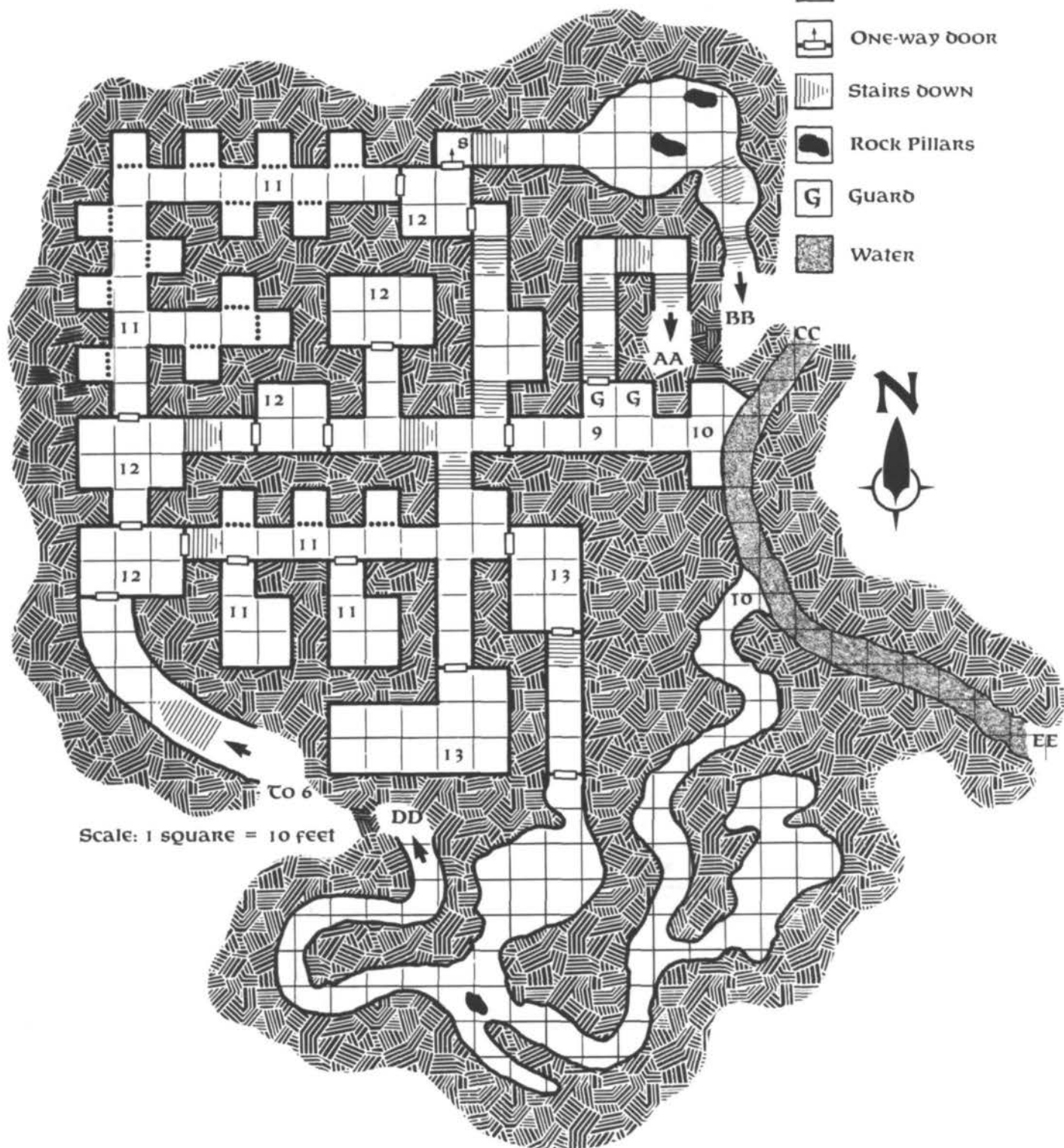
Rock Pillars



Guard



Water



markings (shadow elf). Characters who know the elvish tongue have a 50% chance of being able to puzzle out a pronunciation, just as a modern English reader might decipher letters in a medieval manuscript. The word itself, "Aegluvion," makes no sense (it's a name, actually). The ring has no magical powers; it was dropped here accidentally by shadow elf explorers.

6. Corpse

A horribly mutilated corpse, human or at least humanoid (one can't tell for sure in its state of decay), is sprawled here; rotting and bloated, it lies face down in a small, stagnant pool. On it can be found a silver dagger, 3 lucins and 4 asterii.

7A-F. Routes Downward

Only the foolish would ignore Yalag's advice and travel deeper into the bowels of the Known World . . . and the passages slant downward sharply here. Unless you want to create your own sub-levels, discourage players from going in this direction by describing foul odors or intimidating sounds wafting up from below. As a last resort, a difficult encounter or two can be used:

Minotaur: AC 6; HD 6; hp 27; MV ; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1-8 (battle axe) or 1-6/1-6; THAC0 14; Save F6; ML 12; AL C; Treasure: A platinum nose-ring worth 25 gp; and a leather arm-band, studded with silver and five small garnets, 420 gp.

Basilisk: AC 4; HD 6 + 1**; MV 60' (20'); #AT 2; Dmg 1-10/petrification; THAC0 13; Save F6; ML 9; AL N.

If you do decide to expand the dungeon, of course, the PCs could face a host of challenges—if they can survive. The caverns lead into the underground domain of the shadow elves (see GAZ 13 *Shadow Elves*), and ultimately to the Hollow World beyond.

The Lower Basement

This level is used much less than it was in the past. Guards sleep in barracks in the upper basement, and only prisoners who require solitary confinement (which is

rare) are placed in cells here. The storage rooms are still used, however; they contain provisions, weapons and armor.

8. Skeleton and Iron Door

The iron door is featureless on this side, like the door in area 1. Lying next to it is a human skeleton, in gladiator armor—an initiate who failed the test years ago. No valuables remain.

9. Gladiator Guard Post

This door normally is locked, but now is left ajar on the expectation of the initiates' return. Two gladiators are posted here as guards against monsters from the depths, and to welcome the initiates when they return.

10. Underground Stream

This underground stream has a spring source, and it is also fed by the Coliseum's reservoir. Thus, when there are heavy rains or if the arena is filled with water that is then drained (say, after a mock naval battle), this stream swells. It sometimes floods area 3 of the Upper Caverns; on this level, however, the passage is high above the stream's level.

At CC, the stream enters the Upper Caverns (Map 4), and from EE it runs to a large drain in the upper basement of the Coliseum.

11. Unused Cells

These cells were used in the days when criminals were regularly thrown to wild beasts and monsters for the entertainment of crowds in the Coliseum. They are now deserted and locked away; a couple contain skeletons, but that is all. No one goes to the cells north of the guard barracks at all.

12. Guard Barracks

These rooms are now unused.

13. Storage

Success

When (or if) the party emerges alive from the caverns, they are led by the gladiators posted to guard the entry point up through the basements, to the meeting place of the gladiators. There Yalag addresses them:

"You have done well, Initiates; you are hereby inducted into the ranks of the Coliseum gladiators.

"You may have heard of the Order of the Sands, a group that protects the rights and interests of gladiators. Here in the capital, the order has a secret, higher purpose: the protection of Thyatis City from the beasts from below.

"This purpose has been secret from its beginning; it keeps a peace, an unspoken truce, by which neither we of the surface nor they of the depths will invade the other. Our Emperor, Thincol, was himself a gladiator—and he knew this secret, and has kept it all his years on the throne.

"In the past not all gladiators here have been initiated; it was not necessary. But of late there has been increasing trouble from below, and there has been weakness among us. We do not know the causes of these troubling things; we know only that we must muster every resource to uphold our duty and keep our silence.

"We must now swear you, too, to secrecy. You are slaves, but as gladiators you now are our equals, with honor and binding word. We would also ask you to take an oath to uphold our mission of protection, even unto death."

If the PCs decline, the gladiators give them a chance to reconsider. Now that they know the danger that lurks below, how can they not see their duty to protect the city from it—especially having survived the ordeal themselves?

The gladiators are ready to kill to keep their secret, this should be conveyed to the party before their final decision.

If the characters take the oath of protection, they will be branded with the symbol of the Coliseum gladiators: crossed short swords in a circle, representing the gladiators' weapons.

Finally, the characters are returned to their cell, which the other gladiators have made more comfortable by adding sleeping mats, blankets, and a decent meal.

"Training will begin tomorrow at dawn," says Yalag.

chapter III: a day at the circus

This chapter, like Chapter I, provides a setting, characters, and some ideas for activities. The PCs are now accepted among the gladiators. They are training, and will be fighting their own battles on the sands while all of Thyatis watches.

People

The following characters detailed in the *Dramatis Personae* are to be found in the arenas: Carolus Anthemion, Marcus the Beastmaster, and Yalag. Additionally, there are numerous other gladiators and guards. The general statistics that follow for them are minimums; many, especially among the gladiators, will be considerably more powerful. Make up any additional material that you wish before play or on the spot.

Gladiators: AC 7 (leather armor equivalent); F 1; hp 5; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (sword 1-8, short sword 1-6, trident 1-6, net (entangles, no damage), whip 1-2 or entanglement, cestus 1-3, spear 1-6, halberd 1-10, pole axe 1-10); THAC0 19; Save F1; ML 9; AL varies.

Guards: AC 4 (chain mail, shield); Normal Human; hp 3; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (spear or short sword); THAC0 20; Save NH; ML 9; AL L or N.

Events & Activities

How long you spend in this chapter is up to the tastes and temperament of yourself and your players. If you enjoy the setting, characters may be here not only in the midst of this adventure, but they may return when it is completed. They may enjoy the challenge of arena combat, and with success they may win fame and riches as celebrities in Thyatis, as have such persons as Anaxibius and even Emperor Thincol himself.

Be sure to play more than just combat, however; have role-playing interaction with the other gladiators, even with monsters and the fans in the audience.

Games in the Coliseum occur as frequently as there are rich people and organizations willing and able to sponsor

them; this usually means once a week. There are also national celebrations, such as the Emperor's Birthday (22 Flaurmont), during which the Imperial Treasury sponsors the circus games.

Most contests involve gladiators against monsters or animals, or duels of gladiator against gladiator. (Sometimes more than one such duel goes on at the same time, or gladiators are organized into opposing teams.) For pure spectacle, criminals sentenced to death are thrown on the sands with minimum, if any, armament (e.g., a dagger), and then wild animals or hungry monsters are released.

The most exotic event (which usually only the Emperor can afford to sponsor) is the enactment of full-scale naval battles, with the arena water-filled.

The victor of a duel is often showered with flowers and coins from the cheering crowd (mostly copper; roll for 5d4 denarii, 2d6 - 2 asterii, and 1d6 - 1 lucins). He also receives a pay bonus (usually 10 gp, though more for famous gladiators). Slave gladiator bonuses go to the master, who also receives their wages, but they may keep the showered gifts.

The one crucial event to occur in this chapter, besides as much arena combat as suits you, is the following:

One day of the games, there is a match in which Carolus Anthemion is supposed to face the snow ape (see monstrous opponents, below). Though the rookie gladiator hasn't yet faced a one-on-one combat, he has shown great promise and popularity, and the betting odds are called in his favor. At the last minute, however, Carolus is found to be suddenly and quite violently ill; there is no way he can possible fight as scheduled. The strongest PC in the party is asked to step in and take his place.

Play out the combat with as much drama and excitement as you can, with plentiful allusions to the cheering crowd, the desperate growls of the ape, the flailing, attacking limbs and spraying blood. The snow ape is a formidable opponent, but a strong PC should be able to defeat it. Carolus would not have been able.

The reason for his illness is the drug, *zzonga*; it was intended that he would lose the match, against the expectations of many bet-placers, and to the advantage of Helenites Osteropolus. What the senator could not have known was that Carolus is a werewolf, in fact, and the *zzonga* mixes poorly with his unusual metabolism, causing a debilitating illness and convulsions instead of blissful stupor.

Helenites suffers a considerable loss as a result of the change in the program, and he is none too pleased. He suspects that Maximitus Chrystatarius is behind his change of "luck"; at the least, the upstart gladiator is listed as a slave of Chrystatarius . . . closer inspection reveals that this "slave" was a free adventurer not long ago at Helenites' own party.

Something underhanded is afoot, thinks Helenites, and for once he is not himself behind it (he thinks). Action is demanded.

Setting

Gladiatorial fights take place in the Coliseum, naturally enough, which is shown by Maps 5, 6 and 7. Map 5 depicts the seating level of the Coliseum (the statues around the top all depict past Emperors); Map 6 shows the arena floor itself, entrances and exits, and the stairs that are beneath the seats. Map 7 depicts the upper basement of the Coliseum.

A key to numbered areas on all three maps follows.

1. Emperor's Box

The best view is here reserved for the sponsor of the games, Emperor Thincol, and their guests. For the games the box is decked out lavishly, but at other times it is left bare.

2. Emperor's Private Room

During the games this room is filled with couches, refreshments and so forth, so that the sponsor, the Emperor, and their guests might come back here and socialize during or between events.

Monstrous Opponents

To make things easier for the DM, here are a list of monsters that may face the PCs as opponents, or may be found in the cells beneath the Coliseum. Feel encouraged to expand it.

Great Cats

Ferocious and proud, various great cats have long been popular in the circus, so much so that to be condemned to die in the arenas is known as being "thrown to the lions," whether or not felines will actually be involved.

For easy reference, a summary of the great cats from the D&D Basic Set is provided:

Mountain Lion: AC 6; HD 3 + 2; hp 16; MV 150' (50'); #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; THAC0 16; Save F2; ML 8; AL N.

Panther: AC 4; HD 4; hp 18; MV 210' (70'); #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; THAC0 16; Save F2; ML 8; AL N.

Lion: AC 6; HD 5; hp 23; MV 150' (50'); #AT 3; Dmg 2-5/2-5/1-10; THAC0 15; Save F3; ML 9; AL N.

Tiger: AC 6; HD 6; hp 27; MV 150' (50'); #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; THAC0 14; Save F3; ML 9; AL N.

Sabre-Toothed Tiger: AC 6; HD 8; hp 36; MV 150' (50'); #AT 2; Dmg 1-8/1-8/2-16; THAC0 12; Save F4; ML 10; AL N.

Snow Ape

AC 6; HD 3 + 1; hp 11; MV 90' (30'); #AT 2; THAC0 16; Dmg 1-6/2-12; Save F 3; ML 7; AL C.

The snow ape uses a club and hugs (2-12). Once the hug hits, damage is automatically scored until its morale breaks or it is killed. If cornered, its morale increases to 11. This particular specimen was captured high in the Altan Tepes Mountains, and it has been weakened by its capture and transportation. Its considerable cost was paid by Heraclis Metaxion, an importer and retailer of exotic, expensive furs (and the cousin of Helenites' wife, Fabia).

Young Triceratops

AC 2; HD 8; hp 36; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; Dmg 3-18; THAC0 12; Save F6; ML 8; AL N.

This exotic oddity from the past was brought back from the Thanegioth Archipelago. If PCs (probably other than those in this adventure) have already played module *X1, The Isle of Dread*, perhaps they were the ones who captured it.

Giant Weasel

AC 7; HD 4 + 4; hp 22; MV 150' (50'); #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 15; Save F 3; ML 8; AL N.

Giant weasels have infravision (30') and track prey by scent. This is another exotic animal supplied by the fur importer Heraclis Metaxion.

This particular weasel is about 9 feet long and covered with gold fur. It holds on and continues to suck blood if its bite is successful, inflicting 2-8 points per

round until weasel or prey is dead. They prefer wounded prey, so a bleeding gladiator will be attacked before an unharmed comrade.

Wolf

AC 7; HD 2 + 2; hp 11; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1; THAC0 17; Dmg 1-6; Save F1; ML 8 or 10; AL N.

Wolves are a staple for arena combat, since they can be captured on mainland Thyatis, relatively near to the city. They also are less likely to thrill a crowd, because they are seen so often. Typically wolves are featured earlier in a show and against newer gladiators; or they are featured in a pack against gladiators or other monsters. Many Thyatians find the wolf pack's way of fighting fascinating, and military officers are sometimes required to study wolf pack fighting as part of their training in strategy.

To make them more vicious, wolves in the arena are made to go hungry for days before a show. Because of their hunger, their morale is 8 (in groups of up to 3) or 10 (in packs) rather than the usual 6 or 8.

Dire Wolf

AC 6; HD 4 + 1; MV 150' (50'); #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 15; Save F2; ML 8; AL N.

Larger, more intelligent, and rarer than normal wolves, dire wolves are somewhat popular arena attractions. Solo-fighting one's first dire wolf is like a rite of passage for Thyatian gladiators.

3. The Arena

The floor of the arena is covered with coarse sand and gravel, beneath which are stones. The whole is watertight, so that it may be filled with water and naval combats or fights with sea monsters may be exhibited. Water is also applied to the sand for cleaning after every game. Drains around the edge of the arena (see map 6 for more detail) can be opened and closed as needed.

4. Guard Barracks

Each of these rooms contains the bunks and personal belongings of several guards; usually one will be found in each.

5. Cells

These cells hold monsters, animals and convicts for the games. The large, round cells are for particularly large monsters, such as dinosaurs and drag-

ons; there is a 10% chance that each is occupied by some such beast. Roll 1d6 to determine the contents of other cells:

Roll	Result
1	Monster
2-3	Animals
4	Convict(s)
5-6	Empty

See Activities, above, for monsters and animals, or take them straight out of the



D&D® rulebooks or the *Creature Catalogue*. Of course, be sure the monster you choose fits in the cell. . . .

Convicts are usually normal humans (AC 9; Normal Human; hp 2; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (unarmed); THAC0 20; Save NH; ML 6; AL C). They may also be 1st level thieves (same stats, except T1; hp 3; THAC0 19; ML 7) or fighters (same stats, except F1; hp 5; THAC0 19; ML 8).

6. Passage Down

This passage leads to the Coliseum's lower basement (see Map 4 and Chapter II for details).

7. Reservoir

This huge reservoir collects water drained from the arena through grates and the radiating passages. The doors and stairs at the ends of these passages are for maintenance, and are very rarely used. (Swollen shut from moisture, an open doors roll is needed to get any of them open.) The reservoir itself

drains into an underground stream (see the Lower Basement and Upper Caverns—Maps 4 and 3, keyed in Chapter II), that leads into the earth's unknown depths.

8. Guard Post

An arena guard is posted here 24 hours a day. They are notoriously easy to bribe.

9. Gladiator Quarters

Each of these is the living space of two or more gladiators.

10. Kitchen

For use by the gladiators.

11. Pantry

Sponsors of the games pay to keep this well stocked with food.

12. Lounge

A place for the gladiators to relax or

gather; this is where the last part of the characters' initiation occurs.

13. Catacombs Entrance

This passage leads to the Thyatian Catacombs, a network of tunnels (distinct from the Caverns of Chapter II) that honeycomb the rock beneath the city. They have been used for burial since time immemorial. More information on the Catacombs is provided in module *DDA2, Legions of Thyatis*.



After the day of Carolus' illness, the characters return to their "cell." It is a much more comfortable room than their original place of incarceration, since they've become known as gladiators, but their movement is still restricted.

That is—it *has* been. This particular night, strangely, their door is left unlocked . . . a veritable invitation for escape, or at least a breath of free air.

As they walk (or sneak) away from the Coliseum, a couple of men (Brutus and Antonius) walk up along side and match their pace down the street. It is almost as if these men were expecting the adventurer/slave/gladiators (which they were). Antonius speaks to them tauntingly, while Brutus glares and flexes his pectorals:

"So you slaves think you're pretty hot stuff, huh? Think you can just get out in the Coliseum and be big heroes huh? Well, you've gotta watch who you mess with, you know? You've gotta watch, 'cause maybe you're not supposed to be heroes sometimes, you know? You must think you're pretty nice, pretty wonderful people, doing lots for other people. Really generous, you know? Sticking yourself on the line for buddies, huh? Maybe that's how you do it where you're from. But Brutus here and the rest of the boys—me and the boys just wanna remind you: This is Thyatis, you know? You gotta remember to watch out for yourself more, and keep your nose out of other people's business, get it?"

Antonius tolerates no replies; he just talks louder over anything the characters try to say. When he gets to the end of his spiel, the group should have come to a darkened part of the city—warehouse district, the shadows of the arena, etc. Here the six other thugs materialize, and the whole crew proceed to beat up the character party (or so they hope).

If the PCs have weapons (not likely, since they are only given weapons for training and in actual arena battles), half the thugs will fight with their short

swords, while the other half, including Brutus, will attempt to disarm them (see insert on unarmed combat for details). The thugs will attempt try to knock out all the characters, or stun and damage them to the point of virtual helplessness.

The PCs might do very well here; if Brutus is killed or knocked out, for instance, the other thugs are likely to run away in different directions. (Antonius will be the first to do so.)

On the other hand, they could do quite poorly, and this runs risks; particularly because they are absent without leave from the Coliseum. If found and identified by the authorities, they would be returned to the Coliseum, and would likely suffer penalties as runaways as well. If this seems likely to happen (as would be the case if the party is badly mauled by the thugs), you might drop hints to suggest that at least one character should try to escape, to have a chance at freeing the party if and when they are found by the authorities or Chrystatarius. In any case, the characters should be made to realize that more is going on around them than they might have guessed.

Characters can find out who arranged the ambush by one of two ways: 1) via Flavia, the urchin; or 2) by questioning one of the thugs when he regains consciousness.

Flavia will volunteer to "find" the information the characters need; she's been following the thugs since Elemaledai paid them off. For a generous crossing of her palm (not less than five asterii, in any case), she'll share her knowledge with the party.

In either case, the PCs will find that it was a simple contact and offer: Two gold lucins apiece for beating up some second-rate gladiators (which is itself a pleasure for these hoodlums . . .). It was a woman who arranged it—a red-haired Alpathian sorceress.

The description of Elemaledai may click in the minds of characters who met Elemaledai at Helenites' party. Otherwise, a few inquiries around the arena, or even just casual conversation, may identify the sorceress. She's known about the arena, but not discussed much, be-

cause she's the sole supplier of zzonga.

The Thugs

Antonius, Thug Leader

A small, wiry man, Antonius was hired to give the characters a lecture in Arena etiquette. He's not directly connected to Maximitus; Elemaledai just hired him for this little job. Antonius has a big, obnoxious mouth, but no interest in getting involved in actual fighting.

Combat Notes: Normal human; AC 9; hp 2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 1d6 - 1 (short sword, strength penalty); Save NH; ML 6; AL N; S 8; I 12; W 9; D 9; C 8; Ch 9. Antonius is not confident enough to fight unarmed.

Brutus, Thug Leader

Brutus is large, imposing, and a man of few words. He has always felt that his physique speaks for itself. Indeed, a ripple of the muscles across his usually bare chest has often been enough to send everyone around scurrying to do or find whatever might please him.

Combat Notes: 6th level fighter; AC 6 (ring, dexterity); hp 39; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg by weapon + 3; Save F6; ML 10; AL N; S 18; I 8; W 8; D 14; C 13; Ch 11.

Brutus has a pair of nasty daggers strapped to his side, but he much prefers to fight with brass knuckles (treated as unarmed strike with heavy object in hand). While he scorns armor as such, he does commonly wear a *ring of protection* + 2.

Brutus carries or wears a few personal valuables: An earring of amethyst set in gold (worth 43 lucins), three non-magical electrum rings (worth 4 lucins each), and some loose change (a lucin, 3 asterii, and 12 denarii).

Thugs (6)

These are common Thyatian thugs, ruffians off the street who will do just about anything for money.

Combat Notes: Normal Humans; AC 7 (leather armor); hp 4 each; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg by weapon + 1; Save NM; ML 6; AL C; all

Unarmed Combat

This is an abbreviated version of the unarmed combat system described in Book One of the *D&D® Companion Set*. The striking rules have been simplified and wrestling has been omitted entirely, but this should be enough for the DM to referee a rousing brawl.

Note: The Disarming Procedure described below is new. If Brutus and his thugs find the characters armed, they can make use of this maneuver.

Striking

Besides potentially doing real damage, strike attacks may have one of two effects: Stun or Knockout.

Creatures with less than 4 HD (or experience levels, in character terms) cannot do a knockout without a blunt object in hand.

A strike has no effect if the defender is twice or more times the size of the attacker.

Normal initiative and hit rolls are made by a striking character, after declaring the intention to strike. If the strike hits, the base damage inflicted is zero. If there are strength bonuses to add to this, they will in effect do actual damage.

A victim hit by a Strike must roll 1d20 and subtract his Constitution

score (assume 11 for the thugs in this chapter) from the result. If the total is 1 or more, the victim is Stunned for 1 round. The victim must also make a Saving Throw versus Death Ray with a +4 bonus to the roll, or suffer a Knockout. The duration of the Knockout is simply the result of the previous roll of 1d20 minus Constitution, in rounds.

Stun: victim cannot attack or concentrate (and thus cannot cast spells, use magical items, etc.). Movement is possible, but at 1/3 normal rate. In addition, a +4 penalty to Armor Class applies when Stunned.

Knockout: This is simply a short sleep. The victim is unconscious and completely helpless.

Objects in Hand: A small, heavy object may be held while striking. If the defender is hit, a -2 penalty applies to the Saving Throw. Furthermore, a creature of less than 4 Hit Dice is able to knock out an opponent when striking with an object in hand.

Disarming

Unarmed combat may be grand, but what if your opponent doesn't bother to set down his sword before throwing a punch? The disarming maneuver gives

unarmed characters an opportunity to reduce their opponents to the same level.

To disarm, a character first makes a hit roll. This hit roll is modified not by strength, however, but dexterity instead. (Force here is not the trick, so much as maneuvering one's hands to the right place.) If successful, the opponent will be denied his next attack.

On the subsequent round the character can actually attempt to wrest the weapon from his opponent's hands. Both attacker and defender must make a regular hit roll (adjusted by strength, but not adjusted by any magical bonuses of the defender's weapon) versus the armor class of the other (excluding shields, if any). Consult the following chart to determine the result:

Roll of Attacker	Roll of Defender	Result
Miss	Miss	Undecided
Hit	Miss	Weapon wrested away from defender
Miss	Hit	Attacker thrown off
Hit	Hit	Undecided

"Undecided" means the combatants are still grappling over the weapon at the end of the round, and the process will have to be repeated the next round.

ability scores average, except Strength of 13-15.

Each thug carries 3-18 denarii and 3-12 asterii in loose change. They all have short swords and brass knuckles (the latter are treated as "objects in hand" for the purposes of unarmed combat). They have orders to use their swords only if the PCs are also fighting with weapons.

Flavia

Flavia is a 10-year-old, blonde, blue-eyed and very dirty little street urchin, a "homeless orphan waif," as she describes herself when panhandling. She is also a fairly accomplished thief, and always looking for an easy denarius. Spying,

trailing and other forms of information gathering are ways of getting it.

Combat Notes: Thief; T1; AC 7 (dexterity bonus); hp 2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon -1 (but usually unarmed—otherwise she might not look innocent enough); Save T1; ML 3; AL C; S 6; I 13; W 9; D 16; C 10; Ch 12.

Helenites arranged for the PCs to be given a chance at escape, having deduced that they are unwilling fighters. Their freedom would damage his rival, Chrystatarius. He is also behind the thugs' attack, which was intended to teach the characters themselves a lesson about minding their own business. (Helenites

does not realize that Carolus was indisposed because of a reaction to the zzonga.) Elemaledai arranged the details.

Free at Last

In some way or another, the characters should find themselves liberated in the course of this chapter. They may then decide simply to flee Thyatis, but that would probably just postpone an inevitable confrontation with their "master" and whoever was out to get them with the thugs. That the former is Maximus Chrystatarius is no secret, and the latter is easily recognized as the tempestuous Alpathian sorceress.

A search for either leads ultimately to Domus Chrystatarius, the home of Maximitus (see Chapter V). Seeking Elemaledai might yield some additional hints of knowledge, however.

The easiest time to locate and follow Elemaledai is after one of her drug sales to one of the gladiators. By discreetly inquiring among the other gladiators, it will be easy enough to find when the next such rendezvous will occur.

After her sale, Elemaledai progresses to the warehouse district. There she picks up a packet from a merchant; it was left there earlier in the day by Mustafa the Rat, who still lurks nearby. The packet contains more zonga.

The characters might question the

merchant, Rufus Diophorenos. A couple of asterii will easily loosen his tongue. Rufus knows nothing about the packet's contents. He is just paid a lucin to hold a package for the red-haired woman one day each week. The package is always dropped off in the morning by an Alasiyan man (Mustafa). Rufus doesn't know his name, but may recognize him, and will even point him out discreetly if characters offer more money; but when the characters turn to see, Mustafa has slipped away. Rufus does not know what the packages contain.

Elemaledai, meanwhile, goes on to Domus Maximitus, with whom she is secretly negotiating to betray Helenites Osteropolus.

This connection with Mustafa the Rat is also left open-ended. The characters may be intent on following the little Alasiyan. If they do find him, it might alter the plot significantly (if the Osteropolus connection is discovered); or you could decide that Mustafa will keep his cool, claiming to be just a courier, ignorant as the merchant. Rather than betray his patron, Helenites, he would claim that his employer is Maximitus Chrystatarius. He would even promise directions to Domus Chrystatarius if the characters promise not to report his "betrayal". . . .

All roads lead to Thyatis, goes the saying; and it seems now that all roads in Thyatis lead to Domus Chrystatarius.

chapter v: vengeance

The setting of this chapter is Domus Chrystatarius, Maximitus' residence on the northeast edge of "The Heart," which is the largest merchant district.

People

The characters to be found in Domus Chrystatarius are divided into noncombatants (those who will not fight) and combatants. Among the latter are Elemaledai and Maximitus himself (both described in *Dramatis Personae*).

Noncombatants

Angelica Chrystatarius

Angelica, age 16, is the second child of Maximitus, by his first wife. She will have the fortune of being away, visiting a friend's house, when the PCs come.

Justinica Chrystatarius

Justinica (age 24) is the second wife of Maximitus, hardly older than her husband's eldest son (whose mother, Maximitus' first wife, died seven years ago).

Combat Notes: Normal Human; AC 9; hp 3; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg by weapon (normally un-

armed); Save NH; ML 6; AL N; S 9; I 13; W 12; D 10; C 11; Ch 14.

Olivia & Thincol Chrystatarius

Maximitus and Justinica have had two children since their marriage five years ago: Olivia (age 4) and Thincol (named after the beloved Emperor, age 2). They will run screaming to their mother if they witness violence.

Servants

The Maximitus Chrystatarius family owns four slaves as household servants: **Carulius**, the major domus (steward/butler/aide); **Quen Do-Lien**, the Ocha-lean cook; **Maevin**, nurse and maid; and **Alaam ibn Farqa**, the children's pedagogue (tutor). Carulius and Quen Do-Lien are married; Maevin is devoted in her care of the children, and a confidante of Justinica; and Alaam believes himself a philosopher beyond such mortal concerns as love.

All four are normal humans: AC 9; hp 2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (unarmed); THAC0 20; Save NH; ML 6; AL L. Maevin would risk her life without hesitation to protect the

little children, but the other servants (particularly Alaam) would find self-preservation imperative.

Combatants

Asterian Chrystatarius

Asterian is the eldest child of the family, and only two years younger than his father's second wife.

Combat Notes: 2nd Level Rake; AC 5 (leather armor, dexterity); hp 7; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1-8 (sword); Save T1; ML 9; AL C; OL 20, RT 15, MS 25, CL 88, HS/D 15; HN 1-2; S 12; I 11; W 10; D 16; C 13; Ch 12.

Diocletian Lascaroxenos

Diocletian is the brother-in-law of Maximitus' first wife. He is also a cleric of the evil immortal Alphaks. If he is searched, items (such as his holy symbol and prayer book) will show this.

Combat Notes: 3rd level cleric; AC 7 (leather armor); hp 8; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1d6 + 1 (mace plus strength bonus); Save C1; ML 9; AL C; S 13; I 9; W 14; D 9; C 8; Ch 12. Spells: *light*, *protection from evil*.

Henchmen

Eight henchmen of Maximitus will be found at the Domus Chrystatarius when the party arrives. Their names are: **Aetric, Baldaro, Djemil, Honorio, Kalsif, Lezine, Lucinus, and Sigfried.**

The henchman are distributed through the domus as follows: Two are on guard at the front entrance, one at the rear entrance, one at the small library; one accompanies Maximitus as a bodyguard; and three are asleep in their cubacula (rooms 25-27).

Combat Notes: 1st level fighters; AC 5 (chain mail); hp 5 each; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg by weapon (short sword: 1-6, dagger: 1-4); Save F1; ML 7; AL N or C; average statistics.

Those posted as guards (at the entrances, the small library, and Maximitus' bodyguard) also carry crossbows (loaded, Dmg 1-6).

Plot and Activities

After acquiring the new zzonga, Elemaledai goes for a meeting with Maximitus Chrystatarius. When there she takes one or more generous doses of the new zzonga she's just picked up, and it quickly takes effect.

At the time of the characters' arrival at Domus Maximitus, the master of the house is in the triclinium (room 20), dining with Elemaledai and Diocletian Lascroxenos. (Diocletian's business is

vague, and up to the DM, depending on his plans for the future of his campaign. The visit could just concern family matters, and Maximitus could even be oblivious to Diocletian's religious affiliations. On the other hand, the DM could concoct more sinister connections . . .).

Arriving at the front gate, the characters face two guards: Kalsif and Sigfried. The PCs could bash them (impolite!), incapacitate them, or attempt to deal with them in a more civil manner. The guards are brusque, telling the characters they don't have an appointment, so they'd better leave. (Characters who recognize, by accent and appearance, that the guards are Alasiyan and Hattian, respectively, may try to exploit ethnic tensions between them.)

The rear entrance has just one guard, Lezine. Another means of entry would be the open roof over the peristyle. The neighbors might not appreciate it, but it would be possible.

Once inside, the characters can make their way to confront Maximitus. He is obviously peeved by the interruption and demands that the characters return to their cell; he calls the guards to escort them away.

A fight is almost certain, if only because Elemaledai, far gone on zzonga, will announce that she finds these gladiators quite rude, and so she will kill them. Fortunately for the PCs, she's not up to par, on account of the zzonga.

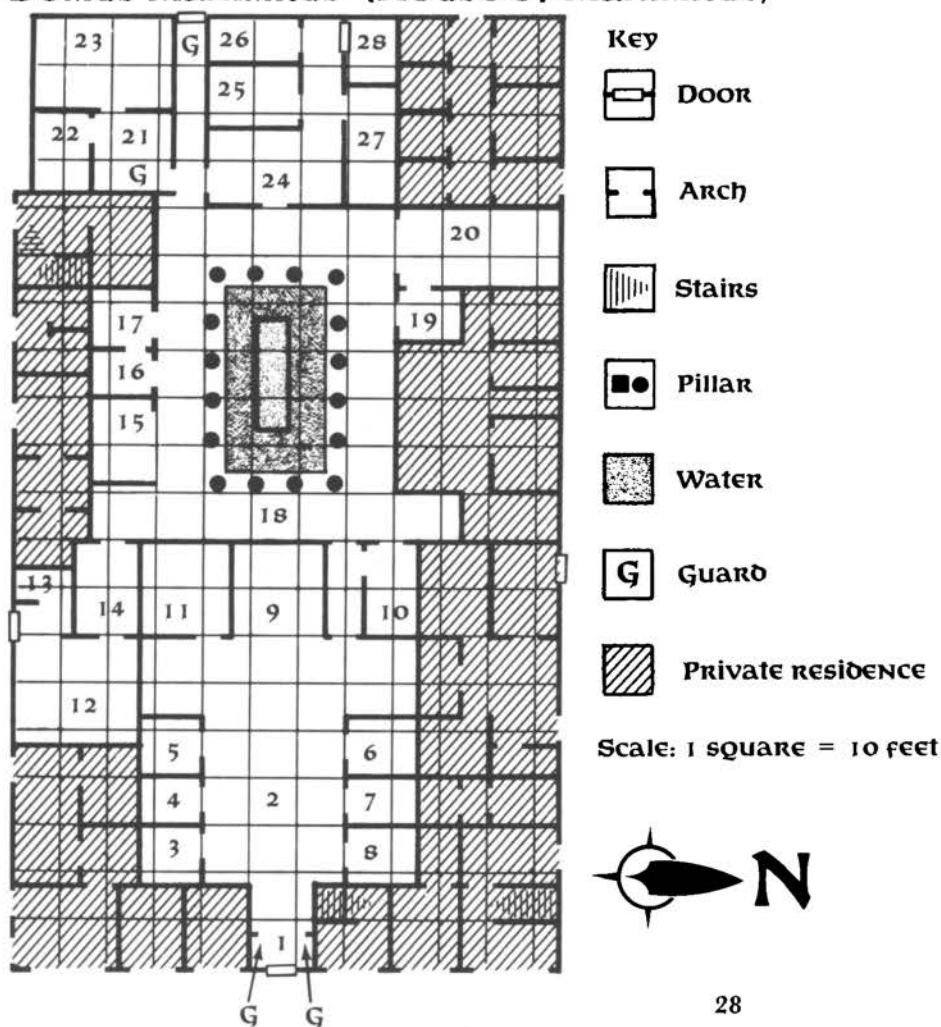
She first attempts to cast *fire ball*, but casts *light*, instead. Next round she reverses the process, and manages to produce a *fire ball*. It is miscast, however; the fiery missile weaves, spluttering, up out of the domus, through the open roof above the peristyle. It explodes spectacularly, but with no practical effect except for the dazzling noise and pyrotechnics (especially at night).

For the remainder of combat, use the normal effects of zzonga on spellcasting (detailed on p. 4). All through the battle, Elemaledai laughs eerily, near hysteria, as if it was all a bizarrely funny joke, and not quite real.

Other characters who become involved in the combat include Maximi-

MAP 8

Domus Maximitus (House of Maximitus)



tus, his bodyguard Lucian, his son Asterian, and Diocletian. Other guards will arrive two rounds after a melee ensues. Be sure to make morale checks for these NPCs; if they fail, they will flee.

Elemaledai, though she does not realize it, has been poisoned by Helenites, who has guessed her treachery (and, in any case, he now is confident that he can run the drug business without her). The activity of battle accelerates the poison's effects. You should select the poison's time of effect for dramatic impact: If the characters are about to defeat Elemaledai, it will take effect just before the final blow is struck. If, on the other hand, Elemaledai is winning, the poison will take effect just before she is about to deal a lethal blow to a player character. (The party receives no experience for defeating her, since it was not their doing.) Elemaledai starts to choke, then begins to cough up a great deal of blood, while she clutches her stomach and falls to the floor. She finally dies in spasms at the feet of the presumably dumbfounded characters.

The players will probably realize that this was not their own doing. But who would have poisoned the sorceress? Maximitus?—he looks aghast, if he is still alive when the sorceress expires. And how? Zzonga might occur to them—and the thought may send them hurrying back to the arena, to prevent friends from being poisoned, as soon as the melee is over. (Since the gladiators are all fine, and their zzonga is pure, the party might deduce that the poisoned drug was in the package Elemaledai picked up.)

As a matter of honor, Maximitus will fight unto the death in his own home. Asterian will run if he can, as will Diocletian, but they'll surely plot vengeance. Other members of the household will be attracted by the clamor of battle. They'll watch in horror, and run away if it is apparent that the PCs are winning. They won't call the authorities, because they fear it is rivalry in the organized crime in which Maximitus is involved.

Options

It is not really necessary that the climax of the adventure be so violent.

Many players will prefer a diplomatic solution, and may be able to role-play it. The key event would then be that Maximitus recognizes the PCs' true freedom. Another approach might be for the matter to come before an Imperial court.

In any case, though, the poison affects Elemaledai; this may leave some questions in the characters' minds, as might Maximitus' denial of knowing anything about the attack of thugs.

Domus Chrystatarius

Map 8 shows Domus Chrystatarius. The building is like many others of the merchant district. It is more than just a home for Maximitus and his family; it also features shops (known as *tabernae*) and apartments that are both rented out. The map only shows the first floor of the Domus; the second level contains additional rented apartment space above the areas where staircases are depicted.

Shaded areas, plus all second floor apartments, are inhabited by people not associated with Maximitus in any way relevant to this adventure; as such, these rooms and their inhabitants are not detailed. Should the need arise, "wing it"—decide that one shop is a cobbler, another apartment is the home of an elderly widow, or whatever. (Do record your decision in case PCs return sometime.) Assume NPCs in these areas have normal human statistics and no desire to get embroiled in any trouble.

1. Entrance.

Two thugs are normally posted here to keep watch and question people who would enter the house, since Maximitus has a fair share of enemies. If a visitor does have business here, Maximitus or Carulius (the major domus) will be summoned by one of the guards.

2. Atrium.

The atrium is the traditional center of a Thyatian house, something like a modern living room. The floor is covered by a beautiful mosaic portrait of Maximitus' great-grandparents, who built the house nearly a century ago.

3. Guest Cubiculum.

These are currently empty.

4-8. Cubicula.

These are the bedrooms of Maximitus' four children (rooms 4-7), and his mother-in-law (room 8). Each has a modest sleeping mat and a shelf for clothes and personal belongings (including 2d6 denarii and 1d4 asterii). All are very neat, thanks to the Maevin.

9. Tablinium.

This is like an office; besides day-to-day matters of the household and management of legitimate business dealings, it contains documents of family history (journals, imperial commendations, military honors, etc.). None of it concerns illegal matters. Maximitus leaves Carulius and Justinica to take care of almost all of the work here.

10. Library.

This library contains volumes on assorted topics. Few are very complicated or esoteric. The children study and are taught in this library and, not surprisingly, this is where Alaam spends much of his time. There is a desk where the Ylari scholar-slave writes when he isn't tutoring one of Maximitus' children.

11. Biclinium.

This is a small dining room; the larger and more formal meals are eaten in the triclinium (room 20). The biclinium takes its name from a dining couch built for two people, but it has also come to mean a dining room with two couches, rather than the three that are traditionally found in the larger triclinium.

12. Kitchen.

The kitchen is typical.

13. Pantry.

Foodstuffs are stored here. Most food items are bought fresh every day, however, since the household has no refrigeration equipment, magical or common. There is a good assortment of strong spices, applied liberally to mask the flavor of food (especially meat), which often starts to spoil before it can be eaten.

14. Storage.

Pans, dishes, and flatware are kept in this room. A partial listing of kitchen and dining items would include wooden, ceramic (including valuable china), copper, pewter, silver, and even gold items. The whole collection could probably sell



for about 5,000 gold lucins, but moving it would be a bit difficult (and may look suspicious). Also, all of the more valuable pieces are kept locked in cabinets.

15-17. Servants' Cubicula.

Room 15 is for Carulius and Quen Do-Lien, room 16 for Alaam, and room 17 for Maevin. Each slave's cubiculum contains a modest sleeping mat, personal effects, and some personal money: 2d8 denarii, 2d6 asterii, and 1d6 - 1 lucins. Slaves often receive a small allowance from their owners; and if they save thriftily, they may even buy their freedom.

Carulius is also trusted with money for day-to-day operation of the household. This money, locked in an iron-bound wooden box, amounts to 44 denarii, 21 asterii, 28 lucins, and 2 emperors.

18. Peristyle.

This is a pleasant little garden to walk around. In the middle of the peristyle is a water basin, known as an *euripus*.

19. Lararium.

Here is a small shrine dedicated to As-terius, the neutral immortal patron of trade, commerce and thievery; this is

where members of the household offer prayer and devotions. A small gold altar set is in here, normally under lock (keys are carried by Maximitus, Justinica, and Carulius); it is worth 300 gp.

20. Triclinium.

This is the main dining room of the domus. It has three large dining couches, and the fresco on the walls is of a Keren-dan hunting scene.

21. Lounge.

A guard is always posted in this room, to protect Maximitus and Justinica, if they are sleeping in their cubiculum, or in any case to keep people out of Maximitus' office (room 22).

22. Office.

Maximitus uses this room for management of his shady business affairs: gambling, loan sharking, fencing stolen goods, and a little bit of extortion.

Most of his money is invested, much of it legitimately, and so can't be taken by pillaging adventurers. A stone under Maximitus' desk in the office can be pried up; under it is a locked iron box that contains documents certifying his le-

gitimate investments, plus a small cache of 50 platinum emperors.

23. Cubiculum.

The bedroom of Maximitus and Justinica is quite lavish, with a beautiful bed built of expensive wood, silk sheets, and the works. The both have valuable wardrobes here as well.

24. Meeting Room.

A large table, with many chairs placed around it, is in the center of the room. The walls are plain, whitewashed plaster.

25-27. Cubicula.

These three rooms are reserved as sleeping space for Maximitus' hirelings.

28. Armory.

Weapons and armor are stored in this room when they are not worn or carried. At any time one might find here an assortment of chain mail, leather armor, a few daggers, short swords and small spears, a crossbow, and a box of quarrels.

After getting out of their mess, and possibly paying their debt of vengeance to Maximitus, the characters haven't actually solved the problem at the root of it all: Helenites Osteropolus. There have been enough hints along the way that the players will probably suspect that their characters haven't gotten to the end of the line.

As DM, there are at least two courses you can follow after the characters have freed themselves of Maximitus Chrystatarius: Either they go directly after Osteropolus, or they don't.

The former may require some work. There are a lot of valuable details in this module, but you'll need to flesh out more, and design your own plot. Another option is just to go with what information you have, and play the continuing adventure by ear. The next step to master in Dungeon Mastering is, instead of elaborate planning ahead of time, to work primarily by responding to the players' ideas.

The players may be eager to go after Osteropolus (though they probably don't

recognize that he is the one they seek). You may wish to turn them away, usually because you want to keep him around as a villain and foil for the PCs' future plans. (This is the approach you'll want to take if you'll be playing *Legions of Thyatis*, the sequel to this adventure.) There are many obstructions and distractions you can put in the PCs' way to accomplish this. For instance, the one direct link to Helenites (since Elemaledai's demise) is Mustafa, the agent who passed her the poisoned zzonga. The PCs may track him down—only to find him assassinated, or similarly poisoned. Furthermore, even if the PCs have reasonable suspicions about Helenites, he can make himself appear very clean.

Of course, it is possible that the players will have no desire to investigate Osteropolus further; either because they fear he's out of their league (a reasonable assumption), or because they're distracted by other false leads.

One such red herring is Diocletian Lascaroxenos, the priest of Alphaks. Characters might be led to suspect that a cult of

the evil immortal is somehow tied in with the unpleasant goings-on in the arena. While this is not so, the diversion may be interesting in its own right. If you feel up to it, you could design a series of encounters and investigations concerning the cult in which Diocletian is involved.

For instance, the characters may kill or seriously maim Diocletian at Domus Chrystatarius. Characters then wouldn't even need to have learned of Diocletian's affiliation in order to be entangled in new matters. Other members of Diocletian's cult may take it upon themselves to avenge the death of the cleric, by ambushing single characters or the whole party in the streets of Thyatis. The characters, in turn, seek out their ambushers, discover the cult (which, remember, is illegal). . . . And along the way they may find a connection to something entirely different.

This is the natural way of city adventures. A teeming metropolis is a complicated social web, more difficult to map than simple dungeon—and potentially just as much more fun for adventurers to explore!

appendix I: the order of the sands

The Order of the Sands is an organization of fighters, like those described in Book II of the *Dawn of the Emperors* Boxed Set (p. 25-26).

Interests: This is an order of arena gladiators interested in pressuring the organizers of gladiatorial contests to keep them fair and competitive. It also makes sure that owners of slave gladiators allow them to buy their freedom; owners who cheat their slaves or take from them the presents thrown by crowd may find themselves roughed up and intimidated. Contest organizers who don't keep enough clerics on hand to deal with injuries have the same problems.

Certain members of the Order, those who fight in the Coliseum of Thyatis, are rumored to have other secret interests, and a special rite of initiation.

Requirements: Members must be

Citizen-rank gladiators who have spent at least six months of competition in Thyatian arenas. Gladiators may be fighters, clerics, thieves, rakes, dwarves, elves, or foresters, but only fighters are common. Female gladiators, though rare, may join the order.

Annual Fee: 25% of gladiatorial income and 5% of related income (such as from commercial endorsements). The Order doesn't ask for any percentage of other types of income.

Benefits: Without the Order, conditions would be much less fair for gladiators. Every mainland Thyatis city has a coliseum, and in it members of the Order can find free meals and shelter with fellow members of the order willing to put them up.

Problems: Wealthy nobles (such as Helenites Osteropolus) don't like the Order

because it cuts into their profits and their control over the contests they sponsor. Order members receive a -2 reaction from persons of the rank of Baron or higher (except for knights and ex-gladiators).



appendix II: thyatian names

As noted in Book II of the *Dawn of the Emperors* Boxed Set, Thyatians have two names—a given name and a family name. It's not difficult to make Thyatian-sounding names, once you've encountered a few in this module and the Boxed Set, but it can be a challenge to make a whole bunch of them.

This appendix provides a method of building names from various letter combinations. Players as well as DMs may appreciate the ease with which they can create authentic Thyatian names.

Given Names

To build traditional Thyatian given (first) names, you choose from a set of prefixes, bridge letters, and suffixes.

Prefixes

Begin the given name with one of the following prefixes. Note that if the prefix ends with a letter enclosed in parentheses, such as "Constan(s)," it means that the letter in parentheses is dropped if you add a suffix, but is kept if none is added . . . as we'll describe momentarily.

Acas-	Gale-
Adrian-	Gregor-
Adron-	Helen-
Aet-	Heracl-
Allat-	Honor-
Alex-	Jul-
Anasta(s)-	Justin-
Angel-	Leo(n)-
Anthem-	Luc-
Arcad-	Maxim-
Aster-	Oliv-
Belisa-	Petron-
Bessar-	Phaid-
Callin-	Pulcher-
Callis-	Roman-
Constan(s)-	Stefan-
Demet-	Taras-
Diocle(s)-	Theo-
Eudoc-	Theodo-
Euse-	Valen-
Fab-	Vanya-
Flav-	Xen-
Gabr-	Zen-
Galat-	

Bridge Letters

If you choose a prefix that ends in a vowel (like Theodo-), you'll next need to choose a "bridge letter," a consonant to be placed between the prefix and suffix. For example, if you choose Theodo-, you might choose the bridge letter -r-.

If you choose a prefix that already ends in a consonant, such as Roman-, you don't have to take a bridge letter, but you often can.

-b- -r- -s- -t-

You can use some bridge letters, especially -t-, on prefixes that already end with a consonant. Thus, Valen- becomes Valent-.

Suffixes

Now choose one of the following suffixes to complete your character's given name. Thus, Theodo- plus -r- plus -ian becomes Theodorian, while Theodo- plus -r- plus -a becomes Theodora.

One of the male suffix options is (none): no suffix is used. This way, Constan(s) ends up as Constans.

Male Suffixes	Female Suffixes
(none)	-a
-es	-ia
-ian	-iana
-ic	-ica
-iel	-iela
-ine	-ina
-inius	-inia
-io	-ira
-ites	-ita
-itus	
-ius	
-us	

Name Creation Notes

Put together prefixes, bridge letters (where necessary), and suffixes. Mix and match; experiment with the choices available. Be sure to say your constructed name out loud. If it reads strangely, or sounds stupid when spoken, discard it and try again.

Family Names

The Thyatians have long, ponderous family names. To construct one, choose one of the following prefixes, from one to three of the middle syllables, any bridge letters you want, and then a suffix. Put them all together, and if it sounds weighty and pretentious—but doesn't tie your tongue in knots—you have it.

Prefixes

Acin-	Jow-
Acro-	Kara-
Anton-	Kant-
Blas-	Kel-
Can-	Kor-
Cata-	Las-
Cerul-	Meto-
Chrys-	Nice-
Com-	Os-
Daphno-	Paph-
Glan-	Paphla-
Hala-	Pe-
Hy-	Pro-

Middle Syllables

-av-	-pat-
-cal-	-phor-
-car-	-pol-
-chi-	-rak-
-cuz-	-rig-
-del-	-ta-
-dyn-	-tar-
-gen-	-ter-
-mei-	-them-
-nen-	-tri-
-olo-	-yro-

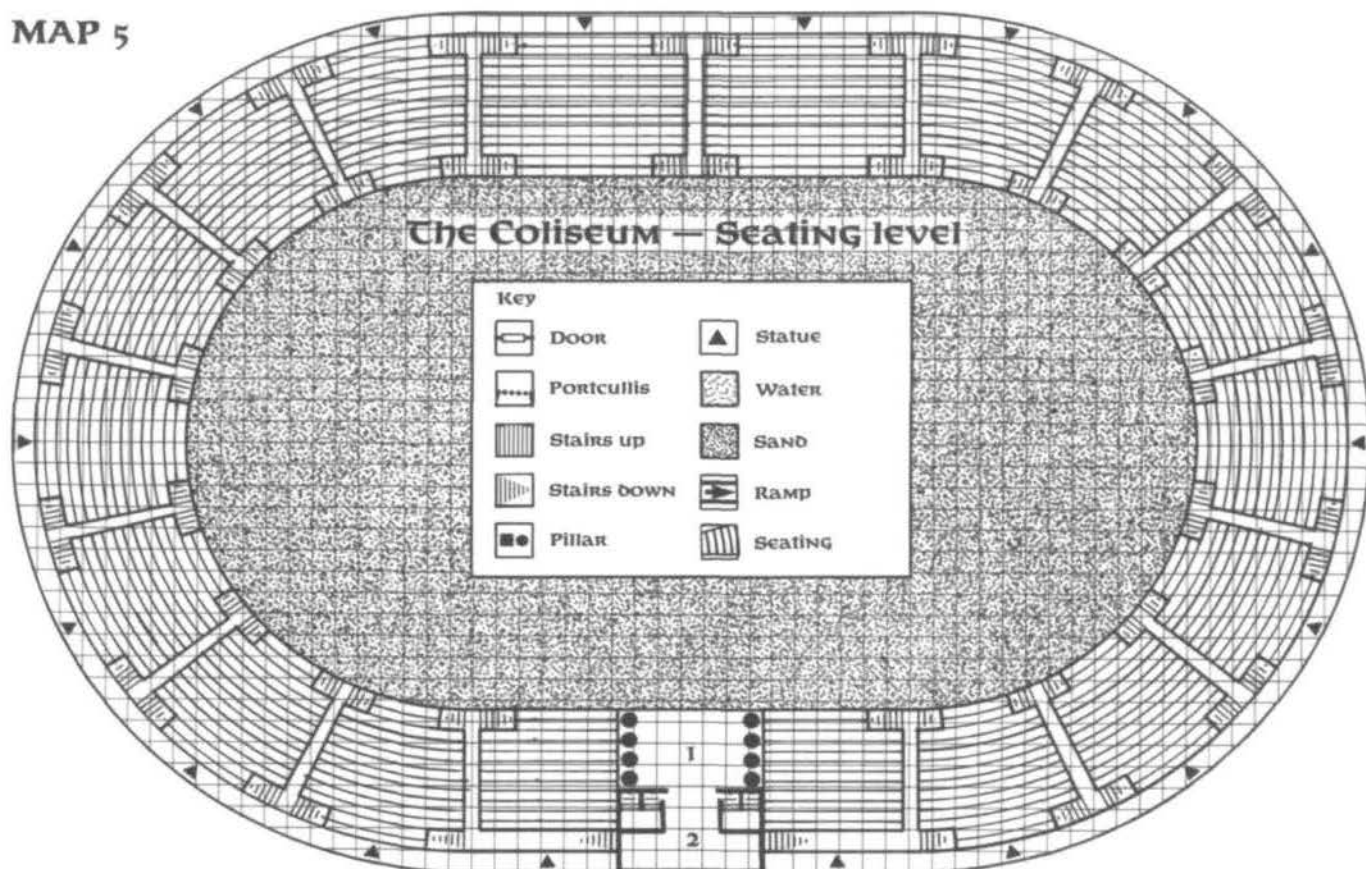
Bridge Letters

-b- -k- -o- -r- -s- -t- -v- -x- -y-

Suffixes

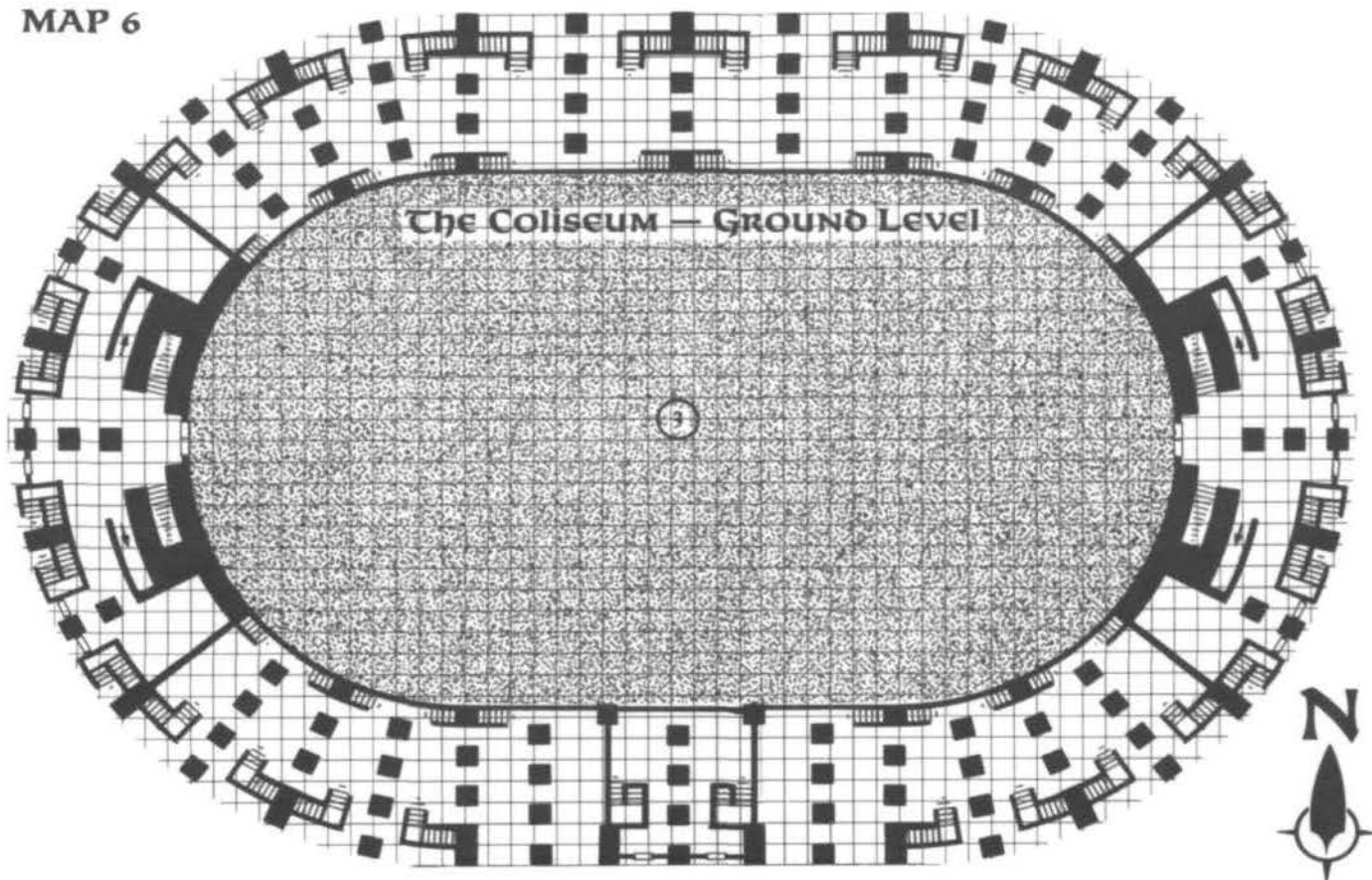
(none)	-it
-an	-ites
-arius	-itos
-enzen	-ium
-ian	-ius
-ic	-um
-in	-opolus
-ion	-os
-ios	-thus
-is	-zenus

MAP 5

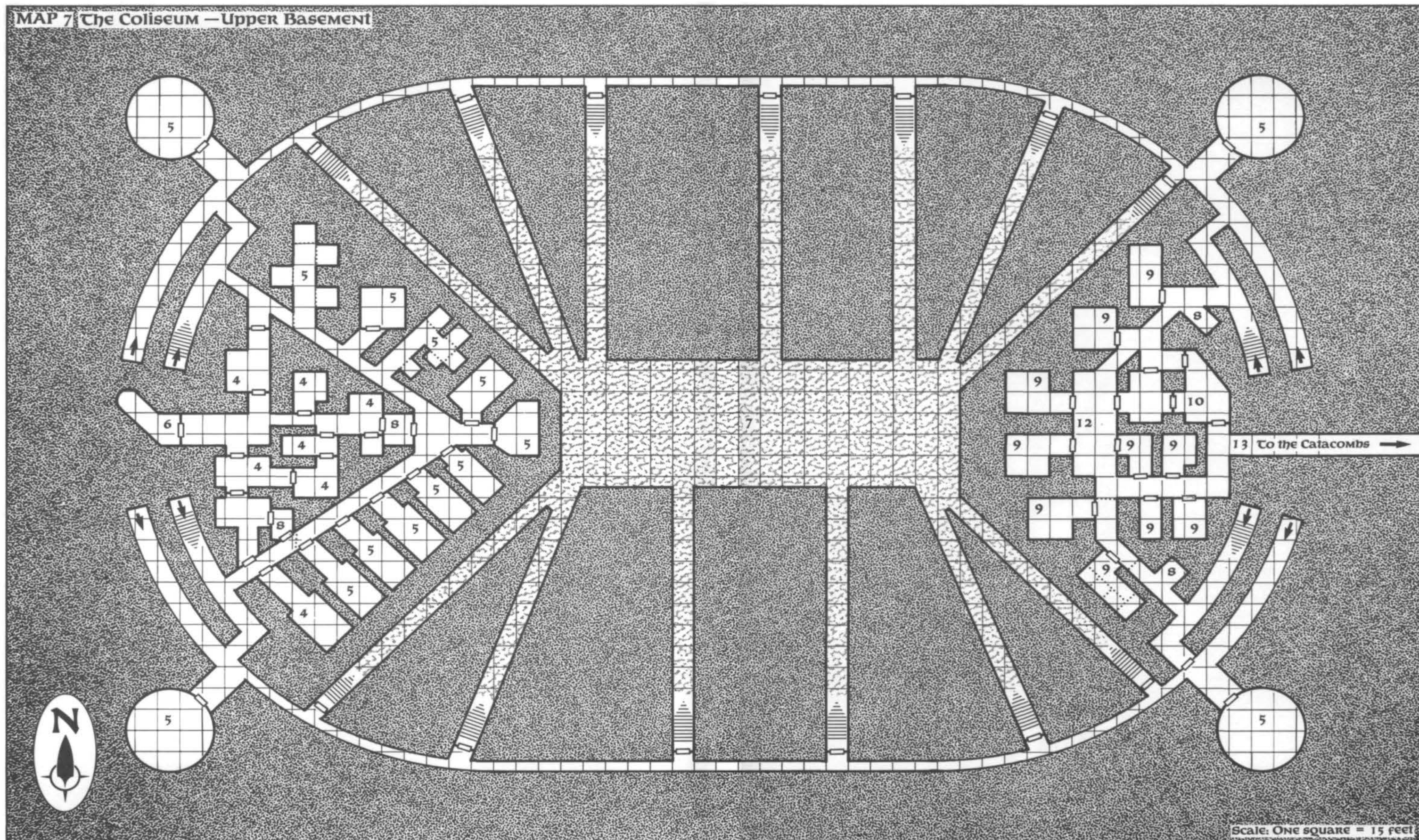


Scale: One square = 25 feet

MAP 6

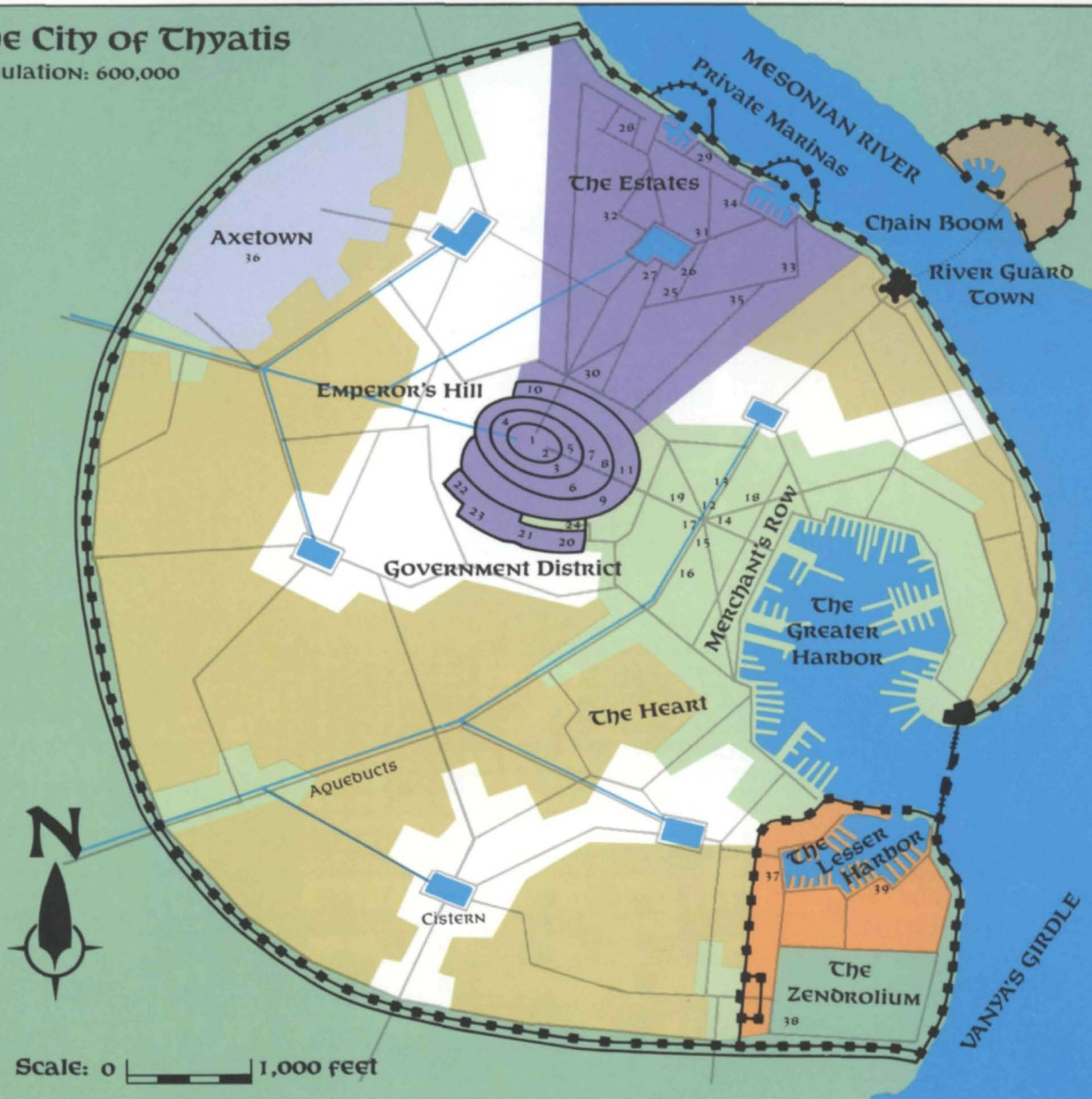


MAP 7 The Coliseum — Upper Basement



The City of Thyatis

Population: 600,000



Key to Thyatis City

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Emperor's Palace | 21. Ministerial Buildings |
| 2. Palace Walls | 22. Ambassador's Way |
| 3. Hightop District | 23. Government District Walls |
| 4. Anaxibus' Estate | 24. Government Market (Leechtown) |
| 5. Hightop District Walls | 25. High Temple of Vanya |
| 6. Streets of Gold District | 26. Warriors Guildhall (Brotherhood of the Grey Lady) |
| 7. Canolocarius Estate | 27. Monastic Estate (Wings of Vanya) |
| 8. Street of Gold District Walls | 28. Knights of the Air Enclave |
| 9. Silverlight District | 29. Poetic Recital Hall |
| 10. Valinor's Estate | 30. Storm Soldiers Enclave |
| 11. Silverlight District Walls | 31. Temple of Asterius (Free Market) |
| 12. The Coliseum | 32. Temple of Valerias |
| 13. Great Guildhall (Order of the Sands) | 33. The Park (Forester's Enclave) |
| 14. The Baths | 34. Church of Tarastia |
| 15. The Great Imperial Library | 35. Warriors Guildhall (Sisterhood of the Sword) |
| 16. The Collegium Arcanum | 36. Shadow-Hand Thieves' Guild |
| 17. The Gabionus Theatre | 37. Fort Zendrolium |
| 18. Club Row | 38. Retebius Air Fleet Enclave |
| 19. The Imperial Bakeries | 39. Blackrock Prison |
| 20. The Senate Building | |



Official Game Adventure

Arena of Thyatis

By John Nephew



IT'S PARTY TIME IN THYATIS . . .

And simply *everyone* is going to the magnificent *VILLA OSTEROPOLUS*, home of the wealthy old senator, Helenites. Raucous fun, exotic food, and even advanced betting on the upcoming Arena games are expected. Even adventurers just in from the outlands may meet the powerful here. So don your festive togas, for in Thyatis City there are important connections to be made and deeds to be done, duels to be fought and fame to be won.

(But beware, oh Adventurer! The politics of Thyatis can be as labyrinthine as the mazes beneath the Coliseum . . .)

This module is designed especially for the DM who wants to sharpen his interactive skills.

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