

EARTHDAWN[®]BLADES[™]FASA
CORPORATION

A COLLECTION OF EARTHDAWN ADVENTURES

BLADES

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FASA CORPORATION



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FINAL BATTLE



he smell told them they were close. Sickly-sweet, the smell of fresh blood grew stronger with every step the little band of orks took down the stony path by the river. The sound of rushing water echoed off the walls and roof of the tunnel, taking on the tones of mocking laughter. Ahead, the orks saw a faint greenish glow.

The Seven Spokes walked in single file, each with one hand on a comrade's shoulder and the other clutching the hilt of a dagger. Grim and determined, they walked toward the place where the Horror waited. Their eyes showed no sign of fear. They were orks; they had grabbed life by the throat in their time, and they knew how to die well.

A few paces shy of the dreadful light, Pobov Gaarz halted the line. He turned to face his comrades, smiling the smile he always wore in battle. Green sparks glinted off the tips of his tusks. "It is a good day to avenge a friend," he said. His six companions rumbled their assent.

Gaarz held out his blade at arm's length. "Let us pledge to each other once more before we die!"

Silently, with grim smiles, the other six orks came around and touched the tips of their daggers to Gaarz's. The joined daggers made up the spokes of a wheel, with a gap where an eighth blade should have been. Together, they chanted, "Eight we are, eight we shall be—united, indivisible, eternally."

"To the memory of Kragen Overtall," said Nhag Katuru, who had been Kragen's closest friend. All the orks bowed their heads, paying one last tribute to the comrade whom the Horror had led to betray them.

Pobov Gaarz was the first to raise his head. "We strike to avenge Kragen, and all the other Name-givers that this Horror's poison has touched. By the Blades of Cara Fahd, we shall have victory!"

As one, they raised their dagger blades. The light glinted off the metal, turning the wheel to green fire.

R'ashani paced back and forth across her tent, her tail switching violently from side to side. Vainly, she strove to shut her ears to the distant echoes of horrible laughter drifting up from the caverns. Surely the thing below could not triumph over seven such bold heroes, armed as they were with the rite she had made for them. The best fruits of her sorcery she had given to these strangers, that they

might destroy the Horror whose touch had brought so many of her own folk to ruin. She could not do it on her own—but they could slay the entity. They must. If the orks failed, House Ch'elann would fall to the Horror.

R'ashani stopped pacing abruptly and clenched her fists. She was shivalahala—she refused to admit the possibility of defeat.

The green glow came from the small lake at the grotto's heart. Dark patterns turned and twisted in the water, signs of the Horror's power. The Horror itself was a nightmare shape, black and glistening, its narrow snakelike body held up by eight limbs that the creature could transform from hard-shelled insect legs to flailing tentacles. On three sides of its massive head—crested like a t'skrang's—huge eyes glowed the same sickly green as the water the thing sat in. As the Seven Spokes watched, greenish ichor shot through with red blood welled up and dripped from the Horror's left-side eye. It splashed on a jutting edge of rock, sending bubbles of the stuff flying through the grotto. One of them struck Nhag, who screamed and clutched at her neck. The ichor bubble dropped off, leaving a patch of burned flesh behind.

"Buunda!" shouted Pobov Gaarz, darting toward the Horror. Lazily, it hurled a tentacle at him. He sidestepped the blow, striking at the glistening flesh as he moved. Then he darted away, drawing the Horror's attention just long enough to let Mogrok the Proud rush up for the second blow. Six of the Seven Spokes danced around the Horror, stabbing at its flailing limbs and dodging its blows. Several feet behind them, Nhag Katuru untied her waist pouch and pulled from it a small copper bowl and a medallion of soft wood. Forcing herself to ignore her comrades' battle shouts and cries of pain, Nhag placed the cool point of her dagger against the back of her hand and cut a shallow triangle—the shape of two-eighths of a wheel. She turned her hand over the bowl, palm-up, and clenched a fist. "For both of us, Kragen," she whispered as her blood dripped into the bowl. When the blood flow slowed, she blotted the wound on her sleeve and charged shrieking toward the battle.

One by one, the Seven Spokes cut their hands and squeezed blood into the bowl. While each of them performed the rite, the others kept the Horror busy. A tentacle caught Mogrok across the face—he screamed as it burned his right eye but stood his ground and slashed at the Horror. Nhag drew her hunting knife, fighting two-fisted with the Blade of Cara Fahd in one hand and the iron knife





in the other. The knife struck, bit deep—and crumbled into nothing, melted away by the Horror's blood.

Pobov Gaarz, the last to give blood, ducked away from a flying gob of ichor. It struck a stalactite behind him and turned its gleaming crystal surface ash-grey. Nhag threw herself at the Horror with a blood-curdling yell; Gaarz took advantage of the distraction to dash toward the bowl. Breathing hard from exertion, he rested the tip of his dagger against his hand—and stopped. Suddenly, the thought of cutting himself seemed fantastic to him. Why was he doing this? What kind of warrior deliberately wounded himself in battle? And on his knife hand, yet? It was all right for the others, they fought left-handed more often than not. But he fought right-handed, so this magical ritual required him to risk himself in a way not asked of his fellows. Gaarz flushed with sudden, furious resentment, throwing down his dagger with a growl. "Harm myself—cripple my fighting hand—for Kragen Overtall? To avenge a traitor who tried to kill me?! No!" He slammed his hand into the side of the burnt stalactite. "No!"

The pain of the blow made him gasp and cleared his head a little. He saw the Blade of Cara Fahd wink up at him from the cavern floor. Its light seemed to pierce through to his soul. For a single, blinding moment he recognized his anger as the Horror's creation and threw it aside like a mange-eaten cloak. He picked up the dagger and cut a triangle in the back of his hand, then clenched his fist over the bowl with a howl of defiance. After a few moments, he sat down and pulled the bowl of blood and the wooden medallion next to him. He gave the Horror a long, steady look, as if memorizing it—then dipped two fingers in the blood and began to trace the thing's outline on the wood. When he finished, he took up the Blade of Cara Fahd and slashed it across

the painted medallion. The Horror howled with pain and rage. Laughing, Gaarz charged back into the fray.

One by one, the Seven Spokes drew the Horror's shape in blood and slashed at the medallion. With every stroke of steel across wood, the Horror shrieked and a part

of its body crumbled to dust. As Nhag made the last stroke with a shout of triumph, the Horror's terrible head melted into nothing. The greenish glow died away, leaving nothing but the light of a few sputtering torches.

Nhag held up her Blade; the metal had turned a dark slate-blue. "Victory!" she crowed. "The blood of Betrayer darkens our blades—destroyed by the heroes of Cara Fahd!" Battered but defiantly alive, the Seven Spokes raised their daggers and shouted their joy.

R'ashani drifted off to sleep feeling more hopeful than she had in many a long night. The Horror was dead. The Seven Spokes had saved enough of her people from the thing's taint to rebuild House Ch'elann. After so long a darkness, all was finally well. R'ashani fell asleep smiling and soon began to dream.

She stood in the grotto where the Horror had laired. It was quiet and dark, except for a single point of light by the far side of the lake. Curious, R'ashani walked around for a closer look.

The light shone from a dagger, one of the Blades of Cara Fahd. It gleamed as white as crystal, so captivating that R'ashani had to pick it up. As she took the blade in her hand, the light began to change, darkening to the pale green of swamp-fire.

The sudden, overpowering smell of blood made R'ashani double over. The dagger fell from her hand, stabbing into the rock floor. As she watched, horrified, the rock began to bleed. R'ashani screamed, but the sound was lost in a rising tide of mocking laughter.





INTRODUCTION



Thousands of years ago there existed an age of magic and high adventure, the age of **Earthdawn**. The power of magic flowed freely through the world, and people could draw on magic to perform both wondrous feats and everyday tasks. But the dawn of magic also brought Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that

devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the people of Earth hid from the Horrors that devastated their land during the time that came to be called the Scourge. Now, the people of Barsaive have re-emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels to reclaim their world from the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes arise to explore the world, search for magical treasure and slay the Horrors that still exist. Magicians spin the magical energies of the universe into powerful spells, and adepts use the magic to enhance their natural talents. Armed with magic, courage, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge and to build their own legends.

Blades is a collection of five short roleplaying adventures set in the world of **Earthdawn**. Each of the adventures deals directly with one of the Key Knowledges of the Blades of Cara Fahd, a matched set of seven magical daggers once wielded by heroes from the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The settings of these adventures span most of Barsaive, from the ruins of Cara Fahd to the Liaj Jungle to the Tylon Mountains.

Along with their powerful magic, the Blades of Cara Fahd hold a dark and dangerous secret, which the characters learn as they weave increasingly powerful threads to the daggers. A Horror lives in the pattern of the Blades and grows stronger with each new thread. The Horror uses its growing strength to spread betrayal and treachery among those near the Blades. And so as the characters travel across Barsaive in search of the Blades' Key Knowledges, they carry the corrupting influence of the Horror with them.

The first adventure in this book, **Bond Breaker**, takes the characters in search of the first Key Knowledge of the Blades—the Names of the Blades and of the weaponsmith who forged them. This adventure leads the characters to the foothills of the Delaris Mountains on the border of the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd, where they witness a marriage between the heirs of two ork scorcher tribes: the Fists of Fahd and the Righteous Vipers. The advisor to the Fists' chieftain has the information the characters need, but the

Horrors influence sets the two scorcher bands at each other's throats. The characters are caught between them, innocent bystanders on the brink of a vicious tribal war. As the adventure ends, the characters learn the Key Knowledge and receive a warning that the Blades are cursed. This curse is the presence of the Horror, growing in power and eager to spread its corruption across Barsaive.

The next adventure, **Grave Wisdom**, leads the characters deep into Cara Fahd in search of the Hold of Courage, an ancient shrine where the spirits of Cara Fahd's dead heroes can provide the characters with the Rank 3 Key Knowledge—the Name of the band of ork heroes who first wielded the Blades. Unfortunately, the torments they endured during the Scourge have corrupted the spirits, and the characters will be lucky to leave the shrine alive.

A Traitor's Fate takes the characters into the Liaj Jungle in search of the Rank 5 Key Knowledge—the Name of the ork hero who betrayed his comrades. When the characters discover the traitor's final resting place, they find that he has become a dark fetch, a dangerous undead being who will do or say anything to gain freedom from his tomb. Once free, the fetch intends to avenge itself on the descendants of the heroes who imprisoned him.

The fourth adventure, **With an Axe in Hand**, leads the characters into the Tylon Mountains in search of the Rank 7 Key Knowledge—the Name of the Horror that lives in the Blades. The adventurers find a corrupted Liferock whose sole surviving brother may be able to tell them what they need to know—if the characters can survive an attack by the Horror-tainted obsidimen.

The final adventure, **Pure Liquids**, sends the characters beneath the Tylon Mountains to the Great Dome of House Ch'elann, a foundation of t'skrang Pale Ones. Here they hope to discover the Blades' final Key Knowledge—the method used by the original wielders of the Blades to defeat the Horror that inhabits the weapons. This quest leads the characters to re-form the Horror's body in a blood magic ritual, hoping to destroy it.

GAMEMASTERING NOTES

The adventures in **Blades** follow a particular sequence. However, feel free to modify the adventures to suit your players and campaign. Before running any of these adventures, the gamemaster should be thoroughly familiar with the contents of this book, and both players and gamemaster should be familiar with the **Earthdawn** rulebook (ED).





Each adventure includes clearly marked sections intended to be read aloud to the players. Depending on the choices made by different groups of players, gamemasters may need to adjust these sections to reflect the course of the adventure. The adventures in **Blades** are best suited for player characters of varying Circles; a brief introductory paragraph in each adventure suggests an appropriate number of characters and their recommended Circles.

MAKING TESTS

Whenever player characters attempt to take actions such as casting a spell, swinging a sword at an opponent, tracking a Horror or flirting with a barmaid, the gamemaster or the player rolls dice against a Difficulty Number to determine the action's outcome. These dice rolls are called tests. To make a test, the player or gamemaster rolls the appropriate Action dice based on the step number of the ability being used (see the **Step/Action Dice Table**, p. 36, ED). If the dice roll result is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Number, the test succeeds and the character accomplishes his action. If the result is lower than the Difficulty Number, the test fails and the character does not accomplish his action. In tests that deal with magic, the dice roll result often determines the duration of a magical effect as well.

Frequently, a test result determines not only success or failure, but the level of success. A test may have one of five success levels: Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, and Extraordinary. A Poor success level indicates failure that causes unpleasant side effects. An Average success—equal to or barely exceeding the Difficulty Number—means that the character just barely accomplished his action. A somewhat better dice roll yields a Good success, and a result close to double the Difficulty Number means an Excellent success. To achieve Extraordinary successes requires an even better roll. Any success level greater than Average may give the character some gain for his actions or valuable extra information. The amount of gain for each success level is determined by the gamemaster unless otherwise noted.

In many cases when the player characters must make a test, the required ability is noted, followed by the Difficulty Number of the task in parentheses. For example, a Perception (13) Test means that a player character must use his Perception ability against a Difficulty Number of 13.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aside from the **Earthdawn** rulebook, this book contains everything required to run **Blades**. Gamemasters may also find the **Barsaive Campaign Set**, the **Earthdawn Gamemaster Pack**, the **Earthdawn Companion**, and the **Creatures and Horrors** sourcebooks useful. Read the adventures carefully to familiarize yourself with the back-

grounds and plot lines of each before beginning an adventure. As always, be prepared to deal with the unexpected.

The Blades of Cara Fahd, the section following this **Introduction**, describes the history of the Blades and their connection to the Horror embedded in their pattern. The section also includes game statistics for the weapons and gamemaster information for handling the characters' research and thread weaving to the Blades. Finally, the section offers advice on running these adventures and incorporating them into an extended **Earthdawn** campaign.

The next section, titled **Interludes**, consists of brief encounters that the gamemaster may use to set up each adventure and connect them to one other. These encounters describe how the characters find out where to go next for each of the Key Knowledges they seek.

The five adventures follow the **Interludes** section. Each adventure begins with a prologue and an **Introduction**, which includes a plot synopsis of the adventure's most probable course. The following chapters, called encounters, describe the actual adventure. Each encounter contains five sections: **Overview**, **Setting the Stage**, **Themes and Images**, **Behind the Scenes**, and **Troubleshooting**.

The **Overview** briefly summarizes the action that occurs during the encounter and describes the encounter's main conflict. The next section, **Setting the Stage**, contains a narrative description that the gamemaster reads aloud to the players. The narrative describes the player characters' location and what is happening to them as if the characters were actually there. Any special instructions for the gamemaster are printed in **boldface** type.

Themes and Images helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter. It includes hints about imagery to use in the scene, emotions to convey, sounds, sensations, and so on.

Behind the Scenes explains what is really going on in each encounter. This section provides the gamemaster with all the information needed to run the encounter, such as specialized descriptions of locations and events and statistics for gamemaster characters and creatures. If the players or gamemaster need a map to play an encounter, it appears here. As with **Setting the Stage**, any special instructions for the gamemaster here are printed in **boldface** type.

The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track if things go awry. For example, the characters may miss an important clue or lose a fight that they need to win. Most gamemasters will not want the player characters to get discouraged or killed off too easily. This section offers the gamemaster options for keeping the game going over trouble spots. Of course, the gamemaster





may ignore these hints and invent his own solutions or simply let the chips fall where they may.

Following the encounters, the section titled **Loose Ends** sums up the consequences of the adventure and suggests ways the gamemaster might use the adventure's gamemaster characters and settings in future adventures. This section also includes **Awarding Legend Points**, guidelines for awarding the adventure's **Legend Points** to the player characters. In **Earthdawn** adventures of standard length, the gamemaster awards Legend Points after each gaming session as well as at the end of the adventure. Because the adventures in this book are designed to fit into a single gaming session, the gamemaster need only give his players an **Adventure Legend Award** (see **Awarding Legend Points**, following). **Cast of Characters** provides game statistics and descriptions for significant gamemaster characters in each adventure.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

The **Loose Ends** section of each adventure includes Legend Award guidelines for that adventure. These guidelines indicate the Legend Points the gamemaster awards for each task accomplished or goal reached during the adventure. The **Adventure Legend Award** represents the Legend Points awarded for completing the adventure successfully. For more information on completing adventure goals and earning Adventure Legend Awards, see p. 242, ED. In addition, player characters may receive Legend Awards for creative roleplaying and/or heroics, defeating creatures and/or opponents, and finding or acquiring treasure.

For creative roleplaying and/or heroics, characters may receive a number of Legend Points for taking certain types of actions listed in each adventure. A single character may only receive one such award during a given adventure. Unlike other Legend Awards, the Legend Points listed for various acts of creative roleplaying or heroics are not divided among the characters.

The **Creature Legend Award** appears in the Creature/Opponent Award Table provided in each adventure. These tables list the available Legend Points for defeating the adventure's creatures and/or opponents, arranged by the type and number of each creature and opponent fought as well as by the number of player characters. The Legend Points listed for each creature represent the total number of points for each type, not the number of Legend Points per creature. For example, the Creature Legend Award for the ice flyers in **With an Axe in Hand** (p. 69–85) is 400 Legend Points for all five creatures, not 400 for each one. Divide the total Creature Legend Award equally among the player characters (see p. 242, ED). Round points per character down to the nearest multiple of

10. For example, 500 Legend Points divided by 6 characters equals 83.3 points per character, rounded down to 80 points per character.

Entries marked with an asterisk indicate creatures or opponents that the characters may choose not to fight. If they battle these opponents, add the indicated Legend Points to the total Creature Legend Award and divide that total by the number of player characters.

Characters earn **Treasure Legend Points** by finding or acquiring specific treasures in each adventure. As with points for defeating creatures, divide the Legend Points for each treasure equally among the player characters. If they choose, the player characters may sell certain items for a number of silver pieces equal to the Legend Points that the item is worth.

TOTAL LEGEND POINT AWARD

The Total Legend Point Award serves as a guideline for the gamemaster. He may award more or fewer Legend Points depending on the circumstances of his game, but the total should not vary drastically from the average provided in each adventure.

PREPARING ADVENTURES

Creating a published adventure that provides the appropriate opposition level for every diverse group of player characters is impossible, because some groups are inherently more powerful than others. Therefore, gamemasters may need to adjust the game statistics and capabilities of an adventure's opposition to provide his players with an appropriate challenge. If an adventure does not suit the player characters' strengths and weaknesses, use it as a blueprint to develop an adventure of your own. Or if it works well except for a glitch here and there, modify the plot or events to make the adventure a better one.

Keep in mind that as the gamemaster, you have a unique responsibility to make the adventure exciting, keep the players involved and hold the story on track. In describing the world of **Earthdawn**, try to answer all the players' questions about what the characters see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Feel free to go beyond the descriptions provided in this book when evoking places and moods. To keep the players connected to the action, ask "What do you do?" each time you describe a new scene to them. By describing what they want their characters to do, the players help tell the story and add to their own enjoyment. If the players wander from the story line, nudge them back in the right direction. If the players make choices that interrupt the story or make them miss a vital clue, drop hints to encourage them to do what the adventure requires. Remember, however, to keep it subtle. A good gamemaster guides the players, he does not tell them what to do.





THE BLADES OF CARA FAHD



his section provides the history of the Blades of Cara Fahd, the Seven Spokes who wielded them, and the Horror Betrayer that corrupted them. The section also includes game statistics for the Blades and information on using the weapons in the game, guidelines for incorporating Betrayer's influence, and directions on using these adventures in an **Earthdawn** campaign.

THE ARRIVAL OF BETRAYER

Armed with the Blades, Cara Fahd's Protectors defeated countless Horrors and Horror constructs. They met their nemesis, however, in the Horror known as Betrayer. While many other Horrors attack with claws and teeth, Betrayer subtly caused its victims to betray those around them. Under the influence of this entity, soldiers betrayed their leaders in battle, villagers revolted against their leaders, and families betrayed their loved ones. When Betrayer grew bored with corrupting the minds of ordinary folk, it sought powerful adepts whose magic it could pervert to betray hundreds or even thousands of victims. In its search for these more toothsome morsels, Betrayer discovered Cara Fahd's Protectors.

HORROR MARKED!

Betrayer led Cara Fahd's Protectors into battle against one of its servitors, a construct that the ork heroes easily defeated. But during the course of the battle, Betrayer marked one of the eight orks—a swordmaster adept Named Kragen Overtall.

Through the Horror mark, Betrayer infiltrated the entire group. And through the group, the Horror caused discord and betrayal among the communities the orks passed through. Eventually the heroes realized that a Horror had somehow touched them. Scant days after that, they discovered that their comrade Kragen Overtall bore the Horror mark that plagued them. At this discovery, Overtall fled Cara Fahd and headed northeast into the Liaj Jungle. The remaining seven heroes followed their Horror-marked companion, first with hopes of saving him—then with the intention to kill him. After weeks of tracking Overtall across Barsaive, Cara Fahd's Protectors caught up with the fugitive and slew him. Grief-stricken at what they had been forced to do, the seven heroes built a small crypt where they laid their departed companion to rest.

THE SEVEN SPOKES

The betrayal of Kragen Overtall remained a painful memory in the minds of the remaining heroes as they traveled back to Cara Fahd. On their return, one of them—Pobov Gaarz—proposed that the seven re-Name themselves and forever sunder the bonds between them, Kragen Overtall, and the Horror that had marked him. The only one to protest was Nhag Katurn, Overtall's closest friend, who only reluctantly agreed with the wisdom in Gaarz's proposal.

HISTORY OF THE BLADES

The history of the Blades of Cara Fahd begins in Barsaive's distant past, during the Orichalcum Wars. At the time, the Theran Empire needed vast amounts of orichalcum for its magical research, including the Rites of Protection and Passage that would one day protect the world from the Scourge. As a result, the Therans offered Barsaive's various kingdoms high prices for the precious element. As the nations and peoples of Barsaive battled each other for the valuable ore, the threat of the Horrors grew with each passing year. Soon, Barsaive's people found themselves fighting the Horrors as well as each other.

THE BLADES AND THEIR WIELDERS

In the southwestern corner of Barsaive, the ork kingdom of Cara Fahd battled its nearest neighbors and rivals—the humans of Landis and the trolls of Ustrect. While many of Cara Fahd's soldiers fought these enemies, other ork adepts were recruited to protect the kingdom from the Horrors. Eight of these adepts performed heroic exploits that captured the attention of Cathon Grimeye, leader of Cara Fahd's military. Grimeye chose these eight adepts to serve as a symbol of heroism and devotion to Cara Fahd. He Named them Cara Fahd's Protectors, so that all Barsaive would know of their deeds in the name of the ork kingdom they served.

Grimeye also charged the famed ork weaponsmith Rugaah Gloh to forge the band a set of weapons that would be their trademark and symbol. Gloh worked for months on the weapons, a matched set of enchanted daggers inscribed with runes identifying them as belonging to the ork kingdom. He Named these daggers the Blades of Cara Fahd and gave one to each of Cara Fahd's Protectors. So long as the Protectors served Cara Fahd, their bond to each other and to the kingdom would strengthen the Blades' magic.





The orks began by destroying Kragen's dagger, thereby severing it from the magical pattern of the remaining Blades. Then they performed the Naming ritual, re-Naming themselves the Seven Spokes. They sealed the rite with a blood oath to protect each other and Cara Fahd. To end the ritual they engraved a new symbol onto one side of each of the remaining Blades. This symbol—a wheel with seven spokes—could only be seen if the Blades were arranged as a wheel with their tips touching in the center. This symbol also showed a break in the pattern, a hole where an eighth spoke should have been. This gap was the heroes' tribute to the memory of their fallen companion.

Their re-Naming complete, the Seven Spokes believed they had rid themselves of the Horror. Unknown to them, however, Betrayers' corruption had spread into the pattern of the Blades themselves.

BETRAYER AND THE LIFEROCK

The destruction of Overtall's dagger and the re-Naming of the group severely weakened Betrayers. Rather than rebuild its power slowly through the Blades, Betrayers sought new victims. It found a brotherhood of obsidimen whose Liferock lay in the Tylon Mountains, near the Horror's lair. As it had done with the ork heroes, Betrayers penetrated the brotherhood by slowly corrupting one of its members and using him as a gateway to the rest. Once it had its first victim completely under its influence, Betrayers sent its unwitting pawn into the Liferock. Through the tainted obsidiman, Betrayers corrupted the remaining members of the brotherhood and the Liferock itself. When the Liferock's cries of pain reached the brotherhood's absent members, they came from all over Barsaive to aid their Liferock. Betrayers consumed them as well, one by one—all save for the last.

Its strength somewhat restored by the betrayal of the Liferock and the brotherhood, Betrayers turned its attention back to the Seven Spokes. Once again, the Horror worked its malevolent magic, and the Spokes carried the Horror's influence with them across Barsaive. Soon the Seven Spokes realized that they had failed to rid themselves of Betrayers. Determined to confront and destroy the Horror, they set out in search of it and eventually came to the Liferock in the Tylon Mountains. As they searched for traces of the Horror, the Seven Spokes were attacked by corrupted obsidimen that Betrayers had turned into Horror

constructs. As they fought, the last of the brotherhood emerged from the Liferock—free of the Horror's taint himself but driven mad by the corruption of the Liferock. The ork heroes defeated the constructs and trapped the mad obsidiman in a small crevasse near the Liferock, where he remained throughout the Scourge.

THE BATTLE

After several more weeks of travel in and the Tylon Mountains, the Seven Spokes discovered the Horror's lair. Betrayers had gone to ground deep within the mountains, near an underground community of t'skrang Pale Ones. With aid from the shivalahala of the t'skrang foundation, the Seven Spokes devised a blood magic ritual intended to destroy the Horror.

The Seven Spokes confronted Betrayers in a small grotto deep beneath the Tylon Mountains. As the orks attacked the Horror, one by one they scarred the backs of their hands with the Blades and let their blood flow into an enchanted bowl. As each member performed the ritual, the Horror grew weaker and weaker, its body shriveling and drying up. As the last of Seven Spokes performed the ritual, the Horror's body melted into nothingness. The Seven Spokes stood triumphant over the Horror that had so long bedeviled them.



BETRAYAL FROM BEYOND

For a long while, the Seven Spokes believed that they had indeed banished Betrayers from the world and their lives. They did not know that they had only succeeded in destroying Betrayers' body. Its spirit remained alive, split into seven parts and trapped within the magical pattern of the Blades of Cara Fahd. Though much weaker than it had been, Betrayers was now safe from physical attack. Again the Horror began to exert its influence over the Seven Spokes and everyone who came into contact with them.

Over the next few years, the Seven Spokes brought tragedy and betrayal wherever they went. During the last months of the Orichalcum Wars, the heroes unknowingly betrayed the very kingdom for which they fought. Because of the Horror-cursed daggers they carried, the Seven Spokes ensured Cara Fahd's downfall.





Soon after Cara Fahd collapsed, Pobov Gaarz—the last surviving member of the Seven Spokes—gathered the Blades together and placed them in an ornate enchanted box. He sealed the box with blood magic so that the Blades might never be seen or wielded again. With this act, Betrayer's power waned. Over time the Horror slept, waiting for new victims to discover and wield the Blades.

THE BLADES SINCE THE SCOURGE

No one knows exactly what happened to the Blades after the death of Pobov Gaarz, nor how they survived the Scourge intact. A generation or so after the Scourge ended, the Blades were discovered by an elven nethermancer Named Tyrlaan, a servant of Verjigorm, the Hunter of Great Dragons. Tyrlaan detected the Horror magic within the Blades and wove threads to them, hoping they would aid the plans of his master. His act awoke Betrayer, but before the Horror became fully aware, a group of adepts took the daggers from Tyrlaan and his servants. These adepts seek to unlock the magic of the Blades of Cara Fahd, not knowing the danger they unleash on all of Barsaive by doing so.

USING THE BLADES

This section provides game information for the Blades and describes the powers and abilities Betrayer can use while trapped within the daggers. This information includes the Key Knowledges and Deeds associated with each of the Blades' thread ranks, the specific interludes appropriate to each thread rank (see **Interludes**, p. 17), and the adventure in which the characters learn the thread rank's Key Knowledge.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Blades of Cara Fahd are a matched set of seven daggers, each with a dark red wooden hilt set with a small, dark emerald. Runic carvings cover both sides of the hilts, the pommels, and the gleaming steel blades. One side of the blades contains the runic symbols for the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The other side contains larger runes that together form the symbol of the Seven Spokes. This symbol can be seen only when the seven daggers are arranged so that each forms a wheel spoke, with the daggers' tips in the center and their pommels at the outer edge.

Each of the original eight wielders carried one of these daggers until the Horror Betrayer marked the swordmaster Kragen Overtall. Kragen eventually betrayed his fellow group members and Cara Fahd. Afterward, the other members killed him and destroyed his dagger.

Only members of a group that has previously formed a group true pattern (see p. 52, **ED Companion**) can use

the magic of the Blades of Cara Fahd. Each individual dagger is meant to be carried by one member of the group, and each character weaves his own thread to his dagger. The daggers enhance the abilities granted by the group true pattern, as well as increasing a wielder's Spell Defenses against Horrors and Horror constructs.

The increase to a wielder's abilities—via threads woven to his dagger—can never exceed the thread woven to that ability from the group's true pattern or pattern item. Threads woven to the Blades count toward the maximum number of threads a character can have active at any time. The daggers have a maximum of 8 threads because eight daggers existed originally, even though only seven exist now. This also allows two characters to weave threads to a single dagger, which may be necessary if the player characters' group contains eight members. For more information, see **How Many Characters?**, p. 14.

Maximum Threads: 8

Spell Defense: 18

Thread Ranks

Rank 1

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The characters must learn that the Name of the item is the Blades of Cara Fahd and that the Name of the weaponsmith who forged the blades is Rugaah Gloh.

Effect: The weapon adds +1 Step to any single ability attached to a group true pattern.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the interlude **Secrets of the Runes** (p. 17) and the adventure **Bond Breaker** (p. 27).

Rank 2

Cost: 500

Effect: The weapon adds +2 Steps to any single ability attached to a group true pattern.

Rank 3

Cost: 800

Key Knowledge: The characters must learn that the Name of the group of ork adventurers who used the Blades before the Scourge is the Seven Spokes.

Deed: The characters must travel to the group's original home and erect a monument to them. This Deed is worth 800 Legend Points.

Effect: The weapon adds +2 Steps to any single ability attached to a group true pattern and adds +1 Step to one other such ability.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the interlude **In Search of Knowledge** (p. 18) and the adventure **Grave Wisdom** (p. 43).



**Rank 4****Cost:** 1,300

Effect: The weapon adds +2 Steps to any two abilities attached to a group true pattern.

Rank 5**Cost:** 2,100

Key Knowledge: One of the heroes who first wielded the daggers became Horror-marked and betrayed the group. The characters must learn this adept's Name—Kragen Overfall.

Effect: The weapon adds +3 Steps to any single ability attached to a group true pattern, +2 Steps to an additional such ability, and +2 to a wielder's Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the interlude **Lighting the Way** (p. 20) and the adventure **A Traitor's Fate** (p. 55).

Rank 6**Cost:** 3,400

Effect: The weapon adds +3 Steps to any single ability attached to a group true pattern, +2 Steps to a second such ability, +1 Step to a third such ability, and +2 to a wielder's Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs.

Rank 7**Cost:** 5,500

Key Knowledge: The group that first wielded the daggers defeated a Horror just before its members died. The characters must learn the Name of that Horror—Betrayal.

Effect: The weapon adds +3 Steps to any single ability attached to a group true pattern, +2 Steps to 2 other abilities, and +2 to the wielder's Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs. This bonus rises to +4 against Betrayal.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the interlude **With a Tale to Tell** (p. 22) and the adventure **With an Axe in Hand** (p. 69).

Rank 8**Cost:** 8,900

Key Knowledge: The characters must learn that the Seven Spokes defeated the Horror by imprisoning Betrayal's spirit within the magical pattern of the Blades.

Deed: The characters must travel to the place where the original wielders defeated the Horror—the Great Dome in the Tylon Mountains. This Deed is worth 5,500 Legend Points.

Effect: The weapon adds +3 Steps to any two abilities attached to a group true pattern, +2 Steps to a third ability, +3 to the wielder's Spell Defense against Horrors, and +6 against Betrayal. The Blades also enable the characters to perform a blood magic ritual that allows them to rip a target's spirit from his body. Using this power causes 5 points of damage to each member of the group. The target's spirit

becomes trapped in one of the daggers and can only be purged after a year and a day. During that time, the spirit can draw magical energy from the active threads attached to the dagger, using that energy to cause various magical effects. To use this special power, each member of the group must make a successful Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If any test does not succeed, the power does not work. The step number for the power is the highest rank of all the threads woven to the Blades.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the interlude **Last Words** (p. 24) and the adventure **Pure Liquids** (p. 87).

Weaving Threads

The characters can weave threads to the Blades as soon as they have learned the appropriate Key Knowledge and performed any Deeds associated with the thread rank. Thread weaving is described in the **Workings of Magic** section of the **Earthdawn** rulebook (see **Thread Magic**, pp. 143-147, ED).

Keep in mind that each character must weave a thread to the individual Blade he carries to gain the benefits of the Blades, and characters cannot skip a thread rank when weaving threads. For example, a character must have previously woven a Rank 2 thread to his dagger before he can weave a Rank 3 thread.

BETRAYAL'S POWERS

The spirit of Betrayal still lives in the pattern of the Blades, awakened by Tyrllaan and his servants when they wove threads to the Blades (see the adventure **Shattered Pattern** for more information about Tyrllaan). Since the characters have taken possession of the Blades, the Horror has grown stronger and begun to exert its influence over those near the Blades. As the characters weave higher-ranked threads to the Blades, the Horror grows in power. The **Introduction** of each adventure suggests ways to use the Horror's influence. Some of the specific actions the Horror causes in each adventure appear below as well.

During **Bond Breaker**, the characters weave no threads to the Blades. Therefore, Betrayal's power remains weak and its influence limited in this adventure. At this point, Betrayal can only strengthen feelings of betrayal and anger in victims physically near the Blades. For example, Betrayal strengthens Gnanagh's feelings of jealousy toward his brother and thereby inspires Gnanagh to attempt murder.

Weaving Rank 1 or Rank 2 threads to the Blades strengthens the Horror's power enough to let it pervert emotions slightly—for example, turning simple envy into obsessive jealousy.





Weaving Rank 3 or Rank 4 threads to the Blades strengthens Betrayer substantially. At this point Betrayer can influence those near the Blades quite easily, even causing friends and companions to turn on one another. For example, in **A Traitor's Fate** the Horror causes the leader of a jungle tribe slay her people and herself.

By weaving Rank 5 or Rank 6 threads to the Blades, the characters make Betrayer powerful enough to cause those near the Blades to attack their closest friends and loved ones. Betrayer's influence can also spread throughout communities, as happens in **With an Axe in Hand**.

Rank 7 threads increase the Horror's power so much that even the most loyal of friends or followers can be prompted toward betrayal. This effect occurs in the adventure **Pure Liquids**, when Betrayer manipulates a group of t'skrang to attack their shivalahala.

Effects on Gamemaster Characters

Betrayer can use its mind-manipulating Influence power against gamemaster characters who are physically close to the Blades of Cara Fahd. The effective area of this power grows larger as the Horror grows stronger. As each new rank of thread is woven to the Blades, Betrayer can exert its influence over more people within a greater area.

The specific instances in which the Horror uses its power in these adventures need no game mechanics because they happen as part of the stories. However, if the gamemaster wishes the Horror to manipulate gamemaster characters in other ways, he can use the following game mechanics or simply declare that the Horror's power works in the manner he wishes.

The Step Number for the Influence power is 7, plus the highest rank of the threads woven to the Blades of Cara Fahd. When Betrayer uses this special power, the Horror makes an Influence Test against the target's Spell Defense. Add a bonus of +3 to +7 Steps to the Step Number if the victim is feeling anger or jealousy or is contemplating betrayal prior to the test. The gamemaster sets the specific bonus, based on the strength of the target's thoughts and feelings. Keep in mind that Betrayer usually seeks out angry or jealous victims on whom to use its powers. If the test succeeds, the victim does as Betrayer suggests. If the Horror achieves a Good or better success, the act of betrayal perpetrated by the victim is intensified. For example, in **Bond Breaker** an Average success on Betrayer's part might have led Gnanagh to simply create dissent or distrust among the Righteous Vipers instead of poisoning his brother's drink.

Effects on Player Characters

The Influence power is intended for use against gamemaster characters. If the gamemaster wishes to turn Betrayer's powers against one of the player characters, use

the Horror's Karma Tap power. The connection between the characters and the Blades allows Karma Tap to function because the characters' threads are essentially connected to the Horror. This connection has the same game effect as a Horror mark. The Horror gains a +3 Step bonus when using Karma Tap against any of the player characters.

RUNNING BLADES

Blades is designed as an **Earthdawn** campaign supplement for use throughout an ongoing **Earthdawn** campaign. The exact role of these adventures in a campaign is up to the gamemaster and, to a lesser extent, the players. The following paragraphs offer suggestions for dealing with the unique structure of this product and implementing the **Blades** adventures into your campaign.

GETTING THE BLADES

The adventures assume that the characters possess the Blades of Cara Fahd. They may have acquired the weapons in a number of ways, the most likely of which are described below.

Shattered Pattern

The most likely way for the characters to have obtained the Blades is at the conclusion of **Shattered Pattern**, a previously published **Earthdawn** adventure. The Blades are the primary treasure the characters gain in that adventure, and most groups that played that adventure should have obtained the Blades at that time.

In **Shattered Pattern**, the characters take the Blades from the elf nethermancer Tyrlaan and his lieutenants in the Cult of the Great Hunter, a Horror cult devoted to Verjigorm. Tyrlaan and his flunkies have already woven threads to the Blades, thereby awakening Betrayer before the adventures in **Blades** begin. Betrayer's awareness and ability to act is an important element of the subplot that plays throughout the **Blades** adventures.

Other Means

If the characters have not played **Shattered Pattern** or did not obtain the Blades at the end of that adventure, devise some other way for the characters to obtain them. For example, the characters may stumble across the Blades locked away in the ruins of Parlainth. Or perhaps the characters receive them as payment for some important task they perform. Tailor the specific circumstances to your campaign.

How the characters obtain the Blades is not important. To run these adventures, the characters simply need to possess the weapons and realize they must research the Blades' history to use their magical powers.





THE BLADES' CURSE

If the characters obtain the Blades in some other way than **Shattered Pattern**, the Horror must be awakened somehow before the characters weave their first threads to the Blades. Someone may have previously woven threads to the daggers, or the gamemaster may simply assume that the Horror awakens when the characters begin studying the Blades. The so-called "curse" on the Blades—actually a manifestation of the Horror within them—must be active when the characters learn the first Key Knowledge (see **Bond Breaker**, p. 27). The characters must also understand that the Blades have cursed them. See **Blades and Your Campaign**, p. 16, for more information about the effects of the Blades and the Horror on the campaign.

Discovering the Truth

Over the course of the adventures, the characters should deduce that the Blades carry more than a simple curse. If the characters decide to astrally sense the Blades to determine the truth, allow them to do so. DO NOT offer this option unless the characters request it. The characters learn the truth in the final adventure. If they haven't figured it out by then, a lot of their questions about the Blades and the curse should be answered at that point.

Characters may make astral sensing tests against Betrayer's Spell Defense of 22 and must achieve a Good or better success to detect anything beyond the effects of the "curse." The Difficulty Number is reduced by 1 for each rank of thread that the characters have woven to the Blades. If any of the characters achieves a Good or better success, he notices elements of Horror taint, which imply that the "curse" on the Blades is similar to a Horror curse. An Excellent success reveals a definite living pattern intertwined with that of the Blades, while an Extraordinary success reveals that a Horror lives in the Blades' pattern.

Any character who does not achieve a Good or better success but whose test result equals the Spell Defense of the Blades (18) detects the "curse" on the pattern of the Blades. An Average success against the Horror's Spell Defense also reveals the "curse."

HOW MANY CHARACTERS?

The adventures in this book are best suited for a group of seven characters, with one dagger for each character. The adventures are designed to accommodate groups of six to eight adepts.

A player group with less than seven characters poses no real problem, because all seven of the Blades need not be wielded for the characters to harness their powers. If the group has eight characters, the gamemaster has a few options. First, one of the characters may choose not to wield

a Blade for some reason or other. Second, a group might consist of several adepts who have formed a group pattern, plus one or two companions who have yet to join the pattern. Such companions cannot use the Blades, and so should not wield them. Third, two of the characters in a group may weave threads to a single dagger. The two characters must decide which character will carry the dagger, but each character benefits from the enhancements granted by the thread.

If a player group has more than eight members, at least one of their characters will not be able to wield a Blade. If desired, the gamemaster may solve this problem by simply changing the number of daggers available throughout the adventures.

ADVENTURE STYLE

The adventures in **Blades** differ from those previously published for **Earthdawn** in a number of ways. First, each adventure forms part of a larger picture, although each can stand alone. As the characters progress through the **Blades** adventures, they learn the history of the Blades and the heroes who wielded them. At the same time, they uncover a serious threat to Barsaive, a threat they become inextricably linked to. This threat grows with each adventure and each thread the characters weave to the Blades.

Also, the scope of the individual adventures is much smaller than that of previously published **Earthdawn** adventures. Most **Earthdawn** adventures have had consequences that affect not only the characters, but also the people and places in those adventures. The **Blades** adventures are more self-contained. Except for the final adventure, **Pure Liquids**, the characters simply seek to learn the next Key Knowledge of the Blades. They are not out to free a small town from the Grim Legion, aid the Resistance in Vivane, defeat a major Horror, or anything else potentially earth-shaking. These limited objectives allow a gamemaster to run these adventures between others in his campaign without disrupting the campaign's status quo.

RESEARCHING THE BLADES

Researching the Blades of Cara Fahd is central to the adventures in **Blades**. These adventures only work if the characters decide they want to study the Blades and weave threads to them. Before running **Blades**, the gamemaster may want to re-read the material on thread magic (pp. 143-147, ED) so that he has a clear idea of how threads are woven to magical items.

Learning each Key Knowledge of the Blades involves three steps. First, a character must make an Item/Weapon History Test to learn the nature of the Key Knowledge and any Deeds associated with the thread rank. Second, the characters must discover how they can learn the Key





Knowledge—at this point, the **Interludes** section comes into play. Third, the characters must go play the adventures to learn the Key Knowledge and perform the Deed.

Making Item/Weapon History Tests

A character makes the Item History or Weapon History test against a Difficulty Number of 18 (the Spell Defense of the Blades). If this test succeeds, the character learns the nature of the Key Knowledge needed to weave a specific thread Rank to the Blades. If none of the characters in the group has either of these talents, the group may find a troubadour or weaponsmith adept to perform the test for them. After learning the nature of a Key Knowledge, the characters must figure out how to learn the specific information they seek.

Using Interludes

Run interludes wherever they are convenient. For example, if the characters are in Vivane researching the Rank 5 Key Knowledge, the interlude for the Rank Five Key Knowledge can take place in or near Vivane. This saves the characters from excessive travel across Barsaive that might upset the gamemaster's plans for the campaign. Each interlude's text lists the appropriate adventure that follows the interlude.

The Adventures

Each adventure in this book assumes the characters have completed the appropriate interlude for that adventure. The adventures begin with the characters arriving at the general location where the adventure takes place and assumes that the characters will complete the adventure once they begin.

The **Blades** adventures are short and relatively straightforward. Generally, the characters already will have done considerable work toward learning the Key Knowledges they need. However, the adventures are not simple to complete or lacking in hazards. Many of the obstacles the characters face are potentially lethal. Such is the life of an adventurer in Barsaive.

The adventures are structured so that the characters learn the Key Knowledge at the end of each one. This forces the characters to play the entire adventure to get the information they seek. Obtaining the Key Knowledges is also the Adventure Goal of each adventure, and so the characters have failed if they do not find what they are looking for. As a result, they will earn far fewer Legend Points. Assuming the characters succeed, they can weave the appropriate thread once they have completed the adventure.

CAN'T WE GET RID OF THESE THINGS?

When the characters learn that the Blades are cursed, they may wish to get rid of the curse by throwing away the weapons. If they learn that the curse is actually the spirit of a Horror, they may want to ditch the Blades even more. This impulse might well pose a problem, as the adventures assume that the characters continue to research the Blades all the way up through the Rank 8 Key Knowledge. The suggestions below can help you deal with this issue, should it arise in your campaign.

Cursed, Like It or Not!

Point out to the players that the characters cannot escape the curse simply by getting rid of the Blades. Curses in **Earthdawn** are not so easily dealt with. The characters can only get rid of the curse by destroying its source—the Horror called Betrayer.

Throwing the Blades Away

If the characters toss the Blades away—down a deep well, into the Serpent River, or some such inaccessible place—they lose the Blades' benefits but do not escape the effects of the curse. The Horror's magic is strong enough to maintain an astral link between the patterns of the characters and the Blades, and so the Horror can continue to use its powers while preventing the characters from defeating it. Throwing away the Blades would prevent the characters from weaving higher-ranked threads to them and thereby prevent them from increasing the Horror's power, but even this is not really the benefit it first appears to be—Betrayer can always increase its strength in other ways.

If the characters want to throw the Blades away in spite of these considerations, arrange for some powerful individual to visit them and explain the importance of finding a way to destroy Betrayer. A high-ranking questor, one of the Lightbearers or even a great dragon are some possible choices. If the characters obtained the Blades through **Shattered Pattern**, Rathann and the other drakes who serve Icewing might turn up to talk to them. This option adds continuity to the campaign as well.

Destroying the Blades

The characters may consider destroying the Blades in an attempt to destroy the Horror. In fact, this choice is worse than keeping the Blades or throwing them away. Destroying the Blades releases Betrayer into astral space, allowing it to roam freely across Barsaive wreaking havoc. The freed Horror can even create a new physical body for itself, which would enable it to do physical damage in addition to manipulating innocent minds. Warn the characters of these circumstances if they contemplate destroying the Blades.





If the characters destroy the Blades anyway, have a much more powerful Betrayer seek them out later in the campaign. The Horror likely will want to thank them for its freedom personally. The characters may also receive a visit from a powerful questor, Lightbearer, or some such figure demanding to know why they have released such a powerful Horror—and very likely demanding that they clean up the mess they have caused.

Doing the Right Thing

Despite the dangers, the characters have several reasons to keep investigating the Blades. First, the Blades' considerable power can help their adventuring group become truly legendary in Barsaive. Second, the Blades provide an opportunity to destroy a legendary Horror. The Seven Spokes unsuccessfully attempted to destroy the Horror several times—any adventuring group that succeeds where these orks failed would gain considerable respect. And Betrayer poses a major threat to Barsaive as well. Destroying Betrayer is a great public service, and only a group armed with the Blades stands a chance of succeeding at the task.

We've Been Cheated

The player characters may feel cheated or manipulated once they learn that Betrayer has tainted them through the Blades. If they do, remind the players that their characters wanted to learn about the Blades in the first place. If they have already woven threads to the daggers, remind them that power never comes without a price—the Horror within the Blades is simply a particularly nasty price they must pay for the Blades' magic. If the players still feel that a Horror living inside their magical treasure is unfair, remind them that the Horrors do not play fair.

BLADES AND YOUR CAMPAIGN

Blades is designed to fit easily into a variety of campaigns. The story is divided into brief, stand-alone interludes and adventures that gamemasters may run between other planned adventures. Whenever the characters wish to learn the next Key Knowledge of the Blades, the gamemaster can simply work the events described in **Blades** around the rest of his campaign.

Gamemasters may easily control how much impact **Blades** has on their campaigns. By confining Betrayer's influence to the **Blades** adventures, for example, a gamemaster can minimize the effects of the story on the rest of his campaign. Alternatively, developments from **Blades** can have considerable impact on the rest of the campaign. For example, the player characters may become quite famous throughout Barsaive if they defeat Betrayer. And such fame could attract jealous enemies, pleas for help from those afflicted by other Horrors, and job offers. In addition, the

player characters possess the Blades themselves—a powerful magical treasure that can help them build their legend. Of course, the player characters are also being shadowed by a Horror, whose malign influence can topple governments and cause irreversible harm. And if things go badly, the characters may unleash a new Horror on Barsaive—a Horror they would have a responsibility to hunt down and destroy.

Running the Adventures

The **Blades** adventures should be spaced between other adventures of a campaign for maximum enjoyment.

The adventures are designed for increasingly powerful characters—the first adventure for characters of Fifth to Seventh Circles, the last adventure for characters of Seventh to Ninth Circles. Spacing the **Blades** adventures between other encounters provides the player characters with opportunities to advance in circle. Gaps between the **Blades** adventures provide the characters with time to weave threads to the Blades as well. For example, the first adventure in this book deals with the Rank 1 Key Knowledge; the next adventure deals with the Rank 3 Key Knowledge. The characters cannot weave the Rank 3 thread before weaving the Rank 2 thread, and so they likely will want to do this between the first and second **Blades** adventures. Think of the events in **Blades** as a subplot in your campaign—a series of connected occurrences that run their course around and between the campaign's other major events.

Threads Woven Prior to Blades

The Blades of Cara Fahd first appear in the adventure **Shattered Pattern**, and so some groups of player characters may already have woven threads to the Blades. Additionally, gamemasters may have already established histories for the Blades that differ from the information provided in this book. In these cases, gamemasters have a few options.

If the characters have learned one or two Key Knowledges, the gamemaster can adjust the information in this book to match his campaign, or vice versa. He can then proceed to the adventure surrounding the next Key Knowledge and pick up the story there. In this case, simply use the skipped adventures later in the campaign and simply omit the Key Knowledge information from the adventure.

If the characters have progressed much further than one or two Key Knowledges, the history and Key Knowledges provided in this book may differ significantly, requiring the gamemaster to make greater adjustments. In this case, the gamemaster can try to fit the rest of **Blades** into his campaign or use the adventures and the history of the Blades for another magical item of his own design. The latter option requires a significant amount of work but enables the gamemaster to use this product as intended.





INTERLUDES



This section contains all the information the gamemaster needs to point the characters in the right direction when they investigate the Key Knowledges of the Blades. Each Key Knowledge has its own interlude, which provides suggestions for conveying the information that the characters need to begin the next adventure. Feel free

to modify the information presented to suit your campaigns and styles of play.

Each interlude is organized like a standard encounter, and each leads directly into one of the five adventures of this book. The interludes assume that the characters have previously used the Item History or Weapon History talents and understand the information they need to learn. Whether the characters move directly from these interludes to the adventures connected with them is up to the gamemaster. For more information, see **Running Blades** (p. 13).

SECRET OF THE RUNES

Secret of the Runes is the first interlude, set before the adventure titled **Bond Breaker**. Use this interlude when the characters begin seeking the Blades' Rank 1 Key Knowledge. The unspecified setting of this interlude allows gamemasters to run it from wherever the adventurers happen to be when **Blades** begins. The facts the adventurers must discover in this interlude are:

- The daggers were manufactured in the now-defunct ork kingdom of Cara Fahd.
- One of Barsaive's foremost experts on Cara Fahd is an ork named Gnanagh, a member of a small scorcher band called the Fists of Fahd.
- The best place to look for the Fists of Fahd is just south of the Delaris Mountains in southwestern Barsaive.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the adventurers begin to investigate the Blades, read the following aloud:

You scrutinize the daggers and see that each of the seven is perfectly matched to the others. Even their balance and heft is the same. Each has a wooden handle covered with deep red lacquer, and small, dark, identical emeralds glitter in their pommels. Runic carvings decorate both sides of each handle and surround the gemstones. Similar carvings cover the gleaming steel blades—

these runes are stranger-looking than the others, but you can't say exactly how.

Clearly, the runes contain a message. But what might that message be?

THEMES AND IMAGES

Emphasize the appearance of the Blades: alluring, beautiful, and deadly.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventurers most likely have some ability to gather information and probably know (or should easily be able to find) a scholar of ork history in their immediate area. The process of getting clues from each source is described below.

Adventurer Investigations

If any of the adventurers has the Item History or Weapon History talents, he or she can use it to learn some of the Key Knowledges of the Blades. The Spell Defense of the Blades is 18. This interlude deals with the first Key Knowledge: the collective Name of the items and the Name of the weaponsmith who forged them.

If any character has Read and Write Language (Ork) as a skill or talent, he recognizes most of the runes as an unusual style of written Ork. A character who makes a Read and Write Language (9) Test may learn more about the writing on the daggers, depending on the level of success achieved.

Poor: The runes on one side of the blades say: "Caravan Fails." The runes on the other side and on the hilts are too strange to decipher.

Average: The runes on one side of the blades say: "Cara Fahd." The runes on the other side of the blade are not the ork language. The runes on the hilt are a poem, but the language and the calligraphy are from legendary times and it is hard to make out the details. The poem seems to be about friendship, loyalty, or partnership.

Good: The character learns the information for an Average success, plus the following. The runes on the handles are a verse in some ancient ork language. The word for "eight" appears three times in the poem, as does the word for "our." The verse seems to be an oath of allegiance designed for a group of ork heroes.

Excellent: The character learns the information for a Good success and can translate the verse:





*Eight we are, eight we shall be.
United, indivisible, eternally.
In fear shall the foes of Fahd be kept.
The step of eight feet in one footstep.
To one another, our fates are threaded.
To legendry, our tales are headed.*

Extraordinary: The character learns the information for an Excellent success and recognizes the style of the language as sixth- or seventh-century Ork, according to the Throalic calendar.

Once the adventurers know that the runes on the Blades spell out “Cara Fahd,” they can try to recall anything they might know about this place. Any adventurer with an appropriate knowledge skill such as Ork History or Ork Lore can make a Skill Test against a Difficulty Number of 6. For general knowledge skills, such as Barsaive History or Ancient Legends, a character may make a Skill Test against a Difficulty Number of 9. If the adventurers have access to an average or better library, they can also make a Research Skill (5) Test to gain the information. What they learn depends on the success level they achieve.

Poor: “Cara Fahd” sounds really familiar. Its meaning is right on the tip of your tongue, but you can’t quite grasp it.

Average: Cara Fahd was an ancient ork kingdom.

Good: Cara Fahd was an ancient ork kingdom destroyed just before the Scourge.

Excellent: Cara Fahd was an ancient ork city-state, destroyed during the Orichalcum Wars in a final suicidal stroke by its military commander. The ruins of Cara Fahd lie somewhere in southwestern Barsaive, north of Vivane and Sky Point and south of the Delaris Mountains.

Extraordinary: The character learns the information for a Good success, plus the following. The memory of the conflagration that destroyed Cara Fahd has obscured the kingdom’s achievements. It prospered for several centuries as a flourishing center of art and culture and serves as a reminder that the ork race is capable of more than raiding and mercenary work.

Learning From the Scholar

Eventually the adventurers need to consult an outside source for further information. If the adventurers are in familiar territory and already know a scholar in the area, use that gamemaster character. If they are away from their usual stomping grounds, suggest that they do a little checking around. They should swiftly discover the most prominent scholar nearby, a young female dwarf named Sarania.

SARANIA

Attributes

DEX: 4	STR: 4	TOU: 4
PER: 7	WIL: 5	CHA: 4

Sarania is a friendly sort and loves to talk. If the adventurers have not uncovered the aforementioned information about the dagger inscription and Cara Fahd on their own, Sarania can do it for them. She can read written Ork—modern and archaic—and translates the verse written on the daggers’ hilts. She also knows quite a bit about the history of Cara Fahd and gives the characters all the historical material.

Finally, she gives them the name of the best-known expert on Cara Fahd: Gnanagh the Querulous, whom she has never met but knows by reputation. He is a legendary eccentric among historians. Though Gnanagh is an expert researcher and author of several sought-after scrolls on the antiquities of Cara Fahd, he spends most of his time as advisor to a scorcher band known as the Fists of Fahd. The members of this band claim direct lineage from the kings of Cara Fahd, although most scholars dispute this claim. The Fists of Fahd live by raiding mining villages in the southern foothills of the Delaris Mountains. If the adventurers truly want to know the secrets their newly acquired daggers hold, they should journey to the scorcher lands and attempt to win an audience with this notoriously irritable old ork.

Once the characters discover that they should seek out Gnanagh, go to **Bond Breaker**, p. 27.

TROUBLESHOOTING

As long as the adventurers get the basic information they need, nothing can go wrong in this interlude.

IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE

This interlude falls between the first and second adventures, **Bond Breaker** and **Grave Wisdom**. Use the interlude when the characters begin seeking the Blades’ Rank 3 Key Knowledge: the Name of the group of heroes that wielded the Blades of Cara Fahd—the “Seven Spokes.” This interlude assumes that the characters begin by searching in a library. They arrive at the library of their choice, hoping to find at least part of the answer to their questions hidden in the pages of some musty tome. Instead, they find an unexpected ally, willing to lead them to the one place in Cara Fahd where they can find the information they need.

If necessary, adjust the following text to fit the place where the characters perform their research.





SETTING THE STAGE

Read the following aloud when the characters approach the library:

The library rises from a sharp, jagged outcropping of rock. It towers over the surrounding buildings, an awe-inspiring sight. Two massive oaken doors form the entrance to the imposing structure, which is cloaked by an almost palpable sense of mystery and wonder. A few folk are entering and leaving the place, all seemingly preoccupied with their own thoughts and discoveries and all tightly clutching small books and tablets to their chests, as if the objects were holy relics.

Read the following aloud when the characters enter the library:

As you pass through the wide doors, several heads swivel up from contemplation of books and scrolls. The owners of the heads shoot glares at you like daggers. Almost before the doors swing shut, a white-robed librarian appears at your side and motions silently for you to follow her through a small door to the left of the main entrance. From the disgusted look she gives your weapons, you can guess what's coming next.

Once you have all squeezed into the small office, the librarian closes the door behind you and lowers a thick rug over the door. "Welcome to the library. To better aid you in your quest for knowledge, I must ask two things. First, please divest yourselves of any armor or weapons while within these walls—such things make noises most distracting to those who come here to learn in peace and quiet. Second, what subject will you be researching?"

Read the following aloud when the characters actually begin their research:

You find the proper section of the library with little difficulty and begin digging through the hundreds of tomes that might hold some part of the answer you need. It's hard going, distinguishing between genuine ancient histories and books of stories about ancient history—and harder still

to find anything that relates directly to the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd. Still, you are able to sort the useful from the worthless. Within a few hours, you have a sizable stack of books that just might be of some use to you.

As you gather up the books you need and put the others back on the shelves, an ork woman collides with you, almost at a run. Books thump noisily to the floor, and hisses of annoyance echo from all over the library.

Though startled, the ork swiftly regains her wits. She smiles broadly, revealing

a set of tusks that would do any ork proud, and doffs her wide-brimmed velvet hat with a flourish. "Vanyk Auldsinger, at your service, gentlepersons. My apologies for my haste—let me help you." She begins to gather up your scattered books, in the process muddling the useful and useless together.

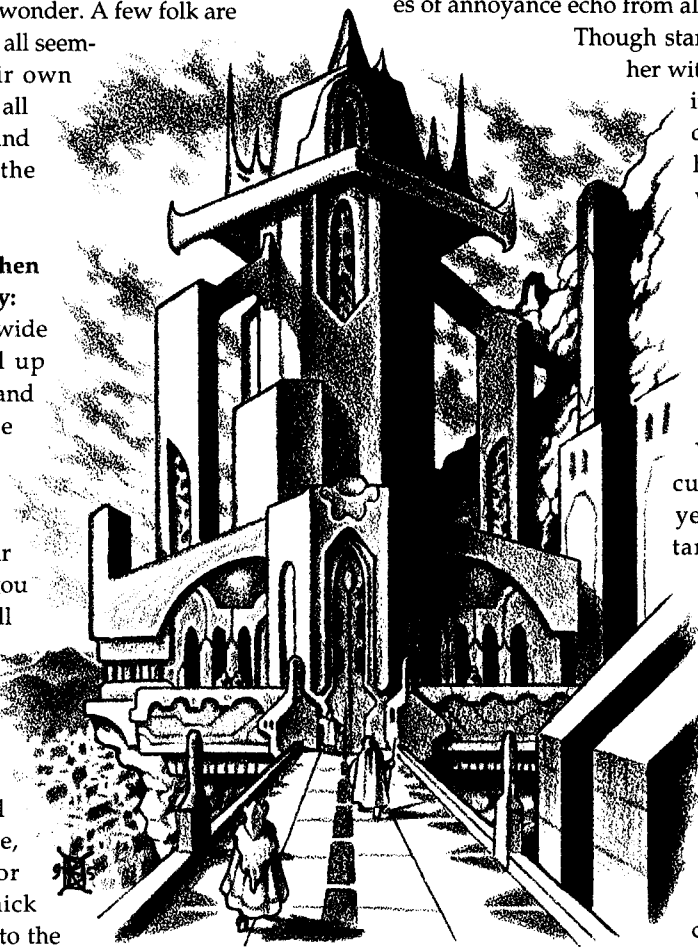
You try to stop her, but she cuts you off with an excited yelp and looks at you expectantly. "You've been looking into the legends of Cara Fahd, haven't you? Are you going there? I can lead you there, I've been researching my people's ancient kingdom for years now, I can guide you there and help you find whatever it is you're looking for. I can even help you get ready for the trip. Please, let me come with you, it would mean so much to me to be able

to tell the tale of the rediscovery of my ancient homeland."

She herds you across the reading room, alternately tugging on your arms and pushing you gently from behind. "I can tell you so much—where all the best treasure probably lies, where you can find the homes of ancient heroes, everything you can want to know. It's my specialty. When do we leave?"

THEMES AND IMAGES

The feel of this interlude changes abruptly with the appearance of Vanyk Auldsinger. At the beginning, emphasize the hard work that needs to be done and a sense of awe at the amount of information the library





holds. With Vanyk's arrival, the pace speeds up as the troubadour does her best to get the characters moving with her breathless speech and hurried actions.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Vanyk Auldsinger is an ork troubadour who has dedicated her life to making the glories of ork history known to her people. To that end, she spends most of her time traveling from city to city, perusing the libraries and other sources of information at each location for any legends or facts she can find concerning orks in general and Cara Fahd in particular.

Weeks ago she discovered a partial map of ancient Cara Fahd, and with it some important new information regarding the ancient orks' methods of keeping history. Apparently, an order of nethermancers in the service of the ancient kingdom discovered a blood magic ritual that effectively allowed communication with the dead through something called a soul-stone. The nethermancers' ritual gave the greatest minds and most important heroes of Cara Fahd a sort of immortality by placing their departed spirits in these soul-stones, from which they could pass on advice and information about times past to the rulers of the kingdom or anyone else with a truly pressing need. The soul-stones were kept in a shrine known as the Hold of Courage, located somewhere in the jungles of Cara Fahd. Vanyk has discovered the approximate location of this shrine and desperately hopes to locate it. Until now, she has not found a group of adepts willing to travel to Cara Fahd with her or strong enough to bear the rigors of the journey. She believes that the characters fit the bill and is desperately anxious to accompany them.

Vanyk goes out of her way to ensure that the adventurers make ready for the journey to Cara Fahd as soon as possible. Although she does not have much silver to spend, she donates everything she has to getting the journey underway, including her time and advice. As a veteran traveler, Vanyk has also plotted a relatively short route that will carry the characters through as many villages as possible to allow for resupply and a night or two's rest in a real bed. If the characters choose to ignore Vanyk's advice and prepare their traveling gear and route themselves, she is disappointed but does not make waves. She sees this trip as her big chance to resurrect what may be the most important time in ork history and will not miss it for anything. Unless the characters make truly idiotic decisions, Vanyk goes along with what they say, offering advice but ultimately submitting to their wishes.

If the players ask to see Vanyk's map, draw some lines and cryptic symbols on a piece of paper and then crumple and uncrumple it ten or twelve times. Then tear a piece off

the corner and hand the paper to the players. Vanyk's map is completely illegible to anyone who lacks her comprehensive knowledge of ork history and ancient ork writing.

Keep in mind that Vanyk is not all that powerful an adept. As a Third Circle troubadour, she is considerably weaker than the characters and needs at least some protection if serious fighting breaks out along the journey. For more information about Vanyk, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 53 of **Grave Wisdom**.

Once the characters learn that the knowledge they seek can be found in the Hold of Courage, go to **Grave Wisdom**, p. 43.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Unless the characters attack Vanyk or refuse to listen to her and thereby waste a valuable source of information, few problems can occur in this encounter. Particularly paranoid characters may refuse to leave their weapons and armor with the librarians, in which case they are politely asked to leave. If the characters do cause problems at the library, guardsmen quickly arrive to take care of the trouble. Cities value information almost as much as gold, especially with the urgent need for knowledge to rebuild Barsaive and deal with the Horrors that still linger. If the characters do not meet Vanyk in the library, she may spot them as she is exiting the building and inquire about their purpose.

If the characters meet Vanyk in the library and send her away, she tries to get back into their good graces as they sift through the books at the library. The troubadour will do her best to provide the characters with information that they may not have, perhaps even showing them her map of the route to Cara Fahd or her precious partial map of the pre-Scourge kingdom. If that does not convince the characters that Vanyk is a valuable asset in this undertaking, let them suffer through days, perhaps weeks, of further research before they learn of the Hold of Courage.

LIGHTING THE WAY

Use this third interlude between **Grave Wisdom** and **A Traitor's Fate**, when the characters are ready to seek out the Rank 5 Key Knowledge. In this interlude the adventurers go to Jahnee Firebalm, an elven questor of Mynbruje, to learn how they might discover the Name of the Horror-marked adept who betrayed his fellows.

The following text assumes the characters have already found the questor. If desired, run a brief encounter in which the characters learn the questor's Name and where to find him from local townsfolk.





SETTING THE STAGE

Read the following text aloud:

Horror-marked, a traitor to his fellows and his race! The knowledge that one of the eight legendary ork heroes who once wielded the Blades of Cara Fahd betrayed his friends and family still gives you nightmares. More than once you have glanced surreptitiously over the rim of your frothing mug at your laughing, chattering compatriots, trying to imagine the cold glint of betrayal in their eyes. Surely none of them would ever—none of them could possibly—such a thing could never happen! Try as you might, however, you cannot banish the unsettling thought from your mind.

There is only one way to settle your nagging suspicions. You must learn the Name of the long-ago traitor so that you can weave more threads to your daggers and move one step closer to banishing their curse. Luckily, you have found a highly reputable questor of Mynbruje who should be able to guide you on this part of your quest, for the Passion Mynbruje guides all sincere seekers of hidden truths and metes out justice to traitors and criminals.

The questor, Jahnee Firebalm, lives on the edge of town in a small, weathered wooden cottage. It nests comfortably in a copse of trees, its large windows thrown wide to welcome the morning sun. Before the sun reaches its zenith, you may well know how to find the traitor's Name and where your quest will next lead you.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Jahnee's residence is clean and austere, with none of the clutter that fills most homes. Though most visitors feel safe within Jahnee's walls, the openness of the dwelling faintly disturbs some; the hut contains nowhere to hide, no trinkets or paintings to distract attention from one's true motives. Clarity reigns inside Jahnee's abode and the unvarnished truth is rarely comforting. Use Jahnee's home and this entire interlude to remind the adventurers that the search for truth is seldom painless.

BEHIND THE SCENES

A few seconds after the characters knock on Jahnee's door or call out to indicate their presence, Jahnee Firebalm ushers the adventurers into his home. The questor is a tall, ascetic elf with high cheekbones and colorless eyes. His hair is pale red, the color of false dawn. He wears a plain brown robe tied at the waist with a thin rope, and his bare feet are tan and callused.

Jahnee's house is furnished with a low wooden table and a few reed mats for kneeling or sitting. A larger reed mat, which Jahnee sleeps on at night, lies rolled up against one wall. A fireplace with a plain mantel takes up part of another wall. Two large earthenware bowls rest on the

hearth, one filled with sand, the other with water. A curtained doorway leads to the questor's simple kitchen.

Once introductions have been made and the adventurers are sitting down, Jahnee asks them to explain why they have sought him out. As the adventurers tell their tale, Jahnee listens carefully, using his Perceive Emotion questor power (p. 101, **Earthdawn Companion**) to help determine the truth of all statements the adventurers make. Jahnee raises one eyebrow and cocks his head inquiringly at any untruth he detects. He does not interrupt the characters' tale until they are finished, at which point he asks any questions he feels are necessary to determine their true intentions and how justice can best be served. As long as the characters make their request honestly and respectfully, Jahnee sees no reason to deny them his help. He offers to enter a trance to see if he can divine where the adventurers may find the truth, and he asks for the one of the Blades to help him focus.

When Jahnee prepares to enter his trance, read the following aloud:

The lanky elf rises smoothly to his feet and moves slowly over to the hearth, where he picks up the two large bowls lying by the fire. He sets the earthenware dishes on the low table, then sinks to his knees in front of them. Then he takes up the borrowed dagger and plunges its tip into the bowl of sand. He scoops some water out of the first bowl and pours it from his cupped hands over the bowl of sand. He repeats this action three times, until the sand is smooth and wet.

Sighing softly, Jahnee draws a long spiral pattern in the wet sand with one graceful finger. As his hand moves around and around, you can sense the questor slow his breathing. The elf seems to have turned into a statue, save for the continual movement of his finger through the damp sand.

After what seems like an eternity, you realize that Jahnee has begun to whisper, his voice gradually rising in volume. A few more minutes trickle by and you begin to make out his words; he is praying to Mynbruje for guidance and justice. Another handful of minutes crawl by like hours—then Jahnee begins to speak of your quest.

"Blight draws the eye in ways beauty rarely can. The one you seek lies imprisoned within the dark confines of his final home, his Name carved deeply into it so that none shall forget his shame. You must enter the place of imprisonment from the south, the south. The Liaj is his jail, his jail is the Liaj Jungle. There will you find the spark of truth you seek. There you may light a candle, the better to see the ocean of darkness around you."

Once Jahnee finishes his speech, he draws another handful of water from the bowl and splashes it onto the spiral in the sand. As the pattern washes away, Jahnee





returns to normal consciousness and returns the borrowed dagger. The characters can ask Jahnee any questions they like—however, all the questor knows is that the adventurers must journey to the southernmost part of the Liaj Jungle to find the traitor's final resting place.

If the characters ask how they may determine the exact location of the traitor's tomb, read the following aloud:

"Your daggers may lead you there, for I can still feel the traitor's touch ever so faintly upon them. His long association with these weapons left a mark that has not faded, despite all that has happened since his fall.

"By placing a Seal of Truth on one of your daggers, Mynbruje may enable me to make it work as a lodestone, to keep your feet on the path that leads to the truth you seek."

If the adventurers hand one of the daggers to Jahnee, he brings a large bowl of white wax and a small wooden box from the kitchen over to the fireside. Allowing the wax to warm by the fire, Jahnee meditates over the dagger. Once the wax has warmed sufficiently, the questor expertly scoops out a small circle of it and presses it against the dagger's hilt. He then opens the small box and removes a golden seal bearing one of the symbols of Mynbruje: stars over an executioner's axe. After pressing the seal against the warm wax, Jahnee dips the hilt into the water bowl and seals the ritual. When he is finished, Jahnee returns the dagger to the appropriate character.

Jahnee then demonstrates how the stars on the seal glow softly when the dagger points in the direction of the traitor's tomb. He then warns the characters not to use the dagger in combat or to speak a falsehood while holding it until they have found what they are seeking. If they do either of these things, the seal will break and Mynbruje can no longer aid them.

If the adventurers ask how they can repay Jahnee for his help, read the following aloud:

"I ask only that you aid the next questor of Mynbruje you come across in whatever he asks of you, no matter how small or large the task. Mynbruje always acts with justice, and your service will no doubt equal the worth of my service to you this day."

Once Jahnee has placed the Seal of Truth on one of the Blades, the characters can begin to search for the Rank 5 Key Knowledge. Go to **A Traitor's Fate**, p. 55.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Trouble may occur in this interlude if the adventurers behave rudely or lie to Jahnee or refuse to let him place the Seal of Truth on one of the daggers. Jahnee is a patient elf,

however, and he gives the characters several opportunities to make amends by telling the truth or apologizing. If the characters refuse the seal, they eventually realize that they cannot possibly find the traitor's tomb in the tangled depths of the Liaj Jungle without its aid. Jahnee will still create the seal, but he requests that the adventurers do him a favor in return (aiding someone unjustly accused or wronged or helping to restore one of Mynbruje's ancient shrines).

If the adventurers already know a questor of Mynbruje, the gamemaster may use that character instead of Jahnee. However, the general feel of the encounter and the information received should remain the same.

WITH A TALE TO TELL

This interlude occurs between the adventures titled **A Traitor's Fate** and **With an Axe in Hand**. Use the interlude when the characters begin seeking the Blades' Rank 7 Key Knowledge: the Name of the Horror that plagued the Seven Spokes—"Betrayed."

As the characters begin searching for this Key Knowledge, they hear tales of a corrupted Liferock rumored to lie somewhere in the Tylon Mountains. These tales speak of a Horror that corrupted an obsidiman and then used him to corrupt his entire Liferock and brotherhood. The characters should recognize that this account sounds typical of the Horror that corrupted the Seven Spokes. When the characters make inquiries about this Liferock, they are told of a wandering troubadour, Senog, who may be able to help them. As this interlude begins, the characters have just caught up with Senog at a small tavern near the city of Kratas.

SETTING THE STAGE

Read the following aloud when the characters arrive at the tavern:

Why is it always a traveling troubadour who knows the one thing a Name-giver must find out? You seem to have been trying forever to catch up with the knowledgeable—and fleet-footed—troubadour who can tell you the full story of the corrupted Liferock. In the last town they told you he was headed toward Kratas, and the folk you've passed on the road all remember seeing him (or at least, the few willing to give away free information remember him).

Less than a mile from Kratas, you stand in front of a solidly built inn. A sign in front reads "The Axe in Hand." Shaking the dust from your boots, you push open the heavy, iron-bound doors and walk in. You look around the main room. The place is about a third full of weary adventurers like yourselves, who barely look up as you enter.

You find a seat at a solid wooden table and order the first decently cooked meal and cool draught of ale you've had in several days. The choices are few, but the smells are appetiz-





ing: ham hocks with boiled potatoes or roasted pheasant with onions. The service is quick, the tables are clean, and the patrons well-behaved. A pretty human serving girl brings your meals, saying, "Will you be staying the night, masters—perhaps to use the bath house or hear the entertainment? We are fortunate to have a troubadour with us this evening."

It seems you have finally caught up with Senog.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The theme of this encounter is questions and answers. Emphasize the time and trouble that the characters have spent tracking down the troubadour who can finally give them answers—answers that only raise more questions, questions that the characters can only answer by making another, more arduous trip to a dangerous place. In addition, the tale of the Liferock's corruption should give the adventurers chills.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Axe in Hand is a hospitable tavern with ten small single-occupancy rooms, as well as a luxurious bath house built around a hot spring. Because of the inn's proximity to Kratas and the number of scoundrels who stop here along the way, the Axe in Hand accepts no responsibility for the security of its patrons. The proprietor charges a fair price but not so high that the patrons might feel entitled to particular protection against thieves or footpads. A private room costs 5 silver pieces and includes access to the bath house. Each additional occupant of a room who wishes to use the bath house must pay 3 silver pieces extra. A meal with ale costs 4 silver pieces—ale alone costs 1 silver piece.

The innkeeper is a young, rough-looking human named Nandra Finch. She is pleasant, but not especially friendly toward her customers. Her motto is "The last one standing deserves to be right," and she does not intervene in the business of her patrons.

NANDRA FINCH

Attributes

DEX: 6 STR: 5 TOU: 5
PER: 5 WIL: 6 CHA: 6

Nandra has the knowledge skills of Legends and Heroes and Local Lore, both at Rank 3 (Step 8/2D6). If the characters speak with her, she might tell them a legend or two that may lead to future adventures.

Meeting Senog

If the characters wait around until the evening performance, they can watch the obsidiman troubadour Senog



recite stories and sing in the tavern. The large performer sits on a short stool while he tells his tales, but his animated face is still visible to most of his audience. He wears a decorative robe over his brown-gray skin. He is happy to talk with the characters, especially if they agree to tell him some stories in return. The story of the corrupted Liferock makes Senog very sad but he does not hesitate to tell the tale because he believes it is an important one. As he frequently says, "The world contains many unhappy things, but they should not be forgotten simply because they are painful."

SENOG

Third Circle Troubadour

Attributes

DEX: 5 STR: 7 TOU: 6
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 7

When the characters ask Senog the story of the Liferock, he recites the following:

My brothers tell the tale of the Corrupted with great sadness, for no greater tragedy can befall an obsidiman.

The lives of countless obsidimen not yet Emerged, the souls of the Returned, the Spirit-That-Pervades-All—in the Tylon Mountains, a Liferock once held all these things for a brotherhood of obsidimen. Alas, this Liferock drew the foul attentions of a powerful Horror—the same Horror, it is said, that corrupted the famed heroes known as Cara Fahd's Protectors.





The Horror first tainted one of the brotherhood—how, we do not know. The soul of the corrupted one merged with the Liferock, and one by one the rest of the brotherhood succumbed. The Liferock sensed its peril and called out to its children, but each one who came fell under the Horror's sway as soon as he entered the Dreaming. Soon, all were destroyed and the Liferock turned to a thing of death. None are left to bear witness, none go there but to mourn—and even that we do from a distance, lest the corruption touch us.

My friends, have you ever thought about an old friend for the first time in many months only to bump into that friend as you round the corner? Or thought fondly of your family far away and received a note or gift from them the next day? Such occurrences pale in comparison to the *knowledge* an obsidiman has of his Liferock. Now imagine that your old friend has become an embittered cripple with a twisted soul or your family has perished. Imagine your feelings if such a thing should happen, and you will begin to understand a little the feelings of an obsidiman who knows that some ill has befallen his Liferock. How the members of that brotherhood must have streamed home from all corners of Barsaive when they felt the death of their Elders!

Afterward, other brotherhoods sometimes found surviving brothers wandering like those who have Emerged but not Awakened. Some went mad, others faded away. Now nothing exists of the Liferock save dead stone and these tales.

If the characters ask Senog where they might find the Liferock, he gives them the following directions using Shantaya's Sextant (pp. 8-10, **Barsaive GM Book**).

Center Sextant on: Travar

Align ☿ **with:** Jerris

Sight along point: Ø

Follow: Floranuus at sunset

Days Travel: 11 walking, 7 riding

Senog also describes a number of landmarks along the way. The village of Smallstream lies three days' walk from Kratas. If the characters follow the creek for which Smallstream is named, two days' walk brings them to the village of Cliffstone. Two days' walk from Cliffstone, following the slope of the Tylons, brings the characters to the village of Ridge. The Liferock lies three days' walk from Ridge, following Floranuus at midnight.

Once the characters learn that the answer they seek lies at the Liferock, go to **With an Axe in Hand**, p. 69.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The main challenge in this interlude is to ensure the characters believe that the Horror responsible for corrupting the Liferock is the same Horror they seek. If necessary, stage an encounter prior to this interlude in which the characters obtain some hint that the Liferock's corrupter is the same Horror that twisted Kragen Overtall. Senog's story confirms this, but the characters may nonetheless have their doubts.

LAST WORDS

This interlude occurs between the adventure titled **With an Axe in Hand** and the final adventure, **Pure Liquids**. Use the interlude when the characters begin seeking the Blades' Rank 8 Key Knowledge. That knowledge is the specific method the Seven Spokes used to defeat the Horror called Betrayal. The characters should know that this Thread Rank also requires a Deed: to travel to the place where the ancient heroes defeated Betrayal.

The information the characters need to start on the final adventure is contained in a document (**Setting the Stage**, below). The gamemaster determines exactly how the adventurers find the document and may flesh out the interlude as he pleases. For example, the characters may find it in the Great Library of Throal or in the ruins of some city in Cara Fahd. Alternatively, they may hear it as a tale told by a drunken troubadour in Barsaivian Vivane or some such place. Whatever the gamemaster's choice, however, any investigative measure that makes half a lick of sense should yield the document.

Because this interlude is the gamemaster's to design, no **Troubleshooting** section is included.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the adventurers obtain the document, read the following aloud:

For a time after the defeat of Betrayal, the Seven Spokes prospered. When acting in concert, the Blades magnified their abilities. The magical weapons gave them strength against the fell powers of the Horrors, against whom they struck many telling blows.

But within the Blades, Betrayal's spirit lurked and plotted, and discord and bloodshed began to follow the Seven Spokes wherever they went. The scholar Skonag Skonak has traced all of the events that led to the destruction of the kingdom of Cara Fahd in the Orichalcum Wars. He found that the Seven Spokes and their Blades were near every crucial event of double-dealing and treachery that prompted the ork kingdom's involvement in that conflict.





On his deathbed, Pobov Gaarz—the last of the Seven Spokes—had terrible visions of the Horror they had slain and of the river of blood that had flowed in their wake since their legendary deed. He proclaimed that one day a company of heroes would arise to right the wrongs he and his fellows had done. He said these heroes would awaken the power of the Blades again to purify them and make them fit weapons for heroes to wield. He said they would do this by journeying to the Great Dome of the House of Ch'elann, miles beneath the Tylon Mountains. There they would seek the help of the Pale Ones who had aided the Seven Spokes in their misguided battle with Betrayer. The heroes would learn of the dread secret the t'skrang could wield against the Horror. And they would undo what the Seven Spokes had done, truly destroying Betrayer for all eternity. For this deed, the people of Barsaive would sing their praises down all the generations to come.

Having spoken this prophecy, Pobov Gaarz died. Observers at his death-bed say his eyes held a look of terror, as if he were being irresistibly pulled toward some unimaginable torment. The last words Pobov Gaarz spoke were: "Free me! Free Barsaive!"

THEMES AND IMAGES

Finding the document should fill the characters with relief and dread—relief because the quest for the Key Knowledges of the Blades is nearly over, and dread

because the prophecy says that the heroes must face the Horror Betrayer. Betrayer has plagued the characters since the first adventure of this book, whether they know it or not. The possibility of confronting this Horror should make the characters more than a little afraid.

BEHIND THE SCENES

As noted above, the gamemaster determines the circumstances in which the characters discover the document (or the information it contains). This interlude is the gamemaster's chance to personalize a part of **Blades** to suit his campaign. If the players have just finished **With an Axe in Hand** and wish to push on, the characters might find this document in one of the small villages from that adventure. If the characters have moved on since completing **With an Axe in Hand**, they may come across the document in any number of locations: the Kingdom of Throal, Vardeghul's Lore Exchange in Haven (see **Parlainth: The Forgotten City** campaign set), or just about anywhere else that the gamemaster deems plausible and interesting. The characters must learn the last bit of information they need to weave the Rank 8 thread to the Blades. This allows them to rid themselves of Betrayer's curse.

Once the characters have read the document and are ready to move on to the last adventure, go to **Pure Liquids**, p. 87.





SACRED UNION



o loyalty! To honor!" bellowed Moschtug, self-proclaimed king of Cara Fahd. Around him, lit by the glow of a bonfire, stood the sum of his followers—a typically ragged lot of ork scorchers, no more than four dozen in number. Crude depictions of the Cara Fahd coat of arms adorned their shields and helmets. They belched their approval of their sovereign's words, then continued quaffing the contents of their wineskins.

Adding their number to this rude summit were three dozen or so similarly attired ork raiders—members of the Righteous Vipers. The Vipers' hungry eyes were on their leader, Orguk. Orguk was slim and tall for an ork, especially when compared to the beefy and square-shouldered Moschtug. He raised his own wineskin in the direction of his fellow chieftain.

"To true love," he said. His city accent stood out against the rough mountain speech of Moschtug and his followers. "To the love between my delightful daughter, Tirag, and your valiant son, Uvtug."

Orguk turned toward the two young orks, who were paying little heed to the speechmaking as they groped one another with an enthusiasm that any but an ork would consider unseemly in the presence of others. The two groups of orks joined in guttural laughter, ringing their approval of the couple.

"Ha! Our matchmaking skills are superior!" grunted Moschtug.

"Indeed," replied Orguk. "Our alliance shall make the other foothill bands quake in terror."

"They shall soil themselves when they hear of it!" shouted Moschtug.

"Our alliance shall make the miners weep and wail."

"They shall flee at the pounding of our thundras' hooves!"

"Even the Therans shall tremble at our might."

The two chieftains continued their ceremonial boasting, to the elation of their drunken followers. But one ork was not drunk. He was sober with rage, a rage that tightened his fists and throat. Gnanagh, brother to Moschtug, stood apart from the festivities. He kept his fury as a prisoner in his heart.

Again, he thought, *my* work is ignored. It is my negotiation that brought this union to pass, but I receive no credit. All my life it has been so. You grin and raise a wineskin, and all are with you. They hang on your stupidest words as though they were newly discovered pearls from the lips of the great poets of Cara Fahd. *Buunda!* It is *I* who have sweated and toiled to reveal our family's birthright. It is *I* who uncovered the tactical manual of the great Cathon Grimeye and laboriously stuffed its lessons into your thick skull. Yet what do I receive in return? Your men barely tolerate me, think of me as a foolish pedant. And you, Moschtug, when your skin is threatened, you summon me for advice. But when I save you from whatever scrape you've gotten yourself into, I get not even a mumbled "thank you." The magic has always been yours, Moschtug, the magic and the luck. My fate is naught but hard, painstaking labor. The only glory I receive is that which is reflected from you. If only you had even half a brain, you would know just how much I long to place my hands around your throat and—

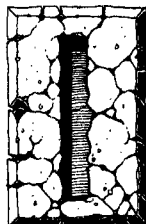
And as he had done a thousand times before, Gnanagh stopped himself from voicing, even in his own mind, the Unthinkable Thought. For blood was blood, and Moschtug was his brother. Thousands of years of ork tradition required that Gnanagh show his brother unswerving loyalty, no matter how little he might deserve it. And so Gnanagh swallowed his anger, once again burying it deep within his soul.

Meanwhile, the two young lovers crept off behind a hill, unnoticed by the joyously howling scorchers.





BOND BREAKER



In **Bond Breaker**, the players become tangled in the political intrigue surrounding two rival ork scorcher bands as they attempt to learn the Rank 1 Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The adventure assumes that the players have already found the Blades of Cara Fahd, either through the published adventure **Shattered Pattern** or in the course of an adventure of the gamemaster's own design.

Bond Breaker is intended for a group of six to eight adept characters of Fifth to Seventh Circles. The gamemaster should be familiar with the entire adventure before starting it and should pay particular attention to the personal dynamics between the adventure's various gamemaster characters. **Bond Breaker** has various possible conclusions, depending on the choices the players make.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The players possess the Blades of Cara Fahd and wish to empower them by weaving threads to them. To do so, the players must discover the Blades' first Key Knowledge—the Name of the items and the Name of the weapon-smith who forged them. Through investigations described in the **Interludes** section, the characters learn that the runes on one side of the Blades indicate that they were manufactured in the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The characters also learn that the area's foremost expert on the history of Cara Fahd is one Gnanagh, advisor to a small ork scorcher band known as the Fists of Fahd.

The players track down the nomadic raiders and discover that the group has descended on Copper Cauldron, a mining town in the southern foothills of the Delaris Mountains. In Copper Cauldron, the Fists of Fahd are meeting with another scorcher tribe, the Righteous Vipers.

These once-sworn foes have made a peace bond and sealed it with a wedding. The daughter of Orguk, chieftain of the Vipers, has married the son of Moschtug, the self-styled king of the Fists of Fahd. The players have arrived just in time for the celebratory wedding feast. If they impress the scorchers, the orks invite them to the party.

The players do not know that their very presence—or more precisely, the presence of the daggers—is a grave danger to the precarious peace arrangement between the tribes. The daggers' power intensifies existing tensions between Orguk, Moschtug, and Moschtug's jealous brother, Gnanagh, until Gnanagh attempts to poison Moschtug. Gnanagh flees with the Righteous Vipers, fearing retribution, and Moschtug swears to exact cruel vengeance on his brother.

The players must find Gnanagh and extract from him the secret of the Blades before Moschtug's forces capture and slay him. The climactic encounter takes place in the cliff-side fortress of the Righteous Vipers. During this encounter, the players may find themselves storming the fortress alongside the Fists of Fahd, defending it against the Fists or attempting to broker a new peace arrangement between the Fists and the Vipers.

After this final scene, Gnanagh reveals the first Key Knowledge of the Blades, as well as their betrayal-inducing influence and power.

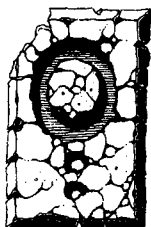
BETRAYER'S INFLUENCE

During **Bond Breaker**, the Horror called Betrayer curses the characters and links their patterns with the pattern of the daggers and its own pattern. From this adventure onward, the player characters carry the Horror's influence with them until they are able to destroy it or they are destroyed themselves. The Horror also influences Gnanagh to betray his brother Moschtug by poisoning his ale.





COPPER CAULDRON



VIEW

The adventure begins when the characters travel to the Delaris foothills in search of Gnanagh, from whom they seek the first Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The characters arrive in the town of Copper Cauldron as the ork wedding feast is about to take place and are invited to join in the festivities before they can get answers from Gnanagh.

Copper Cauldron cuts right to the characters' arrival in the town. Gamemasters can extend the adventure by beginning with the player characters' journey to the town and introducing a variety of dangerous episodes along the way.

SETTING THE STAGE

As the adventurers approach Copper Cauldron, read the following aloud:

You have traveled along a rocky trail through the foothills for several hours and can now see a low stone wall in the distance. Beyond the wall lie a number of buildings—Copper Cauldron. The town is identical to countless other mining communities you have passed in the past few days with one exception—nearly four dozen war horses and thundra beasts graze in the scrub outside its walls.

You draw closer to the town and note a pair of guards stationed on the wall, above the town gate. Both of the guards are young, strapping humans. Each carries a spear and wears partial leather armor.

As you approach closer, one of the guards hails you in Throalic: "Who goes there?"

THEMES AND IMAGES

The mood should be tense, at least at first. Copper Cauldron is a hard place, full of hard people. The town's inhabitants are far from villainous, but they have good reason to be suspicious of strangers. Give the players the impression that their characters have to be on their best behavior.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The people of Copper Cauldron are suspicious because they have many enemies. Like the residents of countless other villages in the foothills, Copper Cauldron's

inhabitants make their living by collecting precious metals. Many places in the mountains contain large gashes in the rock—whorls left by earth-eating Horrors of the Scourge. Often times these gashes expose veins of copper, silver, and iron. The able-bodied folk of Copper Cauldron head out in small groups to find and retrieve these easily obtainable metals. Then they sell or barter the metals to traders.

During their mining expeditions, the people must always watch for various small scorcher bands that attack them for their spoils. Both the Fists of Fahd and Righteous Vipers make their livings by such attacks. Copper Cauldron has a special arrangement with the Fists—they occasionally shelter the raiders—so the town's residents need not fear the band. However, some neighboring villages view Copper Cauldron residents as traitors for aiding orks, and these villages sometimes launch punitive raids against the town's mining parties or Copper Cauldron itself. And Copper Cauldron's arrangement with the Fists does not keep other ork bands from attacking the town and its mining parties, either. The residents must also face the ever-present threat of Thera encroachment. Officials at Sky Point have made several attempts to seize the mining towns, enslave their inhabitants and force them to turn their metals directly over to the Thera authorities. And finally, Barsaive being Barsaive, there are always Horrors to worry about. All of this explains why the guards are suspicious of the adventurers.

The guard who does most of the talking is named Jopren; the other is Macan. Use the game statistics for miners provided in **Cast of Characters**, p. 41, for the guards. Jopren listens to the adventurers' response when he asks them to identify themselves. He then asks them which scorcher band they're affiliated with. If they deny being scorchers with any degree of sincerity, he asks them if they are allies of Thera. If they deny such connections (he's especially impressed if they spit or curse at the very idea of being Thera allies), he tells them to prove that they are not Horrors. As any Barsaivian knows, the correct response in such situations is to display one's artisan skill. After they pass this test, Jopren asks the adventurers their business. He tells them that Gnanagh is indeed in town if they ask him directly.

If the adventurers try to force their way in, Jopren and Macan yell for help, jump down from the wall and draw back, ready to pick off anyone who tries to scale it. They are joined by 1–6 townsfolk and ork scorchers every round,





until 45 defenders are present. No amount of coaxing convinces the folk of Copper Cauldron to let the adventurers in if they have attacked the guards or any other citizens. (Any such attacks throw a major curve at the plot line—see **Troubleshooting**, p. 31.)

Once inside the town, the adventurers will try to find Gnanagh. Introduce them to some of the other major gamemaster characters at this time as well. See **Loose Ends**, p. 36, for information on these characters.

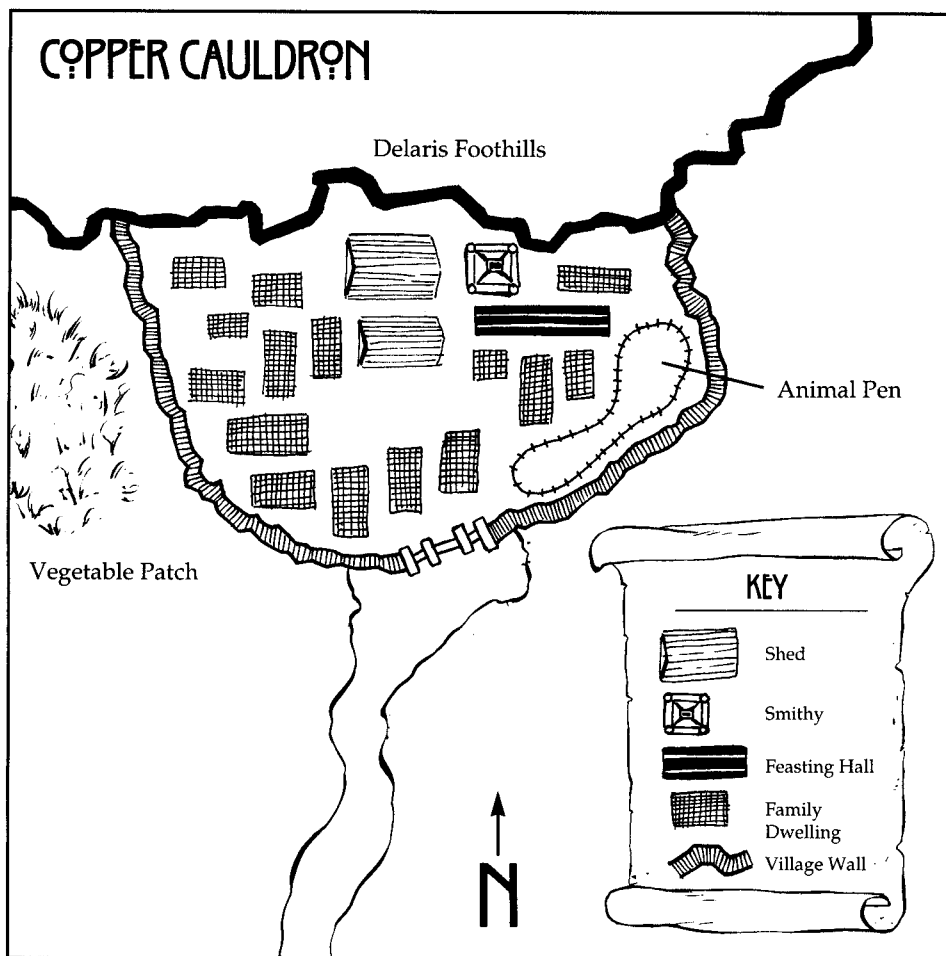
COPPER CAULDRON LAYOUT

Copper Cauldron's north side nestles up against a sharply sloped foothill. A brick wall extends from the hill around the rest of the town. Most of its buildings are long, one-story brick structures, occupied by entire extended families. Two large communal-storage buildings to the north of the town square contain mined metals and purchased trade goods. The town also contains a smithy, where the town smith (not an adept) plies his trade. Copper Cauldron's newest building is a large wooden banquet hall recently erected to keep the Fists of Fahd happy and occupied when they come to town. An animal pen lies along the inside of the southeast section of the town wall, although the village's beef cattle and horses are usually allowed to graze outside the wall unless trouble is expected. A small vegetable patch lies outside the wall. It provides a few basic staples, but most of Copper Cauldron's food is acquired through trade.

ORK FESTIVITIES

Copper Cauldron is filled with orks when the adventurers enter the town. The town square contains a large group of them watching what seems to be a fight. Others are on rooftops of buildings, some are dancing, and still others are banging away at clattering ork musical instruments. All are drinking copious amounts of hurlg, the throat-burning alcoholic mash beloved by orks everywhere.

The adventurers need to learn that the orks are members of rival scorchers bands, the Fists of Fahd and



Righteous Vipers, here to seal an alliance. They need to know that the alliance will be sealed with a wedding between the son of the Fahd "king" and the daughter of the Viper leader. The people of Copper Cauldron are tolerating the presence of these orks because both raider bands have promised to leave the people unmolested in exchange for their hospitality. Finally, the players should learn the names and roles of the major players in the adventure—Moschtug, Gnanagh, Orguk, Tirag, and Uvtug.

TALKING TO THE LOCALS

The people of Copper Cauldron are wary around strangers. But they are also avid traders, so a friendly and diplomatic approach eventually draws any citizen into polite conversation. If the adventurers ask questions about particular subjects, any villager can provide the following information and opinions.

The Fists of Fahd

Copper Cauldron has maintained an alliance with the Fists for several years. The group's leader is Moschtug,





who styles himself as a king, heir to some ancient ork kingdom. He is an honorable fellow, as brigands and killers go. He has always abided by his word to leave Copper Cauldron alone.

The Righteous Vipers

The Vipers have been around the foothills for ages. Recently the group has become much bigger and more threatening, thanks to their new leader, Orguk. He is surprisingly polite and well-spoken for an ork, but many people blame him for a number of atrocities, including some perpetrated against the people of Copper Cauldron. It is a good thing that he is allying with Moschtug, because he will now be bound by Moschtug's agreement with the village.

Gnanagh

Gnanagh is Moschtug's brother. He's an impatient, cruel, thoroughly unpleasant ork—most of us steer clear of him and he steers clear of us. No one knows exactly where he is at the moment, but he is in town.

The townsfolk also supply any of the basic information about Copper Cauldron provided earlier in this section, although they will not reveal where the mined metal is stored. And they play down the fact that some neighboring villages regard them as enemies because of their alliance with the Fists.

CARPUSING WITH THE SCORCHERS

The adventurers can also get information from the raiders. To befriend a scorcher, one needs to act like a scorcher. Ork player characters have an immediate advantage in this regard. They know the basics of ork etiquette and the happy, intoxicated bandits easily accept them.

Characters who participate in the revelry also impress the scorchers. Any character who drinks too much hurlg, especially to the point of passing out or becoming ill, garners much esteem. Non-orks attempting to drink hurlg must make a Willpower (7) Test. If they fail, they involuntarily spit the acidic stuff right back out. Any orks viewing such a display laugh uproariously, believing the hurlg spitter to be irredeemably weak and simpering. For each flagon of hurlg any character consumes after the first, he must make a Toughness (7) Test. If a character fails, he becomes sick or passes out, at the gamemaster's discretion. If the test succeeds, add 1 to all Difficulty Numbers for actions attempted while under the hurlg's influence—including additional Toughness Tests made when drinking more hurlg. This effect is cumulative when more hurlg is consumed, eventually resulting in most everyone, even the orks, succumbing to the effects of this foul liquor.

Alternatively, characters can impress the raiders by joining in the impromptu wrestling matches in the town square. To participate, a character simply charges into the middle of the circle of orks and takes on an opponent. (See p. 197, ED, for grappling rules.) Use the scorcher statistics in **Cast of Characters**, p. 41, for opponents. Any character who puts a successful grapple hold on an opponent receives cheers and backslaps from the surrounding orks. Even unsuccessful wrestlers impress the orks for simply trying. However, attempting to actually harm other wrestlers is a definite *faux pas* that arouses the wrath of the orks—they pile on the offender and pummel away.

Wagering over the various matches is part of the fun. Clever adventurers can use this as a way of making acquaintances while possibly even picking up a few silvers.

An entertaining performance, especially in the ork style of combining singing, dancing, acting, and juggling, impresses the orks as well. The Difficulty Number for pleasing the orks with such skills is 7 for ork characters, 8 for non-ork characters.

Talking with the Fists

If the characters impress any Fist of Fahd members, these orks provide the following opinions when asked appropriate questions.

The Alliance: The upstart Righteous Vipers have finally recognized the obvious superiority of the Fists of Fahd. The true love of the courageous Uvtug and the terrifying Tirag has brought our peoples together. The foothills will now quake in fear at the joining of these two great war bands!

The Fists of Fahd: The Fists of Fahd are heirs to the great traditions of the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd, an inspiration to all orks to bravely loot, pillage, and despoil.

Gnanagh: He is advisor to his brother, the great king Moschtug. He knows many boring things about Cara Fahd. Moschtug humors him and listens to his advice, but as far as the average member of the Fists is concerned, he is a foul-tempered bore.

Talking with the Vipers

Here are paraphrases of the Righteous Vipers' opinions on the same subjects.

The Alliance: The gray and fading Fists of Fahd have made a wise move in allying themselves with the Righteous Vipers. Without us, they would have been left behind in the dust.

The Righteous Vipers: The clever and cruel Orguk's ambitions extend far beyond these meager foothills. Within a generation all of Barsaive will fear the name of the





Righteous Vipers. Most of our members have joined in the last year or so. The spoils are good, and we have driven several lesser bands from the territory.

Gnanagh: Orguk spends much time in conversation with him, and Orguk is a brilliant ork—so Gnanagh must have something worth saying. But he is not the sort the rank-and-file Viper would wish to share a jug of hurlg with. He is foul-tempered and rude.

At some point a medium-ranking member of either band should be sufficiently impressed by the adventurers to invite them to attend the wedding feast. Orks place little stock in ceremonies, but there will be much food to wolf down and hurlg to guzzle.

MEETING GNANAGH

After a fair bit of looking, the characters find Gnanagh, who is ending a conversation with an ork they later identify as Orguk, the leader of the Righteous Vipers. Gnanagh is extremely distracted—Orguk has once more been slyly provoking Gnanagh's gahad by listing the achievements that Moschtug has made at his expense.

The last thing Gnanagh wants is to help a pack of adventurers he doesn't know. But when the adventurers speak to him, a strange thing happens. A reaction occurs in astral space. The strength of Gnanagh's resentment and the power of his temptation to break the bonds of loyalty to his brother attracts the attention of Betrayer, the Horror that lurks within the Blades. It feeds on Gnanagh's swirling, ambivalent emotions, using the energy to curse the characters through the Blades. Make a Curse Test for the Horror. The Step Number for this test is 20, Betrayer's Spellcasting Step (see p. 100). If the test result equals or exceeds the Spell Defense of any of the characters, they are all affected by the curse (the group has already woven its true pattern in preparation for using the Blades). Once cursed, the characters carry Betrayer's influence with them. The Horror can exert its influence near and around wherever the characters travel. The effect lasts until they are able to rid themselves of the curse. For more information about the Horror's curse and its effect, see **Running Blades**, p. 13. Note that the characters should have no idea that anything unusual has happened until Gnanagh tells them about the Blades' curse at the end of the adventure.

The change in Gnanagh, however, has a much more immediate effect. The Horror's influence smashes the last of his inhibitions against murdering his brother. Sometime between this encounter and the next, Gnanagh meets with Orguk and proposes that they poison Moschtug's hurlg at the wedding feast.



For the moment Gnanagh is too shocked by his sudden murderous urge to talk to the adventurers for long. He says that he will perhaps be able to look at the daggers later.

TALKING TO THE OTHERS

Orguk is pleasant and noncommittal when the players speak to him—he is too wily to let any hint of his sinister plans slip. He tries to determine who the adventurers are by encouraging them to talk about their own exploits. If the adventurers watch Orguk carefully, they note that he is not drinking nearly as much hurlg as the other orks.

In contrast, Moschtug is pickled to the gills. He brags relentlessly about his exploits, his cleverness in bringing about this alliance and his capacity for hurlg.

Tirag and Uvtug both want to spend all of their time alone with one another and are quite surly with any adventurers who interfere with their expressions of mutual passion.

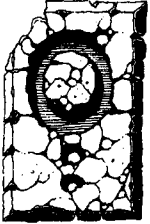
TROUBLESHOOTING

If the adventurers try to fight their way past the town guards, they never get a chance to enter the town. If they camp out within spying distance of Copper Cauldron, they can rejoin the story when the Righteous Vipers sneak out of town after the attempt on Orguk's life, as described in **Poisoned Rites**, p. 32. If they track the Vipers to their lair or otherwise accost them, the characters discover that Gnanagh is among the group. Then they can either help the Vipers defend themselves against Moschtug or go to Moschtug and offer to get Gnanagh for him. In this event, go to **Fort in the Foothills**, p. 34.





POISONED RITES



VIEW

In *Poisoned Rites*, the characters attend the wedding feast of Tirag and Uvtug, which unites the Fists of Fahd and Righteous Vipers as well. As Moschtug raises a toast to the newly wed couple, he drinks from a poisoned cup but survives.

Gnanagh casts the blame on one of the townsfolk. During the middle of the night, Gnanagh sneaks out of Copper Cauldron virtually unnoticed, along with the Vipers.

SETTING THE STAGE

The gamemaster determines the exact amount of time that passes between the arrival of the adventurers in Copper Cauldron and the actual wedding feast. Gauge this based on how much time the player characters want to spend gathering information beforehand. When the time comes, read the following aloud:

One of the orks who invited you to attend the ceremony waves to you, looking up at the sun (or moon) in the sky. "It is time for the great union of our bands to be celebrated!" he cries, making a rude gesture to coincide with the word "union."





You troop into the village's wooden meeting hall, which is packed to the rafters with profusely sweating orks and a surprising number of villagers. You are unable to move very far to the front; those of you who are not windlings, trolls or obsidimen have a poor view of the proceedings.

At the far end of the hall, Moschtug, Orguk, Tirag, Uvtug and Gnanagh are seated behind a long table. Moschtug pounds his fist on the table, shouting: "Pay attention! The wedding now takes place!"

There is an enthusiastic rumble from the crowd. Moschtug then stands. "By the authority vested in me as a big tough ork who can kill anyone who dares gainsay me, I now pronounce Uvtug and Tirag ork and wife! Drink up, all!"

The enthusiastic rumble becomes a cacophony of cheers and shouts. Tirag leaps on Uvtug, drowning him in a deluge of sloppy kisses. Moschtug, Orguk, Uvtug and Tirag drink deeply from cups on the table.

Suddenly, Moschtug lurches to his feet, his face drained of blood. He shouts, "Poison! I've been poisoned!" and collapses on the table.

Gnanagh points to a villager: "Grab him! He poured the hurlg!"

Orks surround the frightened man and pile on top of him, fists flying. Bedlam breaks loose.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Gnanagh and Orguk conspired to poison Moschtug's hurlg. Gnanagh, his mind clouded by the Horror's influence in the Blades, believes the Fists of Fahd will follow him after Moschtug's death. Orguk correctly realizes that the Fists would desert Gnanagh and aims to recruit most of them, doubling his power. For the moment, Gnanagh's cooperation assures that he will not be the obvious suspect.

When the chaos ebbs, the orks realize that Moschtug is not dead. He is, however, unconscious. Uvtug grabs the poor villager Gnanagh has fingered and slams the man repeatedly against a wall, demanding a confession. The unfortunate patsy's name is Hosya (pronounced HOSS-ya).

The villagers proclaim Hosya's innocence. The Fist scorcher then accuses the villagers of plotting to destroy them. Accusations fly back and forth.

The adventurers can step in and try to calm both sides down. Roleplay this exchange or have the characters make Charisma or appropriate persuasion talent tests to lower the tension level. As neither group has any particular reason to trust or heed the adventurers, these tests require a Good success. If the adventurers do not intervene, a series of scuffles break out, and many villagers are hurt.

Eventually they surrender, and the orks demand copper and silver ore from them as reparation.

Unless the adventurers have somehow calmed him, Uvtug drags Hosya to the village square and starts torturing him for information. Uvtug's brutality is extreme; if allowed free rein, he cripples Hosya for life.

Eventually, the commotion fades, though the tension between the two ork tribes swells as suspicions rise.

In the middle of the night, Gnanagh and Orguk decide to slip out of town, as they don't want to risk Moschtug figuring things out when he regains consciousness. Do not let the characters interrupt them at this point. If the characters are staking out the walls of the city, members of the Vipers engineer a diversion so that the characters miss this departure.

Once their leader is safely away, the rest of the Vipers sneak out of town. The characters may note this larger migration. If they rouse the Fists, a brief skirmish between the two bands ensues but most of the Vipers escape into the foothills. Without Moschtug or Gnanagh to issue orders, the Fists are not organized enough to block the Vipers' escape.

Once the Fists of Fahd learn that the Vipers have fled, the Fists make plans to follow the fleeing orks. The tribe is ready to move out at daybreak. Go to **Fort in the Foothills**, p. 34.

If the characters notice the Vipers leaving and follow them to their fortress without telling the Fists, the characters are on their own. Following the tribe is easy enough, but unless the characters are careful, the fleeing Vipers notice the characters and attempt to capture them.

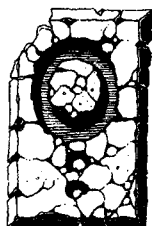
TROUBLESHOOTING

Few things can go wrong here. If the characters wish to aid in determining who poisoned Moschtug's drink, they meet with great resistance. Neither Uvtug nor Orguk allows any members of their tribes to be subject to magical means of divination, as both are firmly convinced of their followers' innocence. Only an Interaction Test that achieves an Extraordinary success against the Social Defense of either of the ork leaders persuades them to allow the characters to use magical means of finding the guilty party. If the characters determine that Gnanagh is involved, both he and Orguk flee immediately, if they have not already done so. In this case, the remaining Vipers attack both the Fists and the characters to allow Orguk and Gnanagh enough time to escape. Once the pair is safely away, the rest of the Vipers flee, eventually meeting up with Orguk and Gnanagh at the Vipers' fortress. Again, without Moschtug or Gnanagh to issue orders, the Fists are not organized enough to prevent this. Go to **Fort in the Foothills**.





FORT IN THE FOOTHILLS



VIEW

In *Fort in the Foothills*, the characters, along with the Fists of Fahd, track down Moschtug, Gnanagh and the Righteous Vipers to their fortress in the foothills of the Delaris Mountains. There the characters can either help the Fists of Fahd storm

the fortress or attempt to negotiate a peace between the ork bands. Of course, the characters' ultimate objective is to talk to Gnanagh, who has the information they seek about the Blades.

SETTING THE STAGE

You set off from Copper Cauldron in hopes of finding Gnanagh, the ork historian who holds the information you seek. His disappearance, along with that of Orguk and the Righteous Vipers, leads you to believe that perhaps Moschtug's brother has betrayed his tribe.

But are you walking into a battle between the two ork tribes? Or can you help them re-establish the peace they were so close to achieving?

BEHIND THE SCENES

To get to Gnanagh, the adventurers must find and penetrate the Righteous Vipers' fortress. The Fists of Fahd do not know where the fortress lies, but any character who makes a successful Tracking (7) Test finds the Vipers' stronghold.

The fort is located in the side of a cliff in a box canyon. The fort is actually a hollowed-out fossil skull of a gigantic lizard from a distant age (see *Orguk's Fort Map*).

The Vipers enter the fort by climbing up rope ladders dropped from an entry hole located fifty feet up the

cliff face. The ladders are rolled out only for the Vipers and their allies. Vipers inside the fort watch the canyon entrance from the lookout hole, which they have fitted with several "windling catchers." These are ballistas modified to fire small, weighted nets. Any windling hit by one of these nets plummets immediately to the earth and takes appropriate falling damage (see p. 206, ED).

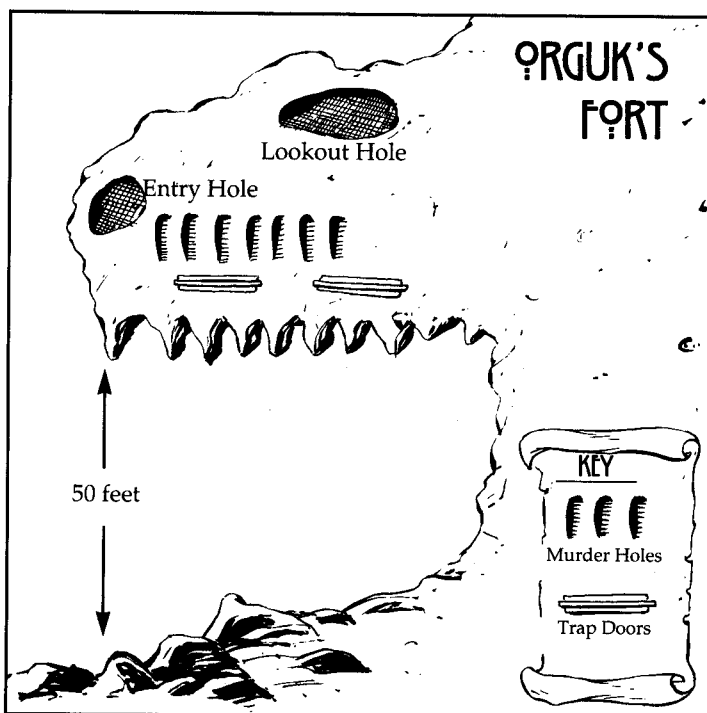
The nets are coated with a contact poison that induces instant paralysis; its Effect Step is 14 (see p. 208, ED). This poison causes only numbness in any target larger than a windling.

Seven "murder holes" are located long each side of the skull. These holes provide Full Cover (see p. 197, ED) to any scorching archer stationed at one.

The floor of the skull contains two trap doors that allow the Vipers to loose a deadly deluge on anyone unfortunate enough to get under the skull's upper jaw. The Vipers keep large pots of ore standing ready. If intruders appear under the skull, they toss ele-

mental fire into the pots to create molten metal. Then they pour the molten metal through the trap doors onto anyone below. The molten metal causes 15 steps of damage for 3 rounds to anyone struck by it. Any character within 10 feet of a direct target suffers 6 steps of damage for 2 rounds. Non-magical armor provides no protection against the molten metal. The Vipers have enough elemental fire to melt four pots of molten metal.

Attackers may scale the 70-foot cliff beside the skull and enter the skull through the lookout or entry holes. The cliff face goes up another thirty feet above the skull and then terminates in a mesa. At a point an hour's ride to the north, attackers may ride a trail to the top of the mesa. From there, they can climb down to the skull. Vipers come





out of the skull to engage enemies trying to attack the fortress from either approach.

Thirty-six Vipers, as well as Orguk, Tirag and Gnanagh, defend the fort against attacks. Make sure Gnanagh does not get killed before he explains the Blades to the adventurers. Moschtug has Uvtug and 48 members of the Fists at his disposal.

GNANAGH'S WORDS

The adventurers can gain an audience with Gnanagh by storming the fort and capturing him—with or without Moschtug's help—or they can talk their way into the fort. Offering help (such as inside information) against Moschtug's upcoming attack gains them entrance to the fortress. If the characters end up defending the fort alongside the Vipers, reduce the number of murder holes and decrease the height that attackers must climb to enter the skull.

If the adventurers come up with some other clever way of getting Gnanagh's ear, reward them for their creativity but make it tough enough to prevent the ending from becoming an anticlimax.

When the adventurers finally meet with Gnanagh and show him the Blades, he turns pale. He begins to tear at his hair and, if not restrained, smashes his head repeatedly into the nearest wall. He now realizes that his betrayal of his brother was magically triggered.

Read the following dialogue to your players:

"Now I understand! The Blades—the Blades of Cara Fahd, forged by the great ork weaponsmith Rugaah Gloh. You have terrible weapons there—terrible! The details are not all clear—they are only hints, dread insinuations in a dozen vague documents. But those Blades carry a curse. They cut, they sever the bonds that hold Name-givers together. They breed betrayal. Now they are weak—they could push a weak, angry ork like myself over the brink, but later even healthy folk will—"

"It may be too late for you. The Blades have no doubt cursed your patterns, and you now bear their curse. You are bond breakers—you will bring discord and betrayal wherever you go. The only way to break the curse is to follow it to its conclusion. Continue to attach threads to it, until you reach the final thread. Then you will be sorely



tested and possibly destroyed. But if you succeed, you will destroy a great menace and you shall win a place among Barsaive's legendary heroes.

"You can ignore this task, never weave another thread to them. But doing so will mark you as small and petty beings—like myself."

Gnanagh then attempts to commit suicide. If still inside the fort with Orguk, he throws himself at the Viper chieftain, hoping to atone either by killing Orguk or dying in the attempt. Otherwise, he grabs one of the Blades of Cara Fahd and tries to stab himself with it. If the adventurers restrain him, he can provide any other information about the Blades that is revealed anywhere in this adventure.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Gnanagh must deliver the speech provided above or the rest of the adventures in *Blades* will not work. Nothing else will derail the adventures.





LOOSE ENDS



his section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, provides ideas for possible sequels to **Bond Breaker**, outlines Legend Point awards and provides statistics for the adventure's major gamemaster characters.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

The adventurers may capture Gnanagh and turn him over to his brother after they get the information they need. Moschtug wants to burn his brother at the stake, despite Gnanagh's remorse and his claim of having been magically influenced. The adventurers can wash their hands of the affair and let Gnanagh be tortured and slain, or they can use their persuasive abilities to effect a reconcil-

iation between the brothers. This earns the player characters the enmity of Orguk, however, who will attempt to have them killed if they ever return to the Delaris foothills.

On the other hand, they may ally themselves with Orguk and Gnanagh and participate in the destruction of Moschtug and the Fists of Fahd.

As a third alternative, the characters can attempt to help reestablish the peace between the Fists of Fahd and the Righteous Vipers. This is an extremely difficult proposition, but is possible.

In any case, the adventurers may befriend the people of Copper Cauldron, who have little to lose in the short term from either chieftain's triumph. The characters may also return to the town at some point to defend it against various threats.





Depending on the characters' choices, they may make friends among the Fists of Fahd, the Righteous Vipers or even both bands. And if the characters prevent Gnanagh from being killed or killing himself, they may

gain an ally in the ork historian. Unfortunately, Gnanagh knows little more about the Blades of Cara Fahd, but he does know much about Cara Fahd and its history. If the gamemaster wishes, Gnanagh can aid the characters in their further search for the Blades' Key Knowledges.

The most significant consequence of the adventure is the curse placed on the characters by Betrayer. Even if the characters destroy the Blades, they still carry the Horror's influence with them. As Gnanagh mentioned, the only way the characters can free themselves and Barsaive from the Blades' curse is to weave threads to the Blades and see the curse through to the end. Only in this way can the Horror's influence be stopped. (See **Running Blades**, p. 13, for more information about Betrayer's influence and the curse on the characters.)

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award the characters Legend Points as described in the **Introduction**, p. 8. The specific awards for **Bond Breaker** are described below. The Adventure Award is 1,000 points. To receive the total award, the adventurers must obtain the information on the Blades from Gnanagh and survive the fight at Orguk's fort. The side they choose to fight on does not affect the award.

CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING AND HEROICS

Award characters Legend Points for any of the following actions:

Talking their way into Copper Cauldron	10
Impressing the raiders	25
Preventing a fight between the Fists and the villagers after Moschtug is poisoned	50
Saving Hosya from torture	50
Effecting a reconciliation between Moschtug and Gnanagh	100
Reestablishing peace between the Fists of Fahd and the Righteous Vipers	150

CREATURE/OPPONENT AWARD TABLE

Creature/Opponent	6 Players	7 Players	8 Players
Gnanagh	135	135	135
Moschtug	1,855	1,855	1,855
Orguk	845	845	845
Ork scorcher (1 per character)	1,080	1,260	1,440
Total	3,915	4,095	4,275
Award per Character	650	580	530

DEFEATING CREATURES/OPPONENTS

Although some of the ork raiders in this adventure are more sympathetic than others, they're all regarded as menaces by most people in the area. If the adventurers defeat any of them, they receive Legend Points. However, a character must defeat an ork in honorable battle to receive the points—no sneak attacks! Deduct 75 Legend Points from the final award for each villager the adventurers slay or allow to be slain. As always, divide creature/opponent awards between participating player characters.

TREASURE

Gnanagh, Moschtug and Orguk are all sufficiently well known that a souvenir from the defeat of any is considered treasure. Each wears a distinctive piece of jewelry—an earring, medallion and torc, respectively—worth 200 Legend Points to the character who seizes it.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

Based on the figures above, a single character who completes **Bond Breaker** receives an average of 1,815 Legend Points. This average assumes 7 players in a group and does not include points earned for defeating additional opponents or recovering treasure created by the gamemaster.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Major gamemaster characters in **Bond Breaker** appear below in order of general importance to the story.





GNANAGH THE QUERULOUS

Gnanagh is a well of bitterness. His long-held grudge against his brother has made him a prime candidate for influence by the bond-breaking aura of the Blades of Cara Fahd.

When still a young ork, he stumbled across ancient documents from the ruins of Cara Fahd. These convinced him that his family was directly descended from the kingdom's royal family. Gnanagh achieved no success in his attempts to exploit this knowledge, but his younger and more charismatic brother, Moschtug, used it to gain followers and form the Fists of Fahd. Gnanagh has roamed far and wide, becoming an expert on Cara Fahd, but has always dreamed of taking over the "kingship." He returns to the band whenever they get into trouble. His failure to

become an adept despite years of tortuous effort also rangles, especially in view of Moschtug's apparently effortless progress in his own Discipline.

Gnanagh is cranky, irritable, distrustful, and insecure. Like all orks, Gnanagh is subject to gahad, a powerful biological response that causes extreme discomfort in any ork that fails to act on his instincts. Gnanagh's gahad is especially likely to be triggered by slights against his abilities or the quality of his scholarship.

His name is pronounced GAH-nag.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (16): 7/D12
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Initiative

Dice: D4 - 1

Movement

Full Movement: 75
Combat Movement: 38

Skills

Arcane Mutterings (6): 12/2D10
Artisan/Calligraphy (3): 8/2D6
Battle Shout (3): 8/2D6
Charge (3): 9/D8 + D6
Disarm (6): 12/2D10
Evidence Analysis (3): 10/D10 + D6
Knowledge/Cara Fahd History (7): 14/D20 + D4
Melee Weapons (5): 11/D10 + D8
Missile Weapons (3): /D8 + D6
Read and Write Languages (4): 11/D10 + D8
(Ork, Troll, Throalic, Sperethiel)
Research (6): 13/D12+D10
Second Attack (3): 9/D8 + D6
Wheeling Defense (6): 12/2D10

Damage

Death Rating: 35
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 27
Recovery Tests/Day: 2
Recovery Dice: D10

Combat

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 10
Mystic Armor: 1

Equipment

Broadsword (+4) (15/D20 + D6)
Chain mail
Lance (Damage 11/D10 + D8; when charging, 25/D20 + D10 + D8 + D4)
Rider's shield
Thundra beast





MOSCHTUG, "KING OF CARA FAHD"

Moschtug is a natural leader of orks, able to inspire confidence and loyalty in others without any apparent effort or thought. It may be his unthinking zest for the good things in life: food, drink and battle. It may be his knack for always finding the right bit of luck to get him and his band out of one impossible scrape after another. Or it may simply be the value he places on loyalty—he never fails to reward those who perform well in his service.

Unfortunately, Moschtug is also about as perceptive as a saddlebag, especially when it comes to his brother, Gnanagh. He's never caught on to the fact that his brother envies him, that his every triumph is a stinging blow to Gnanagh's pride. He expects loyalty from Gnanagh because they are brothers. Although he will go out of his way to praise even the scruffiest, most disreputable new recruit to the Fists of Fahd, he takes Gnanagh's wise counsel for granted.

Moschtug's gahad is especially likely to be triggered by displays of disloyalty, threats to the safety the orks under his command or refusals to treat him as a king.

His name is pronounced MOSH-tug. He is a Sixth Circle cavalryman and Fifth Circle warrior.

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12
Strength (19): 8/2D6
Toughness (17): 7/D12
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (20): 8/2D6

Initiative

Dice: D6

Movement

Full Movement: 90
Combat Movement: 45

Damage

Death Rating: 96
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 80
Recovery Tests/Day: 3
Recovery Dice: D12

Combat

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 7
Mystic Armor: 0

Talents

Acrobatic Strike (5): 12/2D10
Avoid Blow (6): 13/D12 + D10
Charge (6): 14/D20 + D4
Down Strike (5): 16/D20 + D8
Durability (Cavalryman) (8)
Karma (Cavalryman) (6)
Karma (Warrior) (5)
Melee Weapons (8): 15/D20 + D6
Resist Taunt (6): 11/D10 + D8
Swift Kick (3): 10/D10 + D6
Throwing Weapons (5): 12/2D10
Trick Riding (6): 11/D10 + D8
Unarmed Combat (5): 12/2D10
Wheeling Attack (6): 13/D12 + D10
Wheeling Defense (6): 13/D12 + D10
Wood Skin (5): 12/2D10

Karma

Karma Dice: D8
Karma Points: 40

Skills

Artisan/Leatherworking (1): 9 /D8 + D6
Knowledge/Ancient Tactics (1): 6 /D10
Knowledge/Local Geography (3): 8 /2D6

Equipment

Chain mail
Lance (Damage 13/D12 + D10; when charging, 30/D20 + D10 + D8 + 2D6)
Thundra beast
Two-handed sword (Damage 15/D20 + D6)





ORGUK

Orguk is an opportunistic ork who spends most of his time contemplating the quickest and easiest route to wealth and power. Not long ago, Orguk and his daughter, Tirag, appeared in the area, on the lam after incurring the anger of Garlthik One-Eye, ruler of Kratas. Orguk encountered the former leader of the Righteous Vipers in a tavern and won leadership of the Vipers in a card game.

In just over a year, he has managed to dramatically improve the ork band's fortunes. Once a motley gang of dispirited orks barely fit to be called scorcher, the Righteous Vipers have become one of the most feared raider bands in the region—thanks largely to the devious workings of Orguk's mind. Unlike other raider chieftains, Orguk never rushes into a conflict. He always figures the angles, concerned with obtaining the maximum benefit for the minimum effort.

In fact, Orguk has been working several angles at once in his alliance with the Fists of Fahd. Having Moschtug on his side allows him to concentrate on lesser rivals. But killing Moschtug and combining the two scorcher bands would be even better, he thinks. Orguk identified Gnanagh's fierce jealousy of Moschtug the first time he met the two brothers, and he has been subtly pricking Gnanagh's resentment during the wedding negotiations. Orguk's been careful enough not to suggest any outright treachery—instead, he's waiting for Gnanagh to decide to betray Moschtug.

Orguk is cool-headed for an ork and is unusually good at suppressing his gahad. However, particularly apt or cutting insults to his intelligence rile him.

Orguk is a Seventh Circle swordmaster and Third Circle cavalryman.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Initiative

Dice: D4-1

Movement

Full Movement: 75
Combat Movement: 38

Damage

Death Rating: 101
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 83
Recovery Tests/Day: 3
Recovery Dice: D10

Combat

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Armor: 10
Mystic Armor: 1

Talents

Avoid Blow (7): 13/D12 + D10
Blade Weaving (7): 13/D12 + D10
Charge (3): 9/D8 + D6
Disarm (7): 13/D12 + D10
Durability (Swordmaster) (9)
Empathic Command (3): 8/2D6
Heartening Laugh (7): 13/D12 + D10
Karma (Cavalryman) (3)
Karma (Swordmaster) (7)
Maneuver (7): 13/D12 + D10
Melee Weapons (9): 1/D20 + D6
Taunt (7): 13/D12 + D10
Trick Riding (4): 9/D8 + D6
Winning Smile (7): 13/D12 + D10

Skills

Artisan/Juggling (3): 9/D8 + D6
First Impression (3): 9/D8 + D6
Streetwise (3): 9/D8 + D6
Tactics (3): 9/D8 + D6

Karma

Dice: D8
Points: 38

Equipment

Broadsword (+5) (Damage 16/D20 + D8)
Chain mail
Lance (Damage 11/D10 + D8; when charging, 25/D20 + D10 + D8 + D4)
Rider's shield





TIRAG

Tirag is the daughter of Orguk, who has trained her to be as sneaky and devious as he is. She feels a passionate attraction to her husband-to-be, Uvtug, but she does not expect this to last very long. (Ork marriages rarely outlast the birth of one or two offspring anyway.) When it comes down to a conflict between Uvtug's interests and her father's, her father wins. There is not a throat she would not cut for him. Her gahad is provoked by anyone who implies that she is less than ferocious or insults her father in any way.

Her name is pronounced TEER-ag. She is a Fourth Circle swordmaster.

Attributes

DEX: 7	STR: 8	TOU: 6
PER: 7	WIL: 5	CHA: 6

UVTUG

Uvtug is Moschtug's son and Tirag's husband-to-be. He is much like his father—brave, benevolent to his allies and just a bit dim. Tirag's passion thrills him—the first time he saw her, she was skewering an unfortunate miner with her sword. The bloodlust in her eyes that day entranced Uvtug, and he became determined to have her as his bride. Although thoroughly besotted with her, he will not abandon his father if forced to choose between the two. His gahad is provoked by the need to prove himself every inch the equal of his father in combat.

His name is pronounced OOV-tug. He is a Third Circle cavalryman.

Attributes

DEX: 6	STR: 8	TOU: 8
PER: 4	WIL: 4	CHA: 7

MINERS

The miner statistics can be used for any able-bodied resident of Copper Cauldron. The town's population is predominately human, with some orks and a few dwarfs thrown in for spice. Folks here have to be physically stronger than the average city dweller to make a living, and they have to be able to defend themselves from a variety of foes. In general, they are a taciturn lot, though not unfriendly once one wins their trust.

Attributes

DEX: 7	STR: 7	TOU: 7
PER: 5	WIL: 7	CHA: 5

Initiative: 7

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 10

Damage: 11*/14†

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Death Rating: 39

Wound Threshold: 11

Unconsciousness Rating: 31

Legend Points: 50

Equipment

Leather armor

*Longbow w/30 arrows

†Warhammer

Loot: None on person

Physical Defense: 9

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 7

Armor: 3

Mystic Armor: 2

Knockdown: 7

Recovery Tests: 3

Combat Movement: 38

Full Movement: 75

SCORCHERS

Attributes

DEX: 6	STR: 7	TOU: 8
PER: 5	WIL: 4	CHA: 4

Initiative: 2

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 14

Damage: 11*/12†/13″

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Death Rating: 43

Wound Threshold: 12

Unconsciousness Rating: 35

Legend Points: 180

Equipment

“Battle-axe

Chain mail

†Lance

*Longbow w/30 arrows

Rider's shield (cannot be used with battle-axe)

Thundra beast

Loot: Miscellaneous jewelry and small gems worth 50 silver pieces

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 6

Armor: 10

Mystic Armor: 0

Knockdown: 7

Recovery Tests: 3

Combat Movement: 40

Full Movement: 80





A MATTER OF HONOR



Donack stepped aside, allowing Elder Pillad to enter the Hold of Courage first. Donack prided himself on knowing the correct way to behave, despite his youth and recent arrival at the court of Cara Fahd. He was also proud of his achievement, his monument to the greatest heroes of the ork kingdom. He followed the elder into the Great Hall and stepped beside him to see the expression on his face.

To his surprise, Elder Pillad's face bore no expression at all. No pleasure, no satisfaction, no approving pride—nothing that Donack had eagerly anticipated. Donack cleared his throat, forcing himself to sound as if all was well. "Elder Pillad, the pedestal is complete. Word has just reached us that Pobov Gaarz has died—he was the last. All that remains is the ritual, and then the Seven Spokes will join the Hold of Courage."

Pillad remained silent. Unsure what else to say—or whether he should say anything at all—Donack looked down at the nearby pedestal. It bore the symbol of the Seven Spokes—the wheel forged after the betrayal, after they had become seven rather than eight. Donack reached down and patted the stone, then ran his fingers lightly over the design. Seven lines in the wheel, with seven hollows where the great heroes' soul-stones would rest. Next to the symbol of the Seven Spokes was a single well in which the soul-stone of the lost hero would lie. Traitor and Nameless though he had become, he must have once fought as heroically for Cara Fahd as any of his seven comrades, and Donack was determined to honor all eight of Cara Fahd's Protectors. He had prepared the eight stones needed for the ritual, seen to everything necessary. All he needed now was Elder Pillad's permission.

"It cannot be done," said Pillad, his voice ringing through the hall.

Donack gaped, then began to sputter as he groped for words. "But they are among our greatest heroes! Surely they deserve placement here, alongside Hrak Gron and all since who have served Cara Fahd!" He heard the strident note in his voice and tried to swallow it—the shock had made him incautious, or he would never have spoken in such a tone to a leader of the Order of Courage.

"By their deeds, they deserve all that we can give them," Pillad said, his voice soft and sad. "But the curse of the Blades of Cara Fahd pervades their patterns. To bring that curse to the Hold would spell disaster—for us and for our descendants."

Donack turned away from the elder, desperately wanting to kick something. *All my work, gone for nothing because of a few tales fit only to frighten elves with. The greatest heroes of our kingdom, dishonored for a child's nightmare!*

Pillad thumped his staff on the floor, forcing Donack to look at him. "The curse is real, Donack. Why do you think so many disasters have befallen our land? Do you believe so strongly in bad luck, or that we have offended the Passions somehow or that our blood has grown thin and weak as our enemies say? Do you think all our calamities stem from these things?"

Donack rubbed the tip of his tusk, even as he cursed himself for giving in to the nervous habit. The elder's words had struck a chord, and Donack didn't like it. "But Elder," he began feebly, "surely if the tales are true, then it is the Blades that carry the curse. I do not see why—"

"Listen and learn," Pillad growled, thumping his staff again. "The Blades carry the curse, yes. But to bring the Seven Spokes here is to bring the Blades, for they are as bound to each other as we are to the Hold. We cannot have one without the other—and we dare not destroy our children's birthright for the sake of honoring the dead."

Donack bowed his head, signifying his submission. The note of fear in Pillad's voice convinced him, even as a part of him struggled to disbelieve it. As the ranking elder of the Order of Courage, Pillad was within his rights to deny anyone entry to the Hold. For him to deny the Seven Spokes meant that he feared their admission—and anything that could frighten the old nethermancer surely posed a threat to the Hold and to all of Barsaive.





GRAVE WISDOM



Grave Wisdom takes the characters to the ruins of an ancient shrine to fallen ork heroes, in search of the Rank 3 Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The characters must discover the Name of the group of ork heroes who wielded the daggers. They must also perform a Deed—they must build a monument to the Seven Spokes in the Spokes' original home, ten miles away from the Hold of Courage. The adventure is best suited for six to eight characters of Sixth or Seventh Circle.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

During Cara Fahd's heyday, a small group of nethermancers in the service of the kingdom created a ritual that enabled the leaders of Cara Fahd to store and use the knowledge of the kingdom's fallen heroes. This ritual trapped the spirit of a dead hero in an enchanted stone known as a soul-stone. The nethermancers, who called themselves the Order of Courage, built a shrine to house the soul-stones and Named it the Hold of Courage. Whenever word of a hero's death reached the Order, they used the ritual to capture the hero's spirit in a soul-stone. The nethermancers then placed the stones into enchanted statues, through which they could speak with the spirits.

After the fall of Cara Fahd during the Orichalcum Wars, certain members of the Order of Courage wished to enshrine the Seven Spokes in the Hold. To this end, they constructed a pedestal to hold their soul-stones and set aside an area of the Hold for it. The leaders of the Order of Courage, however, warned that the curse of the Blades of Cara Fahd would corrupt the Hold of Courage and refused to allow the Seven Spokes' soul-stones to be placed in the shrine. Over time, the members of the Order died before they could induct new members. Donack Roundhorns, the last surviving leader of the Order, constructed a special pedestal for himself and arranged for the remaining members—a pair of hastily taught novices—to perform the soul-stone ritual for him after his death. He hoped thereby to preserve his own knowledge and that of the Order, so that future generations would be able to call up the knowledge of the fallen heroes of Cara Fahd.

During the Scourge, the unprotected Hold of Courage fell victim to the Horrors. The trapped spirits in the stones offered the Horrors victims who could do little to fight

back. The Horrors corrupted the spirits who grew more malevolent with each passing century.

As described in *Interludes*, the characters' quest for the Rank 3 Key Knowledge begins with research into how they might discover the Name of the Seven Spokes. After learning of the Hold of Courage, the characters head toward Cara Fahd to search for fabled shrine, joined by a young ork troubadour Named Vanyk (see *Interludes*, p. 18). After long days or even weeks of travel, the characters arrive at the border of the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd. Vanyk informs the characters that if the object of their search exists, they will find it here. The group begins scouring the ruined countryside for the shrine, fending off attacks by strange creatures and the tribes of savage orks that still live within the lands of the ancient kingdom.

When at last the characters find the shrine, they may not recognize it. The shrine is a simple, unadorned wooden building. The building's well-preserved condition is the only immediate clue to its special nature—it has not rotted away in five centuries. The Hold is full of small glowing stones set in niches atop stone pedestals. The glowing stones are the spirits of ork heroes who died in the service of Cara Fahd, trapped by the Order of Courage.

Characters who study the pictograms above the niches may decipher the stones' purpose, but they also discover that the niches of the particular ork heroes they seek are empty. When placed within specially constructed statues in the shrine, the soul-stones reveal the histories of the souls they contain and allow the characters to hold brief conversations with the dead. Unfortunately, the corruption of the Horrors and the influence of Betrayer cause the spirits to attack the characters. The adventurers must fight them off, while searching for Donack's soul-stone and asking his soul the right questions. Only Donack's spirit can reveal the Key Knowledge the characters seek.

BETRAYER'S INFLUENCE

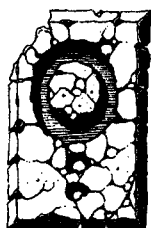
Betrayer's influence does not come into play until late in this adventure, when the characters reach the Hold of Courage. When the characters attempt to communicate with the spirits, the Horror's influence combined with the spirits' corruption prompts the spirits to attack.

If desired, the gamemaster may also have Betrayer influence Vanyk's behavior. For example, Vanyk might assault one of the characters at a crucial juncture of the battle with the spirits.





SEARCH FOR THE HOLD



VIEWVIEW

Search for the Hold begins as the characters reach the border of ancient Cara Fahd. As they search the forsaken kingdom for the Hold of Courage over the next day or so, they may experience any of several suggested encounters. The gamemaster decides which encounters, based on

how much of the travel he wishes to play out.

The following text assumes the characters have come to Cara Fahd with Vanyk, as described in **Interludes**. If this is not the case, the adjust the text accordingly.

SETTING THE STAGE

The sun is sinking toward the horizon when Vanyk suddenly reins in her horse and leaps from the saddle with an excited cry. She digs in her saddlebag and comes up with the tattered fragment of parchment you've seen her consult so often during the journey. She turns slightly and peers at the peaks of the Delaris Mountains. "There," she breathes, "the triple peak." She turns again and looks toward the Twilight Peaks. "Yes, yes! The Cracked Crag there, the river behind us, the jungle ahead of us." She dances around her horse, waving the map in the air and shouting. "We're here! Welcome to the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd!"

You gaze at the wilderness around you, scratching your head in puzzlement. This wild land—the same sort of

wild land you've been traveling through for the past few days—is the proud ork kingdom you have read of? You look at Vanyk, who has fallen to her knees and raised a chunk of soil in her fist. She kisses the dirt, then laughs in delight.

Shrugging, you dismount and prepare to make camp. As an ork troubadour, Vanyk ought to know what she's talking about—and even if she doesn't, night's coming on. Might as well settle in for a comfortable sleep.

When the characters rise the next morning, read the following aloud:

You wake refreshed from your night's sleep, ready to ferret out the location of the Hold of Courage. Your long search is apparently about to end.

Vanyk stumbles out of her tent, yawning. She walks slowly toward the morning fire, stretching the kinks out of her muscles. She clutches the tattered map in one hand, and begins babbling about it as soon as she sits down. "Well, it wasn't hard getting this far, but things might get a little tougher from here on out. My map shows the Hold's location, but many of the landmarks just aren't here. Look." She thrusts the map at one of you, pointing with one long-nailed finger at a crude set of letters above a small dot. "This town, Urkula I think it says, is gone. So is this one and this one." She rolls the map up carefully, sticks it in her pocket and reaches for a hunk of journey-bread to toast over the fire. "I know the Hold's in the jungle, though. We'll find it quickly, never you fear."





Rolling your eyes at Vanyk's naiveté, you finish your breakfast in a less confident mood. No one you know has ever found anything easily in a jungle. The end of your quest may not be as near as you had thought.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The theme of this encounter is travel and discovery. The characters are traveling in a legendary land, seeking something that no one has seen in centuries. Though the distance to be traveled may seem daunting, the prospect of uncovering an ancient secret should be enough to excite any adept.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Led by Vanyk, the characters search for the Hold of Courage. Vanyk's map is far from perfect, and much has changed since the Scourge. Without cities to use as landmarks, finding the Hold may be quite a time-consuming task, fraught with peril from creatures native to Cara Fahd's jungles and from savage ork tribes throughout the region. The gamemaster may decide to let luck favor the characters and allow them to find the Hold within a few days of arriving in Cara Fahd.

ENCOUNTERS

Depending on how much real time the gamemaster wishes to spend on travel through Cara Fahd, the characters may face any or all of the following mini-encounters as they search for the Hold of Courage. Make these encounters challenging but not overwhelming, as the characters will face powerful adversaries within the Hold of Courage (see **Spirits from the Past**, p. 49).

Keep in mind that these lands contain the ruins of an ancient kingdom. The characters might stumble over the shattered remnants of cities or towns lost to the Scourge but should not become sidetracked by exploring these ruins. If the characters want to go exploring, Vanyk does everything she can to discourage them. She is anxious to find the Hold of Courage, and everything she has ever read about it places it in a secluded location in the jungle. Make it clear to the players that their characters are ill-prepared to perform any major exploring. For more information, see the **Loose Ends** section of this adventure.

Blood Monkey Assault

A group of 15 blood monkeys (p. 56, **Barsaive GM Book**) drops down on the characters, who have unknowingly invaded the animals' territory. These savage creatures can call more of their kind, as described in the **Barsaive GM Book**. The characters must either kill all the

monkeys quickly or beat a hasty retreat as hordes of the brutal little monsters arrive.

BLOOD MONKEYS (15)

Attributes

DEX: 9	STR: 5	TOU: 7
PER: 5	WIL: 4	CHA: 4

Initiative: 9 (12)

Number of Attacks: 3

Attack: 9

Damage: 9

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 10

Spell Defense: 9

Social Defense: 7

Armor: 0

Mystic Armor: 3

Knockdown: 10

Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 42

Wound Threshold: 12

Combat Movement: 42

Full Movement: 85 (in trees), 42 (on ground)

Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Legend Points: 100

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Stalked by Crojen

Five crojen (p. 57, **Barsaive GM Book**) stalk the characters as they hack through a particularly dense section of the jungle. These small, panther-like creatures make no secret of their presence and almost seem to taunt the characters with the ease of their movement through the thick undergrowth. For the next several hours (or days, if the gamemaster wants to take his time with this part of the adventure), the crojen lurk at the edge of the characters' vision, lounging almost peacefully. If attacked, they sprint off into the jungle, returning minutes later to take up their watch. Once the characters relax their vigilance or go to sleep for the night, the crojen move in for the kill.

CROJEN (5)

Attributes

DEX: 12	STR: 10	TOU: 9
PER: 6	WIL: 6	CHA: 4

Initiative: 12

Number of Attacks: 2 (3)

Attack: 13

Damage: 12

Number of Spells: NA

Physical Defense: 11

Spell Defense: 8

Social Defense: 6

Armor: 0

Mystic Armor: 4





Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Knockdown: 10
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 50
Wound Threshold: 14
Unconsciousness Rating: 43 (see **Barsaive GM Book**)

Combat Movement: 70
Full Movement: 140

Legend Points: 190
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Jehuthra Attack

The characters unwittingly enter the hunting ground of a mated pair of jehuthras, which prompts these giant, spider-like beings to ambush the characters. The jehuthras use their Iron Web ability to separate the characters from one another before attacking. If the characters kill one of the pair, the remaining jehuthra goes berserk, gaining 3 steps on any Attack Tests it makes and 3 steps on any Damage Tests for damage the characters inflict on it. Fortunately for the adventurers, the jehuthra cannot think clearly enough to use any spells. Instead, it attacks physically in a mad rush.

JEHUTHRAS (2)

Attributes

DEX: 5 **STR:** 5 **TOU:** 7
PER: 8 **WIL:** 9 **CHA:** 5

Initiative: 5	Physical Defense: 9
Number of Attacks: 2	Spell Defense: 13
Attack: 13	Social Defense: 9
Damage: 11	Armor: 8
Number of Spells: (1)	Mystic Armor: 4
Spellcasting: 11	Knockdown: 5
Effect: See p. 305, ED	Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 55
Wound Threshold: 13
Unconsciousness Rating: 50

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Legend Points: 250
Equipment: None

Loot: Thorax web worth D12 x 10 silver pieces. This counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Ork Raiders

At some point, preferably an inconvenient one, 10 savage orks attack the characters. Savage orks are ferocious primitives who attack without mercy and eat their fallen

foes. These savage orks view every stranger as a threat and attempt to destroy anyone they meet. Use the standard ork statistics given on pages 307–308, ED.

Many tribes of savage orks roam the jungles of Cara Fahd, but most contain less than 50 members. These tribes travel constantly, patrolling their individual territories and rarely meeting. When savage ork tribes encounter one another, they invariably fight to the death, ensuring that this breed of ork will die off within a few generations.

FINDING THE HOLD

After a few days or weeks of traveling through the lands of ancient Cara Fahd, the characters reach the spot indicated on Vanyk's map and find the Hold of Courage. Once the characters have found the Hold, go to the next section, **Into the Hold of Courage**.

Read the following aloud when the characters find the Hold:

You hack through the thick underbrush, glad of the heavy machetes that Vanyk suggested you purchase. Maddening swarms of insects buzz around your head, and a steady drizzle makes the footing slick. The heat tells you that the sun has risen above you, though its feeble rays can scarcely penetrate the thick canopy of the treetops. The going is slow, uncomfortable and wet.

Just when your aching arms can hardly hold up a blade any longer, you enter a patch of trees that seems all too quiet. You glance around nervously, watching for predators. Suddenly the jungle seems to part before you, giving way to a sunny clearing. At the center of the clearing lies a weathered, wooden, windowless building. Vines cover the long, low structure, but above the single door you notice a stone disk roughly five feet across, engraved with a crossed sword and axe.

Vanyk stands slack-jawed, for once almost unable to speak. "I ... this ... " Her voice drops as she says reverently, "We've found it. Just as it was described—the Hold of Courage."

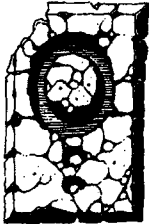
TROUBLESHOOTING

Little can go wrong here. The characters may start off in an unexpected direction, but with Vanyk to guide them, keeping them on track should be fairly easy. Take care not to stage encounters that seriously weaken the characters. If they fare badly in any conflict, slow them down and require them to rest and regain their strength.





INTO THE HOLD OF COURAGE



VIEW

In *Into the Hold of Courage*, the characters enter the Hold in hopes of learning the Blades' Rank 3 Key Knowledge.

SETTING THE STAGE

Before any of you can reach the door of the old building, Vanyk bars your way. "Wait. You can't walk into the sacred Hold of Courage as if it was a tavern or an inn. We must prepare ourselves to enter here." Having gotten your attention, she continues in tones so serious and reverent that you cannot ignore her words. "This place holds the wisdom of the ages and must be treated with respect. The lore I have read says that only the strongest can enter the Hold of Courage, and even they must first be sorely tested."

THEMES AND IMAGES

The characters have finally found the Hold, which they hope contains some answers. Give them a sense of an end drawing near, as well as a certain uneasy feeling. Sacred places can be dangerous, full of tricks and traps to catch unbelievers or others who do not belong.

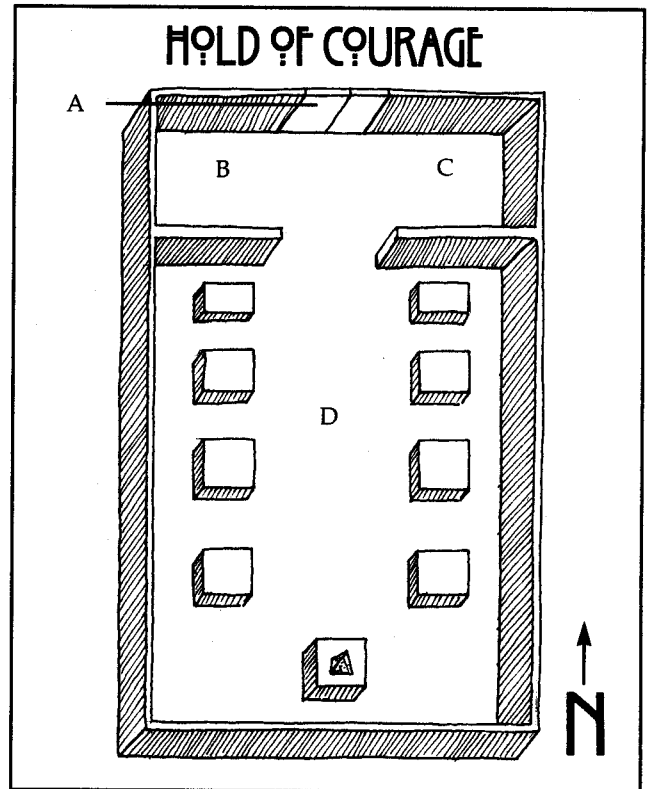
BEHIND THE SCENES

If any character is wounded, Vanyk allows no one to enter the shrine until everyone is healed. If this delay means that the party spends the night in the clearing, so be it. Vanyk believes what she has learned about the Hold and grows furious if anyone tries to contradict her.

When the characters are ready to enter the Hold, read the following aloud:

With everyone rested and at full strength, Vanyk tells you how to enter the Hold. "The legends say we go in one at a time, and none of us may watch the others enter. The testing of your courage is a private matter—if you fail, no one else will witness your shame. Remember that this is a sacred place—show it the honor it is due. Take nothing from here and leave a weapon for the souls of the warriors who lie here once you have learned what you came for."

Vanyk looks at each of you in turn, as if satisfying herself that you have understood. Then she sits down, leaving you to decide who will enter the Hold first.



THE HOLD OF COURAGE

The Hold of Courage is roughly fifty feet long by thirty feet wide. The ceiling is low and flat, a mere eight feet high. The Hold has a dirt floor, and the walls and ceiling are made of tough wood panels reinforced with iron bands. Miraculously, the vines that cover the walls on the outside have not rotted them away, and the steel bands remain clean of rust despite the pervasive moisture of the jungle climate. A set of heavy wooden doors covers the single entrance into the windowless building. Aside from the aforementioned stone disk, the building has no exterior or interior ornamentation. The soul-stones shed the only light inside; they give off a fiery red glow that provides enough light for all Name-giver races to see fairly well by.

During the Scourge, the unprotected Hold provided an easy target for the Horrors. The spirits of the dead trapped within the soul-stones gave the Horrors considerable nourishment and pleasure. Centuries of Horror-inflicted torture have made the spirits malevolent and vengeful, and they manifest and attack if awakened.





A. The Doors of the Strong

The builders of the Hold designed the Doors of the Strong to test the strength of those who wished to enter. To open the doors, each character must make a Strength (9) Test. An Average success or better enables the character to enter the shrine. Warrior, swordmaster, beastmaster, sky raider, or ork characters may spend 1 Karma Point on this test. If a character using Karma achieves a Good success or better, he regains the spent Karma as a mark of approval from the heroes represented inside the Hold. Every character may make two attempts to open the doors and enter the Hold.

Characters with the appropriate abilities may sense the ward placed on these doors as if it was a magical trap with a Detection Difficulty Rating of 22. However, they cannot dispel or disarm the ward. It is part of the Hold, and only the Hold's utter destruction will shatter the magic that prevents the weak from entering.

Assume that Vanyk is able to enter the Hold or roll dice for Vanyk's attempt to enter. If Vanyk's roll fails, she cannot enter the shrine and her failure crushes her. If she succeeds, the characters have quite a time getting her out of the Hold. Vanyk attempts to listen to stone after stone, trying to learn and remember everything she can. If desired, use her as a catalyst for the awakening of the vengeful spirits (*Spirits of the Past*, p. 49).

B. and C. Heroic Statues

These life-size statues of powerfully built male and female orks (B and C, respectively) stand in the antechamber in front of the Great Hall. The statues are clad in crystal armor and hold massive battle axes in a ready stance. Each statue's forehead has a small niche in it, large enough for a soul-stone. Placing a stone in the niche awakens the spirit of the hero linked to the soul-stone and allows the characters to briefly communicate with the hero's spirit. Unfortunately, this act awakens the spirits in all the stones, which attack the characters in unison.

D. The Great Hall

This long hall contains two rows of evenly spaced stone pedestals running down its length. The pedestals are roughly three feet high and firmly embedded in the ground, with carved wells spaced around their surfaces. The wells contain thumb-sized, glowing stones. These stone spheres light up the Hold well enough to see by, revealing that each pedestal also bears a pictogram. Several of the wells on each pedestal are empty, left unoccupied when Donack—the last survivor of the nethermantic order that built the Hold—died just prior to the Scourge.

The pedestal nearest the northwestern corner is decorated with a crude picture of an ork surrounded by rays that extend away from his body in a circular pattern. This pedestal contains the oldest of the ork heroes, some of whom lived more than two thousand years ago. The north-eastern-most pedestal and the next two to the south of it are engraved with the same pictogram—an ork in chains. The stones on these pedestals are the heroes who liberated the orks from slavery. The soul-stone of Hrak Gron, founder of the liberator Discipline (p. 59, *Denizens of Earthdawn Vol. II*), is among them.

The next pair of pedestals show orks shooting arrows at flying castles. These pedestals house the souls of the heroes who died fighting the Therans and their slave ships.

The southwestern-most pedestal shows an ork surrounded by nightmare shapes. The soul-stones on this pedestal are those of the orks who died fighting the Horrors at the beginning of the Scourge. There are few of them, as the bodies of orks who died battling Horrors were often unrecoverable. Without a body, the spell linking them to soul-stones could not be cast.

The southeastern-most pedestal, originally intended for the Seven Spokes, is empty. The pedestal features seven wells in a small oval, with lines connecting them to one another. An eighth well lies outside the oval but has no lines connecting it to the other seven. This well represents the eighth member, Horror-marked Kragen Overtall. The well also gives the characters a clue about the next Key Knowledge of the Blades.

At the far end of the Hold stands a slightly taller pedestal, with a stone pyramid on top of it. At the peak of the pyramid sits a single soul-stone—that of Donack, the last nethermancer of the Order of Courage. The stone pyramid is covered with runic carvings of the order's sacred symbol.

WAKING THE SPIRITS

Once all the characters who can do so enter the Hold, Vanyk explains how the soul-stones work. The characters must now determine which stone to speak to first. Unfortunately, the mere act of placing a soul-stone in either of the statues awakens the spirits in all the stones, which attack the characters. Go to *Spirits from the Past*.

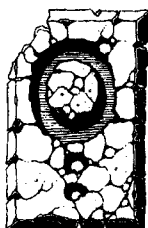
TROUBLESHOOTING

The only potential problem in this encounter occurs if all of the characters fail the Strength Test required to enter the Hold. If the characters seem inclined to waste too much time searching for the right stones, Vanyk can give them a few helpful hints—or try a stone herself and precipitate the spirits' attack.





SPIRITS FROM THE PAST



VERVIEW

In *Spirits from the Past*, the characters battle the awakened spirits trapped within the soul-stones. As they fight for their lives, the characters must also coerce the spirit of Donack, last nethermancer of the Order of Courage, to reveal the Name of the Blades' original owners, the Seven Spokes.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following passage assumes that one of the characters places the first soul-stone in the statue, thereby awakening the spirits. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly.

You pick up one of the glowing stones and carry it over to one of the statues near the Hold's entrance. As you place the stone in the statue's forehead, it begins to glow

more brightly, as do the other soul-stones. Within seconds, the light pouring from them becomes as fierce as a coal's heart. You can't look at the stones without squinting. As the glow intensifies, wisps of astral energy begin to rise from the stones. The wisps swirl around wildly as if driven by a storm wind and gradually begin forming ork-like shapes. The spirit of the stone you placed in the statue glares at you and bellows, "Betrayers! Torturers! We will have blood for the centuries of anguish you inflicted on us! In reparation for our torment, you will join us in death!"

As the angry spirit's words die away, all the astral orks move toward you, their dead eyes glowing red like flames.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Denial, frustration, and fear are the main themes of this encounter. The characters are very close to their goal, but a terrifying obstacle stands in their way. They need all of their strength and courage to surmount it.





BEHIND THE SCENES

By placing a soul-stone in one of the statues, the adventurers (or Vanyk) awaken all the spirits in the Hold. If Vanyk performs the deed, the specific stone she chooses is up to the gamemaster. Depending on how difficult the gamemaster wants to make this final encounter, Vanyk may choose either Donack's stone or another. Choosing Donack's stone makes the characters' lives easier, because they will not have to spend time interrogating spirit after spirit to find Donack's spirit.

THE SPIRITS ATTACK

The effects of corruption during the Scourge and the influence of Betrayer (in the Blades of Cara Fahd) drives the spirits of the long-dead ork heroes into a rage. The Scourge turned these once-noble souls into malevolent beings, and Betrayer has convinced them that the characters have betrayed and dishonored the Hold of Courage. The characters cannot stop the spirits from attacking. Their only hope of learning what they need to know is to defeat all the spirits and then ask questions or to obtain the information while the battle rages—without dying in the process, of course.

The Hold contains 15 soul-stones. All of the soul-stones' associated spirits attack the characters except for the spirit whose soul-stone is in the statue. This spirit cannot physically attack. However, it can resist or intimidate any character asking it questions.

ORK SPIRITS (15)

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 8 TOU: 7
PER: 6 WIL: 4 CHA: 8

Initiative: 10

Number of Attacks: (1)

Attack: 12

Damage: 13

Number of Spells: (1)

Spellcasting: 8

Effect: See text

Death Rating: 60

Wound Threshold: 15

Unconsciousness Rating: NA

Legend Points: 300

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Physical Defense: 10

Spell Defense: 9

Social Defense: 11

Armor: 5

Mystic Armor: 3

Knockdown: NA

Recovery Tests: 3

Combat Movement: 50

Full Movement: 100

Commentary

These spirits are the Horror-corrupted manifestations of the spirits trapped in the soul-stones. They attack by passing their non-corporeal bodies through the target's body, causing extreme physical pain and Step 13 damage. Mystic armor protects against this damage.

A spirit can also intimidate a character by making a Spellcasting Test against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the character is paralyzed with fear. To overcome the effect, the character must make a successful Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the result of the Spellcasting Test.

Fourteen of the fifteen spirits attack the player characters and Vanyk, usually in pairs. The spirits attack ork characters, including Vanyk, more aggressively than characters of other races because the spirits feel especially betrayed by their own people.

When any spirit takes damage equal to its Death Rating, it retreats into its soul-stone rather than be destroyed. Such spirits can no longer manifest or attack, but the player characters may place these spirits' soul-stones in one of the statues and force them to answer questions. If the soul-stone of an attacking spirit is placed in one of the statues, that spirit can only attempt to intimidate the characters—it can no longer physically attack them.

TALKING WITH THE SPIRITS

Though all the spirits have been awakened, the characters can attempt to speak only with the spirit of a stone placed in one of the statues. Be careful about the information the spirits provide. For example, the spirits should not be able to reveal the secrets of the **Earthdawn** universe (they don't know that much). If desired, use the spirits to drop hints about an upcoming adventure or two.

In addition to making the spirits malevolent, the corruption of the Hold of Courage has also made extracting information from them much more difficult. Under normal conditions, placing a stone in a statue's forehead causes the statue to announce the name of the spirit speaking and its affiliation with any group. The spirit then remains connected to the statue for the next few minutes, allowing petitioners to ask up to three questions before fading away. The corruption of the soul-stones, however, means that the characters must coerce information from the spirits.

To do so, a character must achieve an Extraordinary success on an Interaction Test (p. 237, ED) against the spirit's Social Defense. If the Interaction Test equals or exceeds the spirit's Social Defense but is not an Extraordinary success, the character has gotten the spirit's attention; this makes it easier to force the spirit to answer questions on subsequent tries. Each level of success adds 1 Step to the





character's Charisma (or appropriate Social talent) for subsequent tests. For example, a character who achieves a Good success on his first test adds 2 Steps to his Charisma (or to a related talent) when making subsequent tests. Once a character has achieved the necessary level of success, the spirit answers all three questions put to it. The character need not make a new test for each question. No spirit can speak through the statue more than once a week, and the soul-stone of a spirit that has spoken glows more dully than its counterparts until it is ready to speak again.

FINDING THE RIGHT STONE

The characters may ask any questions they like of the spirits, but only Donack's spirit knows that the Seven Spokes wielded the Blades. Other spirits may be able to answer other questions, but none know this Key Knowledge.

The characters may use several methods to discover that the soul-stone atop the pyramid is the one they need. If they examine the Hold carefully before placing any of the soul-stones in the statue, they may recognize the runic carvings on the pyramid as ancient ork for "Order of Courage." Alternatively, Vanyk may suggest the right stone because of its unusual placement in the Hold. If the characters do not initially select Donack's stone, they may notice that the spirits are making a special point of targeting characters closest to the pyramid. This might tip off the characters that the stone atop the pyramid is somehow significant.

When the characters place Donack's stone in a statue, they hear his ghostly voice say, "I am Donack, nether-mancer of the Order of Courage. What do you want of me?"

At this point, the characters must coerce Donack into answering their questions. Once they have done so, they need only ask who wielded the Blades of Cara Fahd. Donack replies, "The Blades were wielded by a group of two Names. They began as Cara Fahd's Protectors. After one of their number was lost to corruption, they re-Named themselves the Seven Spokes."

Donack's answer gives the characters the Key Knowledge they seek and provides a clue to the next Key Knowledge of the Blades. If the characters ask Donack about other Key Knowledges, he does not know the answers. The Names of the traitor and the Horror that corrupted him are both beyond Donack's knowledge.

Just after the spirit reveals the Name of the Seven Spokes to the characters, it realizes that they have brought the curse of the Blades of Cara Fahd into the Hold of Courage with them. Donack knows that the curse has irretrievably corrupted the Hold, and this knowledge enables him to momentarily overcome the rage brought on by

Horror-taint. Donack warns the characters to flee, saying, "Leave this place or you will die! The cursed Blades you carry have corrupted the Hold of Courage beyond even the ruin of the Scourge. Go now, and take the Blades with you!"

As Donack ceases speaking, the other spirits break off their attack and begin to fly in circles around the Great Hall. The realization that the Hold has been corrupted drives the spirits to destroy it rather than let it stand as a monument to the Horrors' power. Faster and faster they fly, turning their strength against the Hold and causing the building to shake violently. Spirits defeated by the characters re-emerge from their soul-stones and join in the assault on the Hold. The characters should get out as soon as possible, before the Hold implodes.

Escaping requires a successful Dexterity (7) Test. Each character may make only one test to escape. On a result of 4, 5, or 6, the character gets out but suffers Step 7 damage from flying debris. On a result lower than 4, the character trips or falls and is still in the Hold when it implodes. Any character in the Hold when it implodes suffers Step 18 damage. Armor provides no protection against this damage.

AFTERMATH

After the spirits have destroyed the Hold, they are free from the soul-stones. If the characters search the ruins, they find the fifteen stones. Each stone is worth 100 silver pieces and counts as treasure worth Legend Points. The characters may also find the top of the pedestal intended for the Seven Spokes, which may become part of the monument they are to construct (see *Loose Ends*, p. 52).

TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest challenge the characters face in this encounter is staying alive long enough to find the right soul-stone and learn the Key Knowledge. If the characters have difficulty finding the right stone, their best strategy is to try to defeat the spirits. If they manage to force all fifteen back into their soul-stones, the characters can then check out each spirit in relative safety. As described in **Finding the Right Stone**, once the characters have asked Donack about the Blades, all the spirits re-emerge from their soul-stones and destroy the Hold.

If the gamemaster wants to emphasize Betrayer's influence, he can have the Horror use Vanyk as an unwitting tool against the characters. For example, the troubadour may become convinced that the characters intend to steal the glory of discovering the Hold of Courage. In this case, Betrayer manipulates Vanyk into attacking one of the characters at a critical point in the battle, shouting that she alone will claim the glory of finding the long-lost Hold of Courage.





LOOSE ENDS



The information in this section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Grave Wisdom** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and provides statistics for major gamemaster characters.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

Grave Wisdom can end in three possible ways. First, the characters may learn the Name of the Seven Spokes and the Deed they must perform to weave the Rank 3 threads to the Blades. Second, the characters may be unable to figure out how the soul-stones work and never learn the Key Knowledge. Finally, the spirits of the Hold may destroy the characters. Using Vanyk to drop a few hints may prevent the second possible ending. The characters' own abilities and the dice rolls are the sole means of preventing the last possibility.

The Deed that the characters must perform is to construct a monument to the Seven Spokes at the site of the ork heroes' original home. When the characters leave the Hold, they discover that the Blades act as compasses, guiding them to the site of that home—a ruin some ten miles distant. Have the characters experience a minor encounter

or two along the way, but nothing that poses too great a threat. The characters may design the monument themselves, but make sure it is worthy of the Legend Point Award that the characters receive for building it.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award Legend Points for this adventure as described in the **Introduction**, p. 8. Specific awards are described below. The Adventure Award for **Grave Wisdom** is 1,250 Legend Points.

CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING AND HEROICS

Award Legend Points for creative roleplaying and heroics if the characters take any of the following actions. For all but the final award, only the first character to accomplish the goal earns the listed Legend Points.

Figuring out the approximate meanings of the pictograms in the Hold of Courage	100
Finding Donack's soul-stone	100
Realizing that Cara Fahd's Protectors contained eight members	100
Placing Vanyk's life ahead of their own/protecting her in a serious fight	100
Constructing the monument to the Seven Spokes*	800

*Each character earns the listed Legend Points for accomplishing this Deed.

DEFEATING CREATURES

Award Legend Points for defeating creatures/opponents in this adventure as shown on the table on p. 53. The table does not include Legend Points earned for battling any of the creatures in **Search for the Hold**, because the creature encounters described in that section are optional. Divide any Legend Points earned during these encounters among the characters.

TREASURE

The characters may obtain the soul-stones from the Hold of Courage, worth 100 silver pieces each.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

A single character who completes **Grave Wisdom** receives an average of 3,100 Legend Points. This assumes





CREATURE/OPPONENT AWARD TABLE

Creature/Opponent	6 Players	7 Players	8 Players
Spirits of the Hold (15)	4,500	4,500	4,500
Total	4,500	4,500	4,500
Award Per Character	750	640	560

seven players in a group and does not include points earned for battling opponents or finding treasure created by the gamemaster.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Statistics and a description of Vanyk Auldsinger, the sole major gamemaster character of the adventure, follow.

VANYK AULDSINGER

At 19 years old, the Third Circle troubadour Named Vanyk Auldsinger is already one of Barsaive's foremost experts on ancient ork history. She has devoted the past five years of her life to mastering her Discipline's information-gathering talents, researching the history of her race in every major library in Barsaive and spreading stories about the exploits of great orks of the past. She is dedicated to this task, though her hurried manner and quick, breathless speech often obscure her seriousness. Vanyk always appears to be in a rush, though she rarely fails to plan her actions carefully. She wants nothing less than to restore the glory of Cara Fahd and gladly helps the adventurers because she believes that doing so will help her attain her prized goal.

Vanyk is about 6 feet tall and weighs 160 pounds, making her unusually tall and slender for an ork. She is also physically weaker than most of her race because she has dedicated herself to learning rather than physical activity. This choice has earned her some less than kind comments from other orks, but every ork who hears her tales of Cara Fahd respects Vanyk for what she knows.

Vanyk wears her long black hair in tight braids down her back. Intricate tattoos surround her brilliant green eyes and descend to her cheeks. Vanyk claims the tattoos are ancient symbols of Cara Fahd and wears them proudly.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (9): 4/D6
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (15): 6/D10
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (15): 6/D10

Initiative

Dice: D8

Movement

Full: 75
Combat: 38

Damage

Death Rating: 46
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 36
Recovery Tests/Day: 2
Recovery Dice: D8

Combat

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Talents

Disguise (3): 9/D8 + D6
Durability (Troubadour) (2)
Emotion Song (3): 9/D8 + D6
First Impression (3): 9/D8 + D6
Item History (4): 10/D10 + D6
Karma Ritual (3)
Melee Weapons (3): 9/D8 + D6
Mimic Voice (3): 9/D8 + D6
Read and Write Language (4): 10/D10 + D6
 Cara Fahd (Ancient Ork)
 Ork
 Sperethiel
 Human

Skills

Artisan/Storytelling (4): 10/D10 + D6
Knowledge/Legends and Heroes (Ork) (3): 9/D8 + D6
Knowledge/Racial Lore (Ork) (7): 13/D12 + D10
Read and Write Language (Throalic) (4): 10/D10 + D6

Karma

Dice: 5/D8
Points: 15

Equipment

Adventurer's kit
Hardened leather armor
Short sword (Damage 8/2D6)
Traveler's garb
50-foot rope
2 weeks worth of rations





PRISONER



he vine has grown since yesterday, thought the creature. *All the vines have grown*. Moving restlessly back and forth, back and forth, the creature glanced over every crack and crevice in its tomb. How many years had it been locked within, sinking slowly into the dank swamp that sucked eagerly at its moldering crypt? The creature had lost count, but did not care. All it cared about was vengeance.

Greenish-black fire caressed the dark thing's hand as it lightly stroked the skeleton that lay in the open stone coffin. The bones had darkened with age, just as the creature's hatred had. Some day, some day it would be free to take its revenge, and then the grotesque tortures it had imagined—nurtured as carefully as a bed of prized flowers—would become real. Someone would suffer. Several someones ...

A small scratching noise drew the thing's attention away from the contemplation of its bones. A young swamp rat scuttled briskly through the mud that had seeped onto the floor of the crypt. Crouching down, the creature moved slowly toward the rat, tossing a choice piece of ancient sinew a few feet ahead of it.

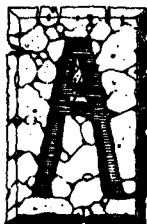
Casting a furtive glance between the tidbit and the strange, dark creature crouching above, the swamp rat made a quick decision. Scuttling forward, it snatched up the bit of food and turned to run. As the rat fled, the creature reached forward and brushed the rodent's tail lightly with a craggy finger. Sickly greenish-black sparks flared along the swamp rat's tail. Within the few seconds it took the rat to cross the small tomb, the dark fire climbed across the animal's back. With a puzzled squeak, the rat collapsed, writhing and shaking in agony. Then it gave a final shudder and lay still as the eerie fire flames flickered and faded into nothing.

The creature returned to contemplating its bones, dreaming of its revenge.





A TRAITOR'S FATE



Traitor's Fate takes the adventurers from the relative safety of a Barsaivian settlement into the dangerous depths of the Liaj Jungle. The adventure is best suited for a group of 6 to 8 players using Sixth or Seventh Circle characters. The particular nature of the characters' quest requires **A**

Traitor's Fate to be linear in structure, but feel free to add encounters and other obstacles to increase the difficulty or complexity of the adventure if desired.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

When the adventurers once again turn their attention to the Blades of Cara Fahd, they learn that one of the Blades' original wielders had been Horror-marked, and that this individual later betrayed his fellows at a critical juncture. The adventurers also learn that they must discover the traitor's Name before they can weave Rank 5 threads to the daggers.

As described in **Interludes**, the characters talk to a questor of Mynbruje, Jahnee Firebalm, to learn how they might discover the traitor's Name. Jahnee tells the adventurers that they must enter the southernmost portion of the Liaj Jungle, where they will find the traitor's burial place.

Jahnee also informs the characters that the daggers are still somehow connected to the dead traitor. He says this bond will enable the characters to use the daggers as lodestones to find their way to the traitor's tomb. Jahnee then places a waxen Seal of Truth on one of the daggers and demonstrates how it works.

Using the seal, the adventurers travel to the Liaj Jungle without mishap. Soon after entering the jungle, the adventurers stumble on a group of hungry lightning lizards and must fight for their lives. During the battle, several characters feel as if they are being watched—yet even the most thorough search reveals no one nearby.

As the adventurers press onward, following the tell-tale glow of the seal, all characters except the one actually holding the sealed dagger begin to drift eastward. They discover their directional difficulties relatively quickly, because the seal glows only when pointing north. Unknown to the characters, a small tribe of Tamers—Name-givers who have abandoned civilization for life in the jungle—are using their magic to lead the adventurers out of their jungle home.

However, the Tamers grow frustrated by their inability to confuse the characters, and they attack the party at dusk. Using blow darts and hand claws dipped in a powerful sleeping poison, the Tamers manage to subdue the adventurers. Dark-Light, the tribe's leader, informs the characters that they will be sacrificed at dawn for daring to enter the Tamers' territory. No amount of persuasion or threats will change Dark-Light's mind. The adventurers have only that night to live—in the morning they will meet their fates.

When the first rays of sunlight penetrate the canopy of leaves above, the adventurers can see around them a scene of horrible carnage. Someone or something apparently murdered every one of the Tamers during the darkest hours of the night. Once the adventurers free themselves and examine the area, they find Dark-Light propped against the trunk of a huge tree with her wrists sliced open. The characters realize that Dark-Light murdered her own people in an inexplicable fit of madness.

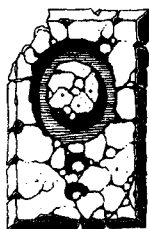
After leaving the scene, the adventurers travel to the makeshift tomb that houses the body of the long-dead traitor. When the adventurers enter the ancient crypt to search for signs of the traitor's Name, they learn that this ork does not rest in peace. The traitor's dark fetch (see **Cast of Characters**, p. 66) hovers over its skeleton, pleading with the adventurers to burn its bones and release it from its endless torment. Unknown to the characters, burning the bones will actually release the fetch from its imprisonment inside the crypt. If they do not release the fetch, they must defeat it in combat before they can search the crypt. Of course, if they free the fetch, the adventurers may well have to contend with it on more than one occasion.

When the characters search the crypt, they find a large silver medallion inscribed with the words, "Kragen Overtall, Traitor." With this information, the adventurers can weave Rank 5 threads to the Blades of Cara Fahd.





INTO THE WOODS



VERVIEW

This adventure begins as the characters enter the southern tip of the Liaj Jungle in search of the traitor's tomb. How long it has taken the adventurers to reach the jungle depends on how far the group has had to travel, as well as what encounters (if any) the gamemaster chooses to place between the adventuring party and their destination.

Within hours of crossing over the jungle's dark borders, the characters are attacked by a hungry pride of lightning lizards. During the battle, some of the adventurers feel as if they are being watched, but they find no evidence of watchers if they search the nearby area.

The following text assumes the characters have come to the Liaj Jungle after meeting with Jahnee as described in

Interludes (p. 20). If the characters learned that the Liaj is their destination in some other way, adjust the text accordingly.

SETTING THE STAGE

You have taken only a few steps beneath the twisting canopy of vines and leaves, yet already you have left the Barsaive you know. Light filters down to your level, green and weak, as if you were seeing it underwater. Even the air feels different here—moist and heavy, blanketing your lungs with every breath. Fragments of an old wives' tale come to mind, something about keeping three stones wrapped in silk close to your skin to draw the jungle diseases away from you. "Into the cold stone they'll go ..." someone told you that once, too many years ago to count. You laughed at it back then, but the tale seems less ridiculous in the quiet depths of the Liaj Jungle.





You walk slowly through the trees for several hours, following the dull glow of Jahnee's Seal of Truth. Your arms ache from clearing vines, and your lungs and head hurt from breathing the heavy air. Blinking, you stumble into a small clearing made by two gigantic trees that lie fallen and rotting in front of you. Your momentary relief at the absence of dangling vines gives way to a sharp dart of fear as you see more than half a dozen giant lizards, easily seven feet long from tip to tail, crouched all around the clearing. The great beasts stare unblinkingly at you and your friends, their eyes glittering coldly. Suddenly the closest lizard, its muscles rippling under its yellowish-green scales, leaps forward and attacks!

THEMES AND IMAGES

Emphasize the disturbing combination of growth and decay throughout the Liaj Jungle. Everywhere the adventurers look in this dark wilderness, plant life grows far more abundantly than in most other places on Barsaive. Despite its riotous growth, the Liaj Jungle is a gloomy place, with giant fungi and the moldering, plant-covered corpses of animals looming out of the earth as if they might attack unwary travelers.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventurers have run into nine very hungry lightning lizards (pp. 306–307, ED). The starving creatures attack the characters immediately, using their Twinbolts attack and Crackling Armor defense. If the characters kill more than half the lizards, the remaining lizards attempt to drag away one or more of their fellows' corpses to satisfy their raging appetites.

While the adventurers are fighting the lizards, make a Perception (18) Test for each of the characters. Any character who test succeeds at this gets the feeling that someone is watching the battle. Any character receiving an Good or better success catches a brief glimpse of a humanoid face peering intently through nearby vines. The adventurers are being observed by the Tamers, a small tribe of Name-givers who live in this part of the Liaj.

Once the adventurers drive off or kill the lightning lizards, they may search the surrounding area. Finding evidence of the Tamers' trail requires an Excellent success on a Tracking (25) Test. Any character who succeeds at this test discovers that the faint traces of the Tamers' path lead in the same general direction as the party is already heading. The characters meet the Tamers in the following encounter, **Tamer Touch**.



LIGHTNING LIZARDS (9)

Attributes

DEX: 6	STR: 5	TOU: 5
PER: 9	WIL: 12	CHA: 5

Initiative: 7

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 6

Damage: 7

Number of Spells: (1)

Spellcasting: 12

Effect: See pp. 306–307, ED

Physical Defense: 6

Spell Defense: 9

Social Defense: 7

Armor: 3

Mystic Armor: 4

Knockdown: 6

Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 38

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 65

Full Movement: 130

Legend Points: 150

Equipment: None

Loot: Eyes worth 150 silver pieces each. The eyes count as treasure worth Legend Points.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If necessary, adjust the number of lightning lizards so that they do not prove too easy or too difficult to defeat. If the lightning lizards seem to be beating the heroes, have the lizards fall greedily on the body of a fallen comrade, thereby giving the adventurers time to retreat from the clearing and work their way slowly around the lizards. Once they have done so, they may proceed toward their destination.





TAMER TOUCH



VIEW

In this encounter a tribe of Tamers attempts to lead the adventurers out of the jungle by magical means. The Seal of Truth's unwavering guidance foils these efforts, however, and so the frustrated Tamers ambush the adventurers. The tribesmen intend to capture the party and slay them ritually at sunrise for daring to enter the tribe's territory.

SETTING THE STAGE

The Liaj Jungle has displayed its treachery, and you can feel your nervousness rising as you forge ever deeper into the dense foliage. Concentrating on every step, you thread your way over countless vines and fallen branches, starting occasionally whenever something you thought was a vine slithers up a nearby tree trunk. Sweat drenches your skin, and tiny insects feast on your flesh. You plod onward, every step a greater effort than the last, when suddenly you notice that you are straying from your path.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The Liaj Jungle is a place of sudden dangers and swift judgment. Describe the jungle's forbidding details: the huge spider webs glittering with dew, the dark shapes of captured insects and small birds hanging limply amid the threads. Trusting one's senses is not always wise in the Liaj, for its tangles and mists and shadows all too often lead them astray.

BEHIND THE SCENES

A small tribe of Tamers has been tracking the adventurers since they first set foot in the Liaj. The Tamers wear few clothes, use few tools and rarely trade goods or services. Instead, they choose to live free like the animals of the jungle. A dark-haired human beastmaster named Dark-Light leads this tribe of humans and orks. Dark-Light ably handles most Name-giver intrusions into the Tamers' territory by using her skills to lead unwary strangers in circles until they emerge at the point where they entered the jungle.

Once the characters notice that they have begun to stray from their path, they can get back on track easily by watching the Seal of Truth on the Blade that they carry.

The seal glows only when pointing north, and this directional beacon keeps the adventurers from falling prey to Dark-Light's tricks. As Dark-Light realizes that this group of Name-givers will not fall for gentle persuasions, she grows frustrated and angry. Finally, after spending an hour or so attempting to confuse the adventurers' sense of direction, Dark-Light decides that these Name-givers are a special affront to the jungle. To atone for the insult of their resistance to her magic, they must be sacrificed to the spirits of the Liaj.

Dark-Light orders the Tamers to encircle the characters and attack on her signal. The Tamers attack with reed blowguns that fire thorn darts and with sharp claws strapped to their hands. Both types of weapons are dipped in a potent sleeping poison. The Tamers intend to subdue the characters rather than kill them outright and immediately cease attacking a fallen foe. They expertly hog-tie sleeping adventurers with ropes of woven vines.

Any adventurer who is wounded by a weapon coated with the Tamers' sleeping poison must make a Toughness (18) Test. If the character achieves an Excellent or Extraordinary success, the poison does not affect him. A Good success leaves the character groggy but still conscious; the character receives a -2 Step penalty to all actions. An Average success means that the character falls unconscious within 1-4 rounds, based on the gamemaster's discretion. If the test fails, the character falls unconscious immediately.

Because the Tamers move so swiftly and silently through their jungle home, characters must achieve Good or better successes on Perception (21) Tests to notice them. Otherwise, the characters are surprised by the Tamers' attack and may not attack in the Combat Round of the Tamers' initial strike. Surprised characters suffer standard penalties, and any Tamer who surprises his opponent receives a +2 bonus to his Attack step. The Tamers also possess the Surprise Strike skill, which they use in their initial assault. Throughout the fight, Dark-Light exhorts her followers to bring down the trespassing "adorners."

If the Tamers subdue all of the adventurers, they take their captives back to the Tamers' current camp. If the Tamers appear to be losing the fight, they retreat into the jungle and disappear. If the Tamers lose three or fewer tribesmen in the initial encounter, they attack the adventurers off and on throughout the day, attempting to use surprise and their familiarity with the terrain to catch the harried characters off balance.





DARK-LIGHT

Born and raised in the city of Jerris on the edge of the Wastes, Dark-Light was a pale, withdrawn and gloomy child. During her fourteenth year, Dark-Light met Arraphine, the elven beastmaster. When Arraphine spotted Dark-Light following her for hours through the gray streets of Jerris, mouth gaping at the three beautiful parrots perched on the elf's thin shoulders, she sent one of her birds flying to the child. Arraphine knew she had found an apprentice when Dark-Light instinctively raised her arm, offering it to the parrot as a perch.

Once Dark-Light formally began her apprenticeship, she and Arraphine left the dusty city behind. After only a few days away from the squalid, dead atmosphere of Jerris, Dark-Light began to change radically. The young girl bloomed like a wilted plant finally given enough light and water. Arraphine Named her apprentice Dark-Light then, for this sudden change in personality.

After spending several years traveling with Arraphine, Dark-Light finished her apprenticeship. She soon decided to journey to the Liaj Jungle, despite its fearsome reputation, in the hope of communing with the parrots native to it. Almost immediately Dark-Light met a tribe of Tamers, who magically led her out of the jungle more than once before she realized what was happening. Fascinated by their wildness and freedom, the young beastmaster chose to join them and leave the trappings of civilization behind.

Dark-Light is a pale-skinned human of medium build with black hair and eyes. She seldom appears without at least one bird perched on her shoulder or hovering near her head. Dark-Light has led her tribe of Tamers for more than five years and is a Fourth Circle beastmaster. She is an intense woman who has rejected Name-giver society to an even greater extent than most Tamers.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Initiative

Dice: D10

Movement

Full: 60
Combat: 30

Damage

Death Rating: 67
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 55
Recovery Tests/Day: 3
Recovery Dice: D12

Combat

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 9
Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 3

Talents

Animal Bond (4): 11/D10 + D8
Beast Weaving (5): 10/D10 + D6
Borrow Sense (4): 10/D10 + D6
Cat's Paw (4): 10/D10 + D6
Claw Shape (4): 13/D12 + D10
Durability (Beastmaster) (4)
Karma Ritual (4)
Tracking (5): 10/D10 + D6
Unarmed Combat (4): 10/D10 + D6

Skills

Artisan/Wood Carving (2) :9/D8 + D6
Knowledge/Creature Lore (3):8/2D6
Knowledge/Wild Animals (7): 12/2D10
Speak Language/Sperethiel (2): 7/D12
Surprise Strike (4): 10/D10 + D6

Karma

Dice: D8
Points: 14

Equipment

Blowgun
Fernweave Armor
Leaf Pouch
Sleeping Poison Paste (12 doses)
Tamer Claws (2) (Size 1, Damage Step 2)
Thorn Darts (6)

Karma Notes: Dark-Light may spend Karma Points on Recovery Tests or any Talent Test substituted for a Recovery Test.





TAMERS (12)

Attributes

DEX: 6 STR: 5 TOU: 6
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 4

Initiative: 7

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 7 (9*)

Damage: 7 (14*)

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 6

Armor: 0

Mystic Armor: 1

Knockdown: 5

Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 36

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Combat Movement: 30

Full Movement: 60

Legend Points: 100

Equipment: Reed blowguns, Tamer claws (2) (Size 1, Damage Step 2), Thorn darts coated in sleeping poison paste (6 each)

Loot: None

*All of the Tamers have the Surprise Strike skill at Rank 3. Use these numbers when the Tamers make their first attack.

Tamer claws: These sharp "claws" consist of sharpened bone fragments or actual animal claws woven together with thin rope or vines into long, open-fingered gloves. The glove is heavily padded on the forearm where the blunt end of the claws rest, to protect the wearer's arm from pressure damage when attacking with the weapon.

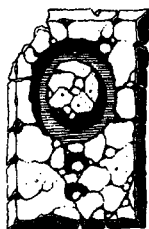
TROUBLESHOOTING

The adventurers are unlikely to defeat the Tamers in this encounter, especially because the Tamers are in their own territory and are using a potent poison. If the characters defeat or drive off the Tamers, skip most of **A Rude Awakening**, which describes the captured characters' plight, and have the adventurers stumble onto the horrifying scene described in **Deadly Dawn** (p. 62) after spending their first night nervously camped in the Liaj. Then go to **Dark Fetch**, p. 64.





A RUDE AWAKENING



INTERVIEW

In this encounter, the captured adventurers learn that the Tamers plan to sacrifice them at dawn to the spirits of the Liaj Jungle. At the end of a long and miserable night, the characters awake to absolute silence and a scene of horrific carnage.

After freeing themselves and investigating the area, the adventurers discover that during the night the Tamers' leader apparently went mad and slaughtered her entire tribe. Once the characters recover from the shock of this scene, they continue on their quest.

SETTING THE STAGE

If the characters were captured by the Tamers in the past encounter, read the following aloud:

After spending what seems like hours trying to figure out why your tongue feels three sizes too large for your mouth, you slowly become aware of a dozen or so mud-covered humans and orks standing over you. Their stares make your head ache. You wish they would leave you alone and let you sleep—but something deep inside warns you that sleep is not a good idea right now.

Flexing your limbs, you discover that someone has tied your hands and feet expertly behind your back. You can just feel your fingers and toes if you concentrate very hard, but struggling only tightens your bonds.

With fluid grace, a female human steps toward you. Her long dark hair, tied back in a muddy braid, swings as she moves. Her face fills your vision, the day's last light dancing in her dark eyes as she begins to speak.

"We warned you, but you would not leave. The Liaj is not like your world. You cannot wander through it at your will, building cottages and forcing the land to give you food, as Name-givers do outside these lands. You have trespassed, and trespassers must pay for their crime.

"As leader of the Footfalls, I claim the right of judgment over all who trespass in the southern Liaj. My judgment on you is this; you shall perish at dawn, split open by my claws. Your blood shall water the earth and do honor to the spirits of the Liaj. So speaks Dark-Light of the Footfalls—as I have spoken, let it be done!"

THEMES AND IMAGES

The sun's last rays cut briefly through the dense leaves and branches while this encounter takes place. Emphasize the fading light, which mirrors the adventurers' fading hopes of survival.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Dark-Light and the rest of the Tamers believe they are completely within their rights to sacrifice the characters at dawn. Though Dark-Light feels no particular animosity toward the heroes, she believes that they have offended the jungle spirits and chosen their own fate by entering the Liaj and then doggedly sticking to their path despite the Tamers' misdirections. The characters may try to persuade Dark-Light to change her mind, but she does not budge. Even if she develops a liking for the characters, she still carries out her judgment. Dark-Light has promised the interlopers' blood to the spirits of the Liaj, and she will not disappoint them.

The Tamers disperse into the trees when the sun sets, settling in for the night. Two guards remain to watch the characters, but the jungle's impenetrable gloom makes it impossible to see the sleeping Tamers. The adventurers may attempt to free themselves, but they are still extremely groggy from the sleeping poison and will not accomplish much. If the characters talk or struggle too much, one of the guards hits them with more poisoned darts from his blowgun. The characters find it virtually impossible to keep their eyes open for long despite their best efforts to stay awake—the sleeping poison is simply too strong to resist.

DEATH IN THE NIGHT

In the middle of the night Dark-Light is overcome by an irrational urge to slaughter her fellow Tamers. Though she does not realize it, this dreadful compulsion comes from Betrayer, the Horror within the Blades of Cara Fahd. Moving swiftly and silently, Dark-Light takes up a dagger from the pile of the adventurers' belongings (though not necessarily one of the Blades of Cara Fahd) and slits the throats of her fellows too quickly for any of them to cry out. She kills the two guards first, then murders the remaining Tamers. As the last one dies, Dark-Light comes to her senses, realizes what she has done and turns the knife on herself in horror.





The adventurers have no inkling that anything is amiss. If a character manages to remain awake, he sees Dark-Light beckon to the first guard, who disappears into the darkness with her. A minute or two later, the character sees Dark-Light whisper in the second guard's ear. As the two Tamers move a few steps away from the small clearing, the character can barely see the guard slump silently to the ground.

DEADLY DAWN

As dawn begins to lighten the jungle's dark heart, the characters awaken to utter silence. Even the insects and birds have ceased their continual noise, and the unnatural quiet lies like a blanket across the clearing. Though the characters do not yet realize it, they are the only living Name-givers within miles.

Eventually, the characters should attempt to free themselves. They are still slightly groggy from the sleeping poison, but it is no longer strong enough to affect their actions. With no one around to keep the characters from talking or taking action, they should be able to come up with a plan to free themselves in relatively short order. Once they have done so, they may reclaim their discarded property and explore the area.

As soon as the adventurers move a few feet into the jungle in any direction, they discover the butchered bodies of the slain Tamers, which lie scattered in a loose circle around the clearing.

When the characters discover the first body, read the following aloud:

Though the sun has risen past the horizon, deep shadows still lie across most of the jungle. Picking your way carefully across the gnarled roots of a giant tree in the green dimness, you notice what looks like a long, dark sap stain running down the trunk and into the earth. You give the stain a closer look—it is dark red, with a faintly sweet odor.

As your eyes follow the sap trail upward, your blood freezes. A young male Tamer lies draped across a wide branch some seven feet above the ground, staring sightlessly down at you. One arm hangs limp, stretched toward you as if beseeching you for aid. His skin is unnaturally pale, and a gaping neck wound grins in mute testimony to the cause of the young Tamer's death.

If the adventurers examine the young Tamer's body, they can tell that the boy's throat was slit from behind with a dagger or knife blade. If the characters examine the rest of the surrounding area, they find the rest of the tribe lying dead in and around the trees. All died from deep throat

wounds, and their faces are frozen in expressions of bewildered terror.

Finally, the characters discover the lifeless body of Dark-Light. Unlike the rest of the corpses, Dark-Light's body sits upright against the bole of a lightning-struck tree. Her neck is untouched, but the blade of a dagger has laid her wrists open to the bone. The still-damp ground is stained with her blood. Next to her lies one of the characters' daggers, the weapon she used to commit her hideous crimes.

It should be obvious to the characters that Dark-Light murdered her tribe and then turned the dagger on herself. However, they should have no idea why she would betray her people in this way. In the short time the characters observed her, nothing about Dark-Light hinted at this sort of dementia. Only later in the adventure, after the player characters have learned more about the Blades of Cara Fahd and the Horror that lies within them, should they guess the true cause of Dark-Light's madness.

The characters can do nothing for the dead Tamers. Whenever they are ready, the adventurers may resume their interrupted journey toward the traitor's tomb.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Once captured and subdued by the Tamers, the characters can do little to free themselves. The Tamers immediately administer more sleeping poison to characters who seem in any shape to attempt escape. Intelligent characters may feign more grogginess than they feel and attempt to escape during the night. If any succeed, keep the adventure on track by having the adventurers escape just after Dark-Light slays her tribe. If the adventurers attempt to sneak away from the clearing before dawn breaks, they should stumble over one of the fresh corpses.

If desired, Dark-Light may bolt away in shock at what she has done instead of killing herself. Though Horror-marked, Dark-Light is otherwise in control of herself. At some later point in the adventure, have the player characters run into Dark-Light again. By then they should realize what prompted her horrible act, and they should feel obliged to help the haunted beastmaster who now shuns the jungle and all its creatures.







DARK FETCH



VIEWVIEW

After working their way slowly through the Liaj Jungle for another tiring day, the adventurers finally reach the traitor's tomb approximately an hour before sunset. Entering the tomb proves relatively easy, but once inside the adventurers must confront the traitor—who has become a dark fetch—before they can search the tomb and discover the traitor's Name.

SETTING THE STAGE

For the past few hours the Seal of Truth has grown steadily brighter until it shines like a star in the jungle's shadowy depths. It leads you onward, ever closer to your destination. Ducking under the twisting, arched roots of several giant trees, you emerge into another clearing about twenty yards across. Nearly half of it is a moss-covered swamp smelling faintly of tar.

On the far side of the clearing lies a small building, half-sunk in the mire. Ropy vines and dark moss lie across its darkly mottled stone slabs like giant spider webs. Judging by its size and shape, the building appears to be a crypt. You point the dagger at the tomb, and the seal glows as bright as a small sun.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Loneliness and loss permeate this encounter. Although the fetch is dangerous and evil, it is nevertheless a pitiful creature. Trapped for centuries in utter isolation, continually reminded of its betrayal, the fetch and its tomb have rotted as the jungle grew up around them. Instill a sense of pity for the fetch's plight in the characters, even though the fetch may horrify them.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Once the characters pick their way across the vine-covered clearing, they can study the tomb's entrance more closely. The door is carved from the same unusual stone as the rest of the building. A bas-relief in its center depicts a brawny ork with a deformed tusk growing through his upper lip. The ork holds out his hands, palms up—they are clean, with no lines or marks on them. After seeing this image, any character who achieves a Good or better success on a Knowledge/Ork Lore (12) Test realizes that the carv-

ing is an ancient ork symbol for a traitor in word and deed. The deformed tusk piercing the lip represents treacherous speech, and the unlined palm represents the worthlessness of a treacherous act.

The door of the crypt is unlocked. However, the crypt has sunk a few inches into the mire and opening the door takes some effort. After clearing away the muck and struggling with the heavy door for a few minutes, the characters should be able to swing it open. The air inside the tomb is fetid, heavy with the smell of swamp gas. Five low, broad steps lead down into the small chamber beyond the entrance.

When the characters enter the tomb, read the following aloud:

The tomb is cramped, no more than fifteen feet square. A large, lidless stone coffin covers most of the left wall, raised a few feet off the floor of the chamber. Several inches of muck and stagnant water blanket the floor of the tomb. Given another century or two, the entire building might sink forever under the muck.

As you stand and gaze at this dispiriting tableau, the muck begins to churn at the far end of the tomb. A shadowy creature, rimed in mud and rotting leaves, rises up from the waste and favors you with a sickly grin. It looks vaguely like an ork—an ork made of fire and shadow.

The creature hisses at you, dank water dribbling over its tusks. "Well met, fellow heroes! Free me from this rotting tomb and I will well repay your kindness!"

The strange creature is Kragen Overtall, the long-ago traitor whose tomb the adventurers have been seeking. Kragen could not rest easily in death, and his spirit has become a dark fetch. Tired of being trapped for centuries in his tomb, Kragen desperately wants to escape so that he might wander once more through Barsaive, hunting down the descendants of his former comrades. Kragen can only escape his prison by persuading a living being to burn his skeleton to ash. The bones lie moldering in the stone coffin, and Kragen is eager to show them to the adventurers.

Kragen is not stupid, and he does not tell the characters any truths about himself (including his Name, of course). Kragen may offer to tell the characters his Name if they promise to release him—however, he intends to make up a name rather than give them the real one. If Kragen lies to the characters, the Seal of Truth senses the lie through the dagger's mystic bond to the dead ork. This bond causes





the seal to crack at each lie, and the seal breaks if Kragen tells a third untruth. If the adventurer holding the dagger notices the cracking, he may realize that the fetch is lying.

Kragen tries several different tactics on the player characters in search of one that works. Among other things, Kragen contends that he is no traitor. Instead, he claims to have been betrayed by those he thought were his friends. Now, he says, all he wants is to sink into the sweet oblivion of death—but he cannot achieve this release unless some compassionate Name-giver burns his bones to ash.

Kragen promises anything to the characters if they agree to first burn his bones. He will not tell the characters his Name before they burn the bones, as he does not trust anyone to keep a bargain. If the adventurers burn Kragen's bones, he cackles at them gleefully as he leaves the crypt to search for his comrades' descendants. He leaves behind a faint trail of fetch-fire as he goes. If this occurs, the adventurers should realize they have let a dangerous being loose upon Barsaive's ork population and should try to stop the fetch if possible.

If the adventurers do not fall for any of Kragen's promises or pleas, the fetch grows increasingly angry until he begins to threaten the characters. If the adventurers still do not yield, Kragen attacks them in a fit of rage. Kragen will fight until he wins, the adventurers retreat from the tomb or until he is "killed." For Kragen's game statistics and descriptions of his abilities, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 67.

If the heroes manage to dispatch Kragen, they may search the crypt. The information they seek lies under a thin layer of muck beside the coffin's base, on a large silver medallion that once lay atop the coffin. Once cleaned off, the medallion clearly reads: "Kragen Overtall, Traitor." Once the characters have read the Name of the traitor, they can weave Rank 5 threads to the daggers.

Except for the information the adventurers seek, the tomb contains little of value. Because of its age and size, the medallion is worth roughly 300 silver pieces and counts as Treasure worth Legend Points.



TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest problem in this encounter occurs if the characters cannot defeat Kragen. However, the adventurers have one major advantage: the fetch cannot follow them outside the tomb. Unless the characters refuse to retreat when pressed, they are unlikely to find themselves in a life-threatening position.

If the characters agree to burn Kragen's bones, let them. Once Kragen has swept off on his mission of destruction, the adventurers should be able to find the medallion. However, they have loosed a dangerous creature on the world—not an act they should be proud of, and one they should eventually take responsibility for.





LOOSE ENDS



his section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **A Traitor's Fate** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and provides statistics for Kragen Overtall in his dark fetch form.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

If the characters successfully reach Kragen's tomb, defeat the dark fetch and find the medallion with his Name on it, they learn the Rank 5 Key Knowledge of the Blades (the Name of the Seven Spokes' betrayer—Kragen Overtall).

If Dark-Light is kept alive (**A Rude Awakening**, p. 62), the adventurers may run into the unfortunate woman some time in the future. If so, they find Dark-Light a shadow of her former self, living on the streets of one of Barsaive's larger cities or otherwise clinging to life by her fingernails. If the adventurers want to help Dark-Light, they must convince her that the slaughter was not entirely her fault, a task that involves taking her to an ancient shrine of healing and purification.

If the adventurers promised Jahnee Firebalm to aid the next questor of Mynbruje who asks them (**Interludes**, p. 22), the gamemaster may use this promise to send the players off on an adventure whenever such an encounter best suits his campaign.

If the characters freed Kragen Overtall's fetch, within a few months they hear tales of a creature fitting Kragen's description terrorizing numerous ork settlements and murdering several innocent orks. These reports continue until the adventurers hunt Kragen down and stop him once and for all.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award Legend Points as described in the **Introduction**, p. 8. Specific awards are described below. The Adventure Award for **A Traitor's Fate** is 1,750 Legend Points.

CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING AND HEROICS

Award characters Legend Points for taking any of the following actions:

CREATURE/OPPONENT AWARD TABLE

Creature/Opponent	6 Players	7 Players	8 Players
Lightning Lizards (9)	1,350	1,350	1,350
Tamers (1 per player)	600	700	800
Kragen Overtall	3,280	3,280	3,280
Total	5,230	5,330	5,430
Award Per Character	870	760	680

Respectfully agreeing to Jahnee's request	50
Escaping from the Tamers without being caught	100
Escaping from the Tamers during the night	50
Deciphering the meaning of the symbol on the tomb's door	50
Refusing to burn Kragen's bones	100
Burning Kragen's bones and freeing the dark fetch	-100

DEFEATING CREATURES

Award Legend Points for defeating creatures and opponents in **A Traitor's Fate** as shown on the Creature/Opponent Award Table.

TREASURE

The only treasure that the characters may gain in this adventure are the eyes of the lightning lizards (worth 150 silver pieces each) and the silver medallion in Kragen's tomb, worth 300 silver pieces. These treasures are worth a total of 3,000 Legend Points, to be distributed among the characters.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

A single character who completes **A Traitor's Fate** receives an average of 3,140 Legend Points. This average assumes 7 players in a group and does not include points earned for battling additional opponents or for finding treasure created by the gamemaster.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Cast of Characters provides information and game statistics for Kragen Overtall in his dark fetch form. If necessary, modify the statistics or create new characters to better suit your players and campaign.





KRAGEN OVERTALL (DARK FETCH)

Attributes

DEX: 13 STR: 12 TOU: 15
PER: 14 WIL: 21 CHA: 7

Initiative: 14	Physical Defense: 19
Number of Attacks: 2	Spell Defense: 14
Attack: 15	Social Defense: 12
Damage: 13	Armor: 2
Number of Spells: 1	Mystic Armor: 7
Spellcasting: 20	Knockdown: NA
Effect: See below	Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 80 (see Commentary)

Wound Threshold: 20	Combat Movement: 38
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune	Full Movement: 75

Powers: Fetch-Fire (see Commentary)

Karma Points: 10 Karma Step: 5

Legend Points: 3,280

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

The dark fetch is a particularly vicious undead creature, created when a Name-giver dies while committing a grievous act of betrayal or before completing an important act of revenge. Under such circumstances, the Name-giver's burning hatred makes his spirit cling to the physical world, trapping the individual's consciousness in his dead body.

Once the dark fetch's body decomposes, the monstrosity arises in a new, semi-incorporeal body. However, until its bones are burned to ash or otherwise completely destroyed, the dark fetch cannot leave its burial chamber (or stray more than thirty feet from its body, if outside). If a fetch's bones are destroyed, it may roam the land freely.

All dark fetches burn with the desire for revenge against those they hate. The extent of such hatred varies, and the object of hatred may range from a single individual to an entire race of Name-givers. Once dark fetches have exacted their revenge, they often dissipate and truly die. However, some fetches re-focus their hatred on other objects rather than dying.

When a dark fetch has taken damage equal to its Death Rating, it does not die. Instead, it temporarily dissipates, and its essence returns to its bones for 1 to 4 days. To



kill a dark fetch, one must force it to dissipate and then bury its bones separately. The burial pattern must form a mystic sigil of closure, and all the buried bones must be separated by a distance of a human arm's length or greater.

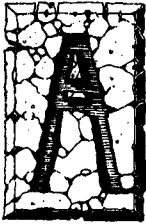
Dark fetches most often attack by striking at their opponents with fetch-fire, a half-incorporeal substance that fetches are made of. The fetch infects an opponent with fetch-fire by making a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the baleful green-black flame—which sometimes surrounds the fetch in a hideous nimbus—crawls onto the character and begins to eat away his flesh, causing 2 points of damage per Combat Round. No type of armor protects against this damage. Fetch-fire lasts for up to 10 rounds before dissipating, unless the fetch is driven back to its bones (in which case the fetch-fire dissipates immediately). Fetch-fire can only be put out by touching it with True Water.

In addition to fetch-fire, the dark fetch may attack by willing its arm to become temporarily corporeal. A fetch attacking an opponent in this manner can rend the target with its long nails, doing Step 13 damage.





NIGHTMARES



Asmersious felt colder than the rock that surrounded him. *The Dreaming should not be like this*, he thought. *Something is not right.*

An evil laugh rolled through the Liferock. More tactile than audible, the presence Asmersious felt was not that of the brotherhood. The obsidiman's unease deepened into dread. Something was terribly wrong, and he did not know what to do.

An impulse to Dream more deeply crossed his mind, filled it as a shout fills the air. Such individual thought should be almost impossible at this point in the Dreaming, yet Asmersious's mind rang with echoes: *Deeper. Must Dream deeper.* He reached forward through his Liferock, grasping at the weak, wispy spirits of the brotherhood whose presence felt so strangely dim. As he cast his spirit toward them, they slipped away like smoke in the wind.

Suddenly Asmersious felt a crushing weight pressing on him from all directions. The brotherhood vanished; nothing remained but the hard, cold presence of the Horror. Even as Asmersious recoiled, the Horror surrounded him, opening his mind like a delicacy. The tortured cries of his devoured brothers filled his being, and his own screams echoed through the Liferock.

High in the Tylon Mountains, a cold wind blew. It sounded like crying.

Asmersious roused himself from his troubled Dreaming, his mind cloudy and full of holes. Something was happening deep within his Liferock—something dark, foreboding, calling him to action.

Snow draped the ground like a heavy, wet cloak, and the icy air carried muffled sounds too distant to identify. Then he saw the nearby footprints. Five or six pairs of boot-shod feet at least, leading around the Liferock to a fissure into which the walkers had doubtless descended. Asmersious drew closer and heard cries echoing up from the heart of the Liferock. For an instant, the thought "When?" emerged from one of the holes in his memory, but a wave of disorientation washed it away. Asmersious fought to stay conscious. As his vision cleared, he began picking his way carefully into the crevasse.

Deep within the fissure, Asmersious heard harsh shouts and the clash of blades. He hurried forward and saw a band of ork warriors standing in a ring, their backs together as they battled six obsidimen. The obsidimen glowed, as darkly luminous as the Liferock they had sprung from. His brothers, yet Asmersious did not recognize them.

"Defilers!" Asmersious cried, leaping toward the glowing obsidimen and swinging his bare fists in all directions. He felt a burning pain in his flank, and his vision blurred again. He reached toward the brother nearest to him and grasped the shiny barb of a Horror-spawned creature. It stood where his brothers had been, black and sleek and grinning. "By the Passions, forgive me," he cried as he fell, succumbing to the darkness that collapsed on him like a boulder.





WITH AN AXE IN HAND



With an Axe in Hand takes the adventurers to the Tylon Mountains in search of an obsidian Liferock that they believe holds the Rank 7 Key Knowledge of the Blades—the Name of the Horror that killed the Seven Spokes. The Horror’s Name is Betrayer. **With an Axe in Hand** is intended for a group of six to eight players using Seventh to Eighth Circle adept characters.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

As described in **Interludes** (p. 22), the characters have discovered that they can learn the Name of the Horror at the site of a Liferock that Betrayer allegedly corrupted. This Liferock sits near the top of a peak in the Tylon Mountains.

Shortly after Cara Fahd’s Protectors caught and killed Kragen Overtall, the remaining members of the group created a new group pattern and re-Named themselves the Seven Spokes. Once they had destroyed the eighth Blade that had belonged to Overtall, the Spokes believed themselves safe from the Horror. Betrayer allowed them to believe in the illusion of their success. The Horror plotted to plague the Seven Spokes again at a later time and focused its attentions elsewhere.

For its new target, Betrayer chose a Liferock near its lair, deep beneath the Tylon Mountains near the Great Dome of House Ch’elasmo. The Horror found it easy to mark one of the brotherhood, who eventually returned to his Liferock. The marked obsidian’s return allowed Betrayer to extend its influence throughout the obsidimen in the Liferock. As the Horror’s corruption spread, the Liferock called out to its brotherhood in a desperate search for salvation from the Horror’s power. For many years the obsidimen of the tainted Liferock returned to merge with it, only to become corrupted themselves.

After some time, Betrayer turned its attention once again to the Seven Spokes. Slowly and subtly, it influenced events around the orks. Using its connection to

them through the Blades of the Cara Fahd, the Horror caused suffering and death to others while leaving the orks to witness the effects of their presence. The Seven Spokes soon recognized the handiwork of the Horror that had marked their companion Kragen Overtall, and they decided to take action.

Using the Horror’s magical ties to the Blades, the Spokes eventually located Betrayer in the Tylon Mountains. As they made their way closer to the Horror, Betrayer’s powerful influence drew them toward the tainted Liferock. The Seven Spokes reached the Liferock, where





they encountered and fought obsidian-based Horror constructs. During the battle, an obsidian Named Asmersious emerged from the Liferock to find his corrupted brethren fighting the orks. Asmersious summoned all his strength to fight alongside the orks and save his Liferock, but the Horror's taint had touched him too. He swiftly succumbed to injuries and then fell into a blind, delusional fury fueled by the Horror. The Seven Spokes managed to trap the raging obsidian beneath a boulder in a crevasse, where he eventually lapsed into hibernation and has lingered on the verge of death ever since.

Then the Horror revived its constructs and sent them again into battle. The Seven Spokes retreated, realizing that the Horror they sought was elsewhere. Much later, when the ork heroes destroyed Betrayor's body and split its spirit into the pattern of the Blades, the Horror's power waned. Its obsidian constructs merged with the tainted Liferock in a corrupted mockery of the Dreaming, where they remain until the player characters arrive.

During their journey toward the corrupted Liferock, the characters have the chance to stop in several small villages. If the characters do so, they meet normal people going about their daily business, seemingly tranquil and undisturbed. Every night that the characters spend in these villages, however, the residents suffer through gruesome nightmares. Some begin sleepwalking and even acting out their nightmares, which often involve bladed weapons. These dreams come from Betrayor, who is

using the conduit of the Blades to prey on the hidden desires and fears of the village residents. As long as the characters remain in a town, the problems intensify. They can help the tormented villagers only by leaving.

The characters eventually find the Liferock, adorned with traditional obsidian ornamentation. They also find

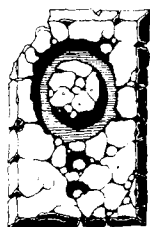
the crevasse the Seven Spokes forced Asmersious into, although snow obscures the fissure. On discovering the hibernating Asmersious, the adventurers free him and carry him to the surface. After five days he awakens. Though his mind is nearly gone and he is close to death, he remembers his encounter with the Seven Spokes and mistakes the characters for them. The characters should be able to tell from the obsidian's ramblings that something has driven him mad. Before they can learn anything from the obsidian, however, the characters must deal with the remnants of the Liferock's corrupted brotherhood. The presence of the Blades awakens them, and they attack in mindless rage. After the battle, Asmersious divulges the Name of the Horror, providing the characters with the Blades' Rank 5 Key Knowledge.

When the heroes make their triumphant descent down the mountain, they once again pass through the villages they encountered along the way. This time the scene is not so benign. Buildings have been burned, fresh graves dug, and bladed weapons stolen or broken. The once-friendly villagers have turned suspicious and hostile. The characters should realize that their presence triggered this terrible destruction.





PROSPEROUS TO A DEGREE



INTERVIEW

The adventure begins when the characters arrive at the foothills of the Tylon Mountains. On their way toward the corrupted Liferock, the characters encounter the three villages mentioned by the troubadour in *Interludes* (p. 24). As the characters

interact with the villagers, Betrayer instigates acts of betrayal among the people.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following text assumes that the characters have come to the Tylon Mountains after meeting with Senog as described in *Interludes*. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly.

From the Axe in Hand, you head for the open road toward the Tylon Mountains. According to the tales Senog told you, the Horror that plagued the Seven Spokes amused its infernal self for a time sowing betrayal among the brotherhood of a Liferock on one of the Tylon peaks. The Liferock may hold the key to the Name of the Horror, the knowledge you must have to bring alive the power in the Blades of Cara Fahd.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The prosperity of Smallstream and its sister villages provides a welcome contrast to the days on the trail and the den-of-thieves atmosphere around Kratas (see *Interludes*). The characters see renewal and rebuilding, all the more precious in the wake of the Scourge. The pregnant woman nearly ready to give birth and the fertile, well-tended fields are appropriate symbols of the potential this village and the others hold.

BEHIND THE SCENES

It is a three-day walk from the Axe in Hand to the village of Smallstream. Along the way the gamemaster may arrange minor encounters with brigands, ork scorchers, slavers, or any other plausible opponents. Keep in mind, however, that the characters' objective is the corrupted Liferock, so one or two encounters should be sufficient.

During their journey up into the Tylon Mountain range, the characters also encounter the villages of Smallstream, Cliffstone, and Ridge. Senog named these

villages as landmarks on the way to the corrupted Liferock, so give the adventures opportunities to stop in them to rest along the way. As they spend a night in each village, Betrayer takes its chance to use the residents as pawns in its growing struggle for power. Betrayer begins by playing on the locals' hidden desires and jealousies, causing the village folk to act them out in nightmares.

SMALLSTREAM

The characters reach Smallstream first, sometime in the late afternoon. The villagers are surprisingly trusting of strangers and welcome the characters.

When the characters approach the village of Smallstream, read the following aloud:

You have spent the better part of three days on this dusty path—too small and ill-kept to be called a road—but you seem no closer to the Tylon peaks. The mountains' eerie spires loom far beyond you, and the small village named by Senog as your landmark has yet to appear on the horizon. A village by a stream, he told you—find the village of Smallstream and then follow the waterway deeper into the mountains. Thus far, however, you have seen no settlements and no streams—not even anything large enough to be called a brook.

Just as you begin to wonder if something has turned you in the wrong direction, you clear the top of a hill and see before you a peaceful settlement stretched along the bank of a creek. Smallstream at last, if Senog's directions were correct. As you draw nearer to the settlement, you marvel at how few houses it contains—a mere six, surrounded by well-tended fields. A woman pulling weeds looks up from her work, sees you, and stares in wonder. As she stands up, you see that she is pregnant. She gives you a timid smile and nod of greeting, then picks up her trowel and heads back toward the cluster of huts, beckoning you to follow.

Meeting the Villagers

Smallstream is scarcely a village, but its few inhabitants are making a life for themselves. They do not receive many visitors, and so they are eager for news of the outside world. Hopeful curiosity, tempered with caution, prompts them to welcome the adventurers with minimal suspicion. In exchange for news, they share what they have with the characters.





The six families of Smallstream each include several children ranging from 2 to 15 years old. The Fielder family commands the position of highest respect in the community. Any town resident tells the characters that the Fielders were the first to coax the surrounding land to bear crops. Pon and Mara Fielder are expecting another child soon, which will bring their brood to eight.

PON FIELDER

DEX: 5 STR: 6 TOU: 6
PER: 4 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

MARA FIELDER

DEX: 5 STR: 5 TOU: 6
PER: 4 WIL: 3 CHA: 4

Once the characters have met the villagers, they are treated to a modest meal and offered shelter by the elderly village healer, known to one and all as Grandma. Out of respect, her fellow villagers built Grandma her own hut. She offers the characters a place to sleep in the dwelling.

After the characters turn in for the evening, read the following aloud:

You open your eyes to blackness and the sounds of frantic sobbing. Pon's low voice, strained and tense, carries softly from the doorway: "Grandma, come quick—Mara's before her time! Something's wrong!"

Lantern light flashes briefly. Grandma grabs a walking stick and bundle propped by the door, then slips out into the night. As the door of the hut swings slowly closed, you hear Mara's panicked cry: "Pon, hurry!"

Grandma rushes across the trampled yard between her hut and the Fielders' with surprising agility. "Pon," she calls over her shoulder, "take these children out of here." She gently herds the Fielder children out of their hut—before they can do more than blink and rub their sleepy eyes, the neighbors gather them up and take them inside for the night.

Pon creeps toward his front door, trying to catch a glimpse of his wife. He jumps back as Grandma's stick pokes out of the doorway just about where his belly would have been. "Out, I say! I'm busy in here," snaps Grandma, and Pon hangs his head like a shamed child. He sits down a little way from the door and wraps his arms around his knees. You almost want to laugh, but the lost look on Pon's face and Mara's frightened cries are enough to sober everyone.

When the characters awake in the night to Mara's cries, they may assume at first that she has simply gone into labor. If they look in on her, they immediately learn

otherwise. Across her abdomen is a shallow, ugly slash, apparently made by a knife or dagger. The wound is bleeding and obviously painful, but not fatal.

The trauma of the apparent stabbing sends Mara into premature labor, and Grandma keeps everyone out of the hut so she can work. This gives the characters time to question Pon about what happened. He says he heard Mara cry out and fetched Grandma thinking that the baby had arrived a bit early. On his return, he discovered that his wife had been cut. Pon is very frightened and mutters about evil omens.

If the characters search the area around the hut, they find a freshly blooded knife thrown or carelessly dropped in a patch of tall grass. The knife belongs to Pon. Though he does not realize it, Pon has fallen victim to Betrayer's influence. The Horror tapped into his anxiety about the upcoming birth and the pressure of providing for the child, and Betrayer used Pon's anxiety to create a vicious nightmare in which the villager slashed his own wife with his hunting knife. Pon is terrified by the dream but does not believe that he actually committed the act. If pressured by the characters, he might tell them that he dreamed "a man" came into the hut and cut Mara. He is too ashamed of his own secret feelings to admit that "the man" was himself.

As dawn breaks, a baby girl is born to the Fielders. They name the baby after any adventurer who showed interest in or kindness to the family, in hope of giving the child a bit of good luck (even if doing so results in the girl having a male name).

Mara is very weak and cannot tell the characters anything if they ask her about the attack. Pon keeps himself very busy tending the new baby, the other children, and the fields. Grandma believes the event is an evil omen and doesn't want to talk about it. She gently suggests that the characters stop by to see the family on their return journey, when Mara and the baby are a bit stronger. If the characters stay in the village, the nightmares get worse for all the families and more, similar incidents occur.

If the characters ask about the village of Cliffstone—the next landmark on their route—no one knows anything. The folk of Smallstream don't have time to go exploring, and the people of Cliffstone prefer to have no contact with others.

CLIFFSTONE

Two days' walk from Smallstream lies the village of Cliffstone, a place less welcoming to strangers than Smallstream.

When the characters arrive at Cliffstone, read the following aloud:





The walk from Smallstream leads you through the foothills along the creek, through rocky, lightly forested land and up a gentle slope. After two days at an easy pace you can see what must be the village of Cliffstone—a little grouping of huts at the foot of a cliff. A waterfall cascades over the cliff edge, showering the surrounding land with rainbow-hued mist and filling the air with its music.

The village looks empty—perhaps the inhabitants are out doing their daily chores. You see no fields, though someone has set a fish trap of sorts across the river. As you walk closer, you feel the hot burn of unseen eyes on you. Suddenly a voice echoes off the cliff wall: “Stop there, strangers! What business do you have here?”

Meeting the Villagers

The isolated village of Cliffstone is all that remains of an old kaer site. The inhabitants fear the outside world and the corruption it might bring, and so they keep to themselves. Unable to farm the rocky soil nearby, they hunt, fish, and gather wild plants. Most of Cliffstone’s residents care little about treasure or the world outside the mountains, but a few townsfolk are keenly interested in sharing stories and legends with anyone who can swap tales.

Trawet is the town elder, a thin troll with a reedy voice that makes him sound as if the life has been squeezed out of him. Most of the villagers are humans and trolls. Trawet greets the adventurers suspiciously and from a distance, asking them where they are going, what business they have

with Cliffstone, and so on. A charismatic adventurer or a troubadour who can swap old stories with Trawet might win him over, but the troll is not impressed with talk of saving Barsaive or anything else so outside his familiar world. Talk of Horrors makes him visibly uncomfortable. Before inviting the adventurers within the circle of huts to meet the other villagers, Trawet looks each of them in the eye and makes them promise to bring no harm to the village.

If the characters spend the night in Cliffstone, its people suffer restless sleep and nightmares. Their nervousness about outsiders is ripe for exploitation, and Betrayer uses their feelings to its advantage. Before the night advances far enough for the villagers to begin acting out their Horror-influenced nightmares, a young human man who has been guarding the fish trap comes screaming into the center of the village, wielding a fillet knife. He says that a group of five ice flyers, including a leader (pp. 304–305, ED) is raiding the fish trap. The entire village appeals to the heroes to save their food supply, especially if the characters have spent the evening telling stories about their courageous exploits. The villagers then dissolve into bickering about who should save the fish trap rather than battling the ice flyers together. Only Trawet joins the characters in saving the fish trap, which the ice flyers are destroying.

If the characters defeat the ice flyers, the townsfolk thank them profusely. Trawet expresses his thanks and apologizes for his initial distrust. No one sleeps well after all this, but nothing else happens for the last few hours of night.





ICE FLYERS (4 + LEADER)

DEX: 6 STR: 5 TOU: 5
PER: 5 WIL: 7 CHA: 5

Initiative: 10 Physical Defense: 7
Number of Attacks: 1 Spell Defense: 6
Attack: 9 Social Defense: 6
Damage: 14 Armor: 5
Number of Spells: (1) Mystic Armor: 7
Spellcasting: 5 Knockdown: 4
Effect: Ice Flyer Shackles, Recovery Tests: 2
Howling Challenge: 13

Death Rating: 38 Combat Movement: 75
Wound Threshold: 10 Full Movement: 150
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Legend Points: 70 (120 for leader)

Equipment: None

Loot: Ice feathers worth 1D6 x 10 silver pieces. These count as treasure worth Legend Points.

Make sure Trawet survives the battle with the ice flyers. If the characters do not plan to stay the night in Cliffstone, the encounter with the ice flyers occurs as they are leaving the village so that Trawet has the chance to thank the characters and show that he trusts them. If the characters defeat the ice flyers under these circumstances, Trawet and the other villagers insist that they remain for the evening, despite their earlier hesitation.

RIDGE

Three days' walk from Cliffstone, situated along the ridge of the mountain, lies the tiny town of Ridge. The greeting the characters receive when they reach this village depends on whether or not one of them is an obsidiman.

When the characters approach the village of Ridge, read the following aloud:

The village of Ridge certainly lives up to its name. You have seen it, perched on a rise above the slope you've been climbing, for most of the day. Reaching the village has taken much longer than you had expected, because you have had to pick your way up the steep, rocky trail and avoid occasional patches of ice. The village has floated above you throughout your long climb, like a beacon never quite within reach. At least one villager has undoubtedly observed your progress, and for a moment you wonder why no one has hailed you. This site would make a fine stronghold for a city, if anyone wanted to build one in the

middle of the Tylon Mountains. Weary and footsore, you fantasize about the cool drink of fresh water you'll have when you finally reach the top.

As the characters reach the crest of the ridge, read the following if they do not have an obsidiman with them:

The sun is beginning to dip below the towering peaks as you climb atop the crest of the ridge. The light plays tricks with your eyes, tinting the patches of snow orange and rose. The cold air feels refreshing after the long climb.

Twenty villagers are gathered in front of a circle of huts. A merry fire leaps and dances in the center of the huts, and the smell of something roasting sets your stomach grumbling. A female elf standing one step in front of the others calls out, "Welcome to Ridge! I am Dolrettea. Please join us and tell us of your journey thus far!" The villagers give you wide, welcoming grins as you step forward to introduce yourselves. Taking this as acceptance of the elf's invitation, the villagers cheer and begin to make ready for a feast.

As the characters reach the crest of the ridge, read the following if they have an obsidiman with them:

The sun is beginning to dip below the towering peaks as you climb atop the crest of the ridge. The light plays tricks with your eyes, tinting the patches of snow orange and rose. The cold air feels refreshing after the long climb.

Twenty villagers are gathered in front of a circle of huts. Most of them hold hoes, axes, or hunting knives; five of them have arrows readied and aimed at your obsidiman comrade. A female elf standing one step in front of the others shouts, "Your kind are not welcome here. You may pass, but stay away from our village."

Meeting the Villagers

Ridge is the last village the characters pass before reaching the corrupted Liferock. The Liferock lies three days' walk from Ridge, but the villagers shun the site out of fear of the Horror taint. If none of the adventurers is an obsidiman, the villagers welcome them. Few travelers make it up this way, and the folk of Ridge are curious about events in the rest of Barsaive. But an adventuring party with obsidiman members gets a much less friendly reception, unless the obsidiman agrees to swear a blood oath of peace to the village. The villagers tell the characters stories of attacks on the village by deranged obsidimen, but anyone listening closely realizes that these stories are all variations on the same tale. In truth, only one such attack by a delirious obsidiman occurred, but the villagers cling to their apocryphal tales as a unifying belief.





Dolrettea Ryse is the council leader and the only elf in the village. Humans, orks, dwarfs, trolls, and even a few windlings live in Ridge, scraping out a living from the inhospitable surroundings. Despite their many hardships, the villagers clearly relish the peace and breath-taking beauty of their mountain eyrie. And they are remarkably well-read. If the characters ask, they discover that most of the villagers traveled for a few years before choosing to return to Ridge.

If the characters spend the night in Ridge, they have a chance to trade gossip with the residents of the town.

Before the characters retire for the evening, read the following:

The embers of the fire have died to a warm orange glow, and your stomachs are comfortably full of fresh roasted meat. Yawning and stretching, the villagers of Ridge head off to bed. After your strenuous hike, sleep is calling you as well. As you make ready for bed, a small group of villagers comes forward, each carrying a small parcel in their hands.

"If you please, we've family and friends in other parts of Barsaive," says a stout middle-aged dwarf whom you recognize from the evening as a boisterous storyteller. "Would you mind very much taking these small items with you, in case you happen to run across our loved-ones? It's been a long time since we've seen them. You needn't go out of your way for us, just carry these things with you."

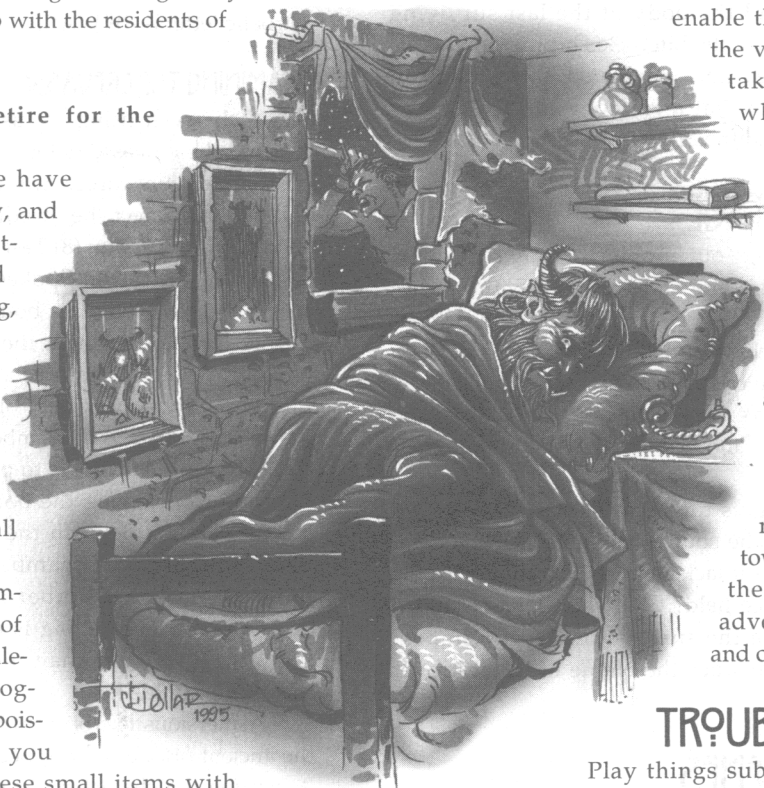
One by one the group hands over various small items—a letter to the dwarf's mother in Throal, a jar of pine salve for the windling's brother who runs a shop in Bartertown, a request to a friend working in Travar to send up some new boots for the ork hunter. Gratitude and nostalgia mix in the expressions of this small group as they hand over their parcels.

The people of Ridge are content with their lives, but visitors remind them of all that lies beyond their little town. The townsfolk experience an uneasy night if the characters stay with them, but their relative contentment leaves Betrayer few resentments to work with. The true effect of the Horror's influence on the residents reveals

itself after the characters leave and the villagers return to their daily lives without the luxuries the characters' visit has reminded them of.

If the characters refuse to carry the messages and small gifts from Ridge, the villagers making the requests look ashamed and apologize for troubling the characters. In any further interactions, they act withdrawn and sullen; the incident has reminded them of how cut off they are from the rest of Barsaive. Such feelings enable the Horror to influence the villagers more easily, so take them into account when describing any return trip through the village.

If an obsidian man is with the adventurers and the villagers ask them to bypass Ridge, the villagers follow the characters until they are a safe distance away from town and then watch them until they move out of sight. The townsfolk stand watch for the next week in case the adventurers plan to return and cause harm to the village.



TROUBLESHOOTING

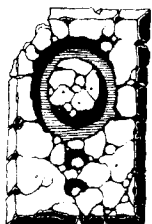
Play things subtly when dealing with Betrayer's influence during the adventurers' initial visits to these villages. The Horror has some impact as the characters stop in each village, but the full extent of Betrayer's malign influence should become apparent to the characters only when they return to each settlement. For more information regarding the specific effects of the Horror's presence in these three small communities, see *Return Journey in Lingering Troubles*, p. 79.

During their encounters in Smallstream and Cliffstone, the characters may suspect that Betrayer is somehow responsible for the unusual events that occur. If the characters tell the residents of any of the villages that the Blades have essentially Horror-marked their group, the villagers drive them out. Speaking of their connection with the Horror is not the wisest decision, but the characters may feel morally obligated to share this knowledge with anyone they meet. If they choose this course of action, the characters are met with fear and suspicion throughout Barsaive.





THE LIFEROCK



INTERVIEW

In this encounter, the characters reach the Liferock that Betrayer corrupted. There they find the body of the last surviving member of the Liferock's brotherhood. This wounded and weakened obsidiman can tell them that a Horror Named Betrayer corrupted the Liferock.

SETTING THE STAGE

Before you sits a huge outcropping of gray rock, lined with veins of black and white and spattered with patches of snow. It looks just like Senog described it, with definite markings and ornaments around its edges. As you look around, breathing in the crisp, clean air, you think of how much life the world has regained since the days when Horrors roamed the land and destroyed everything in their paths.

Your hopeful thoughts turn grimmer as you gaze on the rock that was once the source of life itself for generations of obsidimen. Does it lack some luster, gone with the mystical life force it once held? Or does it look scrubbed clean and renewed like the surrounding rocky slopes? Where within its depths does the Name of its destroyer hide?

BEHIND THE SCENES

The characters have found the corrupted Liferock, but the only evidence of the Horror's Name is in the mind of Asmersious—the sole survivor of the tainted brotherhood. They find nothing etched in the stone or carved in runes, no matter how hard they look. Asmersious lies trapped in a crevasse near the Liferock, where he has slept ever since his long-ago battle with his corrupted brothers (see the **Prologue** and **Plot Synopsis** sections of **With an Axe in Hand** for a description of this confrontation).

Once the characters arrive at the Liferock, they discover the crevasse after a brief search of the area.

When the characters find the crevasse, read the following aloud:

On the westernmost edge of the rock you find a crack, running like a wound deep underground. The opening is big enough for an obsidiman to fall into, and you can make

out foot- and hand-holds carved into the sides of the crevasse. A word has been carved into the rock just above the jagged opening—it is partly obscured by a dusting of snow. You brush the snow away and read the rough Throalic letters—BEWARE.

EXAMINING THE CREVASSE

A character using any astral sensing ability while gazing into the crevasse detects the faint glow of the trapped obsidiman's life force. Any character with astral sensing abilities can detect the obsidiman's life force by making a successful Perception (8) Test.

When the Seven Spokes trapped Asmersious in the crevasse, they wedged a boulder into the lower part of it. To reach the obsidiman, the characters must remove the boulder. Doing so requires a Strength Attribute of 29 or a Lifting/Carrying Capacity of 2,500 pounds (see **Attribute Table**, p. 52, **ED**). Any number of characters may combine their Strength Attributes to produce the required Strength Attribute, so moving the boulder should be much easier than it sounds. Beneath the boulder, the crevasse opens into a roughly oval chamber with an uneven, stone-littered floor. The chamber is about 25 feet wide at its widest point. The ceiling is uneven and so low in places that a troll or obsidiman must proceed with caution or risk bumping his head.

Asmersious has been in hibernation since shortly after the ancient ork heroes trapped him here all those years ago. Assuming the characters do not presume the obsidiman is Horror-tainted and kill him outright, they can learn from him the Name of the Horror. First, however, they must bring him to the surface and tend to him while he recovers. Asmersious is terribly weak and still injured. He has not been able to recover from the wounds he suffered, but his suspended metabolic state and proximity to his Liferock—damaged though it is—have kept him from death.

Getting Asmersious out of the crevasse requires a combined Strength Attribute of 23 or a Lifting/Carrying Capacity of 900 pounds.

When the adventurers have brought Asmersious to the surface, read the following aloud:

You lay the body of the obsidiman on the ground near the outcropping, marveling that any life remains in him at all. He must be from this Liferock; but how long has he been trapped in the abyss? You cannot tell by looking if the





Liferock is empty, as Senog said—but some flicker of life must remain in it, or how could this obsidiman still live? The answer to this riddle lies at your feet, in this obsidiman's mind. If he wakes, maybe he will tell you.

Asmersious remains unconscious for roughly five days. During this time the characters may set up camp and get comfortable, as they can do nothing to rouse Asmersious from hibernation. While they wait, the characters might search the area around the Liferock for some clue to the Horror's Name or to Asmersious's condition. If they search thoroughly, they can find some clues.

In a hole in the far side of the Liferock they find a small chest, battered by the Scourge and centuries of harsh weather. The chest is locked but can be opened by a character who makes a successful Lock Picking (5) Test. The characters may also smash the chest open with a blow that does more than 7 points of damage.

The chest contains a small, bone scroll-case sealed with dried wax. The case contains a small piece of parchment, inscribed in the ork language (see scroll text, above). Reading the scroll requires a successful Read and Write Language (7) Test. Reduce the Difficulty Number to 5 for any character who reads written Ork. Any character who makes a successful test may read the scroll to the group.

The scroll is signed with the symbol of the Seven Spokes—the seven Blades of Cara Fahd arranged as the spokes of a wheel. This is the same symbol the characters see when they confront Betrayer in the final adventure, **Pure Liquids**.

BETRAYER'S RETURN

Betrayer corrupted the Liferock by first corrupting one of its brotherhood, who allowed the Horror to enter the

Liferock and corrupt the rock's spirit. Once Betrayer had thoroughly corrupted the Liferock, it fashioned the rock's luckless brotherhood into Horror constructs similar in

form to invae (p. 18, **Barsaive GM Book**). All the members of the brotherhood, save for Asmersious, fell victim to the Horror's power.

Though beyond salvation, these constructs retained much of their obsidiman nature, including their ability to merge with their Liferock. When the Seven Spokes split Betrayer's spirit and confined it in the pattern of the Blades, the constructs merged with the Liferock. They have since remained dormant, until the characters arrived carrying the Blades.

The characters have brought Betrayer back to the Liferock and the constructs, and the Horror's proximity causes them to awaken. They are fully awake and ready for battle about the time that Asmersious revives (see **Lingering Troubles**, p. 79).

TO WHOMEVER MAY COME AFTER US.

IT IS WITH MUCH REGRET THAT WE SHARE THIS TALE. WE, THE SEVEN SPOKES OF CARA FAHD, HAVING COME TO THIS LIFEROCK IN SEARCH OF THE HORROR THAT BETRAYED US AND OUR BROTHER, WERE MET BY OBSIDIMEN THAT HAD BECOME MONSTROSITIES—SURELY THE CREATIONS OF THE HORROR WE SEEK. THESE CREATURES CAME FROM THE LIFEROCK AS MIGHT TRUE OBSIDIMEN, BUT STANK OF CORRUPTION. HOW THE HORROR TAINTED THIS LIFEROCK WE DO NOT KNOW, BUT NONE OF THE BROTHERHOOD WHO ONCE CALLED THIS PLACE HOME REMAIN.

WE CONTINUE OUR SEARCH FOR THE HORROR, THAT WE MAY ONE DAY RID CARA FAHD AND ALL OF BARSATIVE OF ITS INFLUENCE. WE ARE NEAR IT NOW—WE CAN FEEL IT. WE BELIEVE IT CAN FEEL US AS WELL—IF WE DO NOT SURVIVE, WE ASK THE READER OF THIS SCROLL TO TELL OUR TALE TO THE WORLD.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the characters cannot come up with the necessary, Strength to move the boulder but devise some other method of performing the task, such as using a lever, allow them to move the boulder. If they have the patience, the characters may also break the boulder into smaller rocks and move it bit by bit. They need to investigate the chamber beneath the boulder, so allow them every fair chance to do so.

If the characters decide to dispatch the pitiful obsidiman before they get information from him, they may still learn the Name of the Horror at the gamemaster's discretion. In this case, Asmersious has carved out a rambling message on the underside of the boulder. The message contains the Horror's Name.

Killing Asmersious is a definite betrayal of a self-respecting adventurer's nobler ideals, however, and it





feeds Betrayal's power. The Horror's added strength, in turn, enables the constructs within the Liferock to awaken early. In fact, the constructs emerge from the Liferock and attack just after the characters kill Asmersious. For the constructs' game statistics, see **Lingering Troubles**, p. 79.

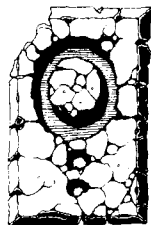
If the characters take Asmersious away from the Liferock, the obsidiman awakens in a few days as normal. Alternatively, the constructs may track down the charac-

ters and arrive just as Asmersious awakens. In this case, run **Lingering Troubles** as written but change the location. Finally, at the gamemaster's discretion, characters with knowledge skills appropriate to obsidiman lore or history may make Skill (6) Tests. Any successful test reveals that removing the obsidiman from the Liferock may prevent him from awakening. (This is not true, but the characters don't know that.)





LINGERING TROUBLES



VIEW

Just as Asmersious awakens from his centuries-long sleep, several obsidian Horror constructs emerge from the Liferock and attack the characters. The adventurers must win the battle against these monstrosities and keep Asmersious safe from harm or they may never learn what Asmersious knows.

SETTING THE STAGE

When Asmersious begins to awaken, read the following aloud:

Day after day you have watched this Name-giver lying like a huge stone, showing no more life than the towering pillar of rock under which you found him. He does not move and barely breathes. For a moment you think you see a flicker, so slight it hardly counts as movement. You stare intently at the sleeping giant, but nothing more happens. Perhaps the flicker was only your imagination. Then it happens again, a shuddering of the skin like a ripple across water. Slowly, the obsidian is reviving. His eyes open, so slowly that you can scarcely bear the suspense. They seem to linger halfway open for most of the day. As the shadows grow longer they open, full and wide but still unseeing.

You hear a feeble mumbling and draw closer to the obsidian so that you can hear him more clearly. "By the Passions, the Passions ..." he breathes. Suddenly, he lurches upright with startling strength. "My brothers!" he screams, "beware the defilers!"

You step back from this wild obsidian as his eyes grow wide with horror. "I ... hurting ... forgive ..." He collapses again and lies motionless. A sudden noise behind you draws your attention away from him—you look toward the Liferock and see seven figures emerging from it. They look like obsidimen, but as they come closer you can see their chitinous hands and mandibles. Whatever these terrible things are, they are moving toward you with malevolent purpose.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The characters are facing the same corruption that led to the fall of the Liferock years before the Scourge. The

corrupted Liferock and its onetime brotherhood, a manifestation of the Horror's malignant power, should instill feelings of dread in the adventurers.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Horror constructs resemble and behave like invae (p. 18, **Barsaive GM Book**), but are subject to all talents and spells that affect Horrors and Horror constructs.

OBSDIMAN HORROR CONSTRUCTS (7)

DEX: 8 STR: 11 TOU: 8
PER: 6 WIL: 8 CHA: 9

Initiative: 9
Number of Attacks: 2
Attack: 9
Damage: 12
Number of Spells: See text
Spellcasting: 8
Effect: 13

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 11
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 7
Mystic Armor: 5
Knockdown: 11
Recovery Tests: 4

Death Rating: 80
Wound Threshold: 15
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 150
Full Movement: 300

Karma Points: 10

Karma Steps: 8

Legend Points: 500
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Like invae, the constructs attack by striking and biting. A construct's bite exudes a paralyzing venom. After a successful bite attack, make a Spellcasting Test against the victim's Spell Defense. If the test is succeeds, the victim must make a Poison Resistance (13) Test. If this test fails, the character gradually becomes paralyzed. Make an Effect Test against the victim's Spell Defense. If the Effect Test succeeds, the victim's Dexterity Step decreases by 1 each round until it reaches 0, at which point the victim is completely paralyzed. This paralysis wears off after 8 to 10 hours.

The Horror constructs ignore Asmersious during the battle. Betrayer still controls them and much prefers to slay the characters than an old, insane, dying obsidian.





long ... hurts. So cold, so hard ... why? Take it away! Take the defilers ... oh, my brothers ... Asmersious weeps." He draws a ragged breath and looks at you, as if seeing you for the first time.

"I Return soon. Defeated ... you have defeated me." He reaches a trembling hand toward you. "Can you defeat it, too? You know its Name. Betrayer."

Slowly, painfully, the obsidiman struggles toward the Liferock, until he lies with his whole body against it. "Death to Betrayer!" he breathes, and begins to merge with the rock. Within seconds he is gone ... whether Dreaming or dead, you do not know.

Unless the characters take some drastic action to heal the obsidiman, Asmersious dies. His injuries are so severe that only Last Chance Salve or a powerful healing potion will help him. If the characters manage to heal Asmersious, he eventually recovers completely from his ordeal and may even choose to join the characters in their search for the final Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd.

RETURN JOURNEY

The characters may believe that their quest is over, but they must still get back down the mountain. Ten days or so have passed if the characters walked to the Liferock, stayed with Asmersious while he regained consciousness, then walked back to Ridge. They might have made somewhat better time if they are riding, but horses are not particularly useful in the steep and rocky terrain of the higher elevations. Ever since the characters passed through the villages of Smallstream, Cliffstone and Ridge, the people of these villages have suffered from the influence of Betrayer, and so the characters are in for some unpleasant surprises on their return trip.

Ridge

When the characters reach Ridge (assuming none of them is an obsidiman), the townspeople respond with apathy and even sullenness. Name-givers who once pushed food and drink into the adventurers' hands now

Betrayer knows that the closer the characters get to learning the last Key Knowledge, the closer they come to separating the Horror from the pattern of the Blades into some form that might be vulnerable to physical attacks. As a result, Betrayer does everything in its power to destroy the adventurers.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Once the battle is over, the characters can return their attention to Asmersious.

Read the following aloud:

The fallen obsidiman lies on the ground. His eyes are open, but he seems to see visions that you do not share. His broken voice carries through the still air: "The holes ... why have you come back? Why bring it with you?! How





barely turn to give them the time of day. Dolrettea greets them with a cold look and a terse demand that they leave at once. If an obsidiman is among them, the villagers greet them with weapons at the ready, just as they did before. But this time they fire their arrows and throw stones to drive the characters off, shouting curses all the while.

If the characters don't take the hint, Dolrettea says, "Your presence here threatens everything we have tried to build. We do not need reminders of the things we left behind. You are making my people unhappy, and I won't tolerate it!" Dolrettea has adopted a possessive attitude about the people of Ridge and she accepts no further insubordination from the characters or villagers.

If the characters think this change in attitude is Dolrettea's problem and try to talk with the villagers individually, the people who gave the characters messages for their distant friends in **Prosperous To a Degree** take them back, saying things like, "We don't need this kind of trouble," and "Everything was fine until you came barging into our lives!"

Cliffstone

When the characters reach Cliffstone, read the following aloud:

You pick your way down the slippery path that skirts the waterfall, stepping carefully around frozen patches of moss and heading down toward Cliffstone. The village should come into sight any moment now, through the mist that hovers near the base of the falls.

You walk onward but don't see or hear any sign of Cliffstone. As the base of the falls comes into view, you can see the pieces of the broken fish trap churning in the water. The huts look abandoned. You see Trawet slouched against the wall of his hut. It occurs to you that he's picked an odd time and place to snooze. But no sooner do you finish this thought than you realize he is not sleeping at all.

The characters might assume that ice flyers attacked the village again. If they look around carefully, they discover otherwise. An examination of Trawet shows that he has been stabbed in the chest multiple times by an assailant or assailants using hunting knives. All around his body, someone has drawn runes matching the ones on the Blades of Cara Fahd. Trawet's hut has been ransacked, and broken knife blades litter the floor.

The characters may decide to track the apparently departed villagers to find out what happened. But the villagers' tracks are several days old, and the characters lose them almost immediately. If they persist in trying to find the rest of the villagers, have them stumble across another

two or three mutilated bodies. The living villagers, however, are long gone.

Smallstream

As the characters approach Smallstream, read the following:

The air begins to warm as you descend from the mountain slopes into the foothills of the Tylons. The walk along the rushing waters of Small Stream has been pleasant, in spite of the troubling events in Ridge and Cliffstone.

As you stop to stretch and have a drink of cool water, something catches your attention. Patches of soil have been churned up across the creek, just where you remember seeing a green field. You look more carefully, and suddenly feel cold as you recognize a row of fresh graves. One is much smaller than the rest. You cross the creek for a closer look, hoping against hope that your suspicions are wrong. The tiny wooden marker reads, "Here Lies [Baby Fielder's Character Name]". Beside it are markers for Pon, Mara, and several others.

As you dash up the hill toward the little town, your belly clenches in knots as you catch the scent of stale smoke. Topping the rise, you stop dead in your tracks. The huts are smoking hulks and the fields lie in ruins. A small child sits in the dirt, his hair matted and his body covered in mud and soot. He sees you running out of the trees and covers his eyes, weeping in terror. "Mamma! Papa! Gran'ma ..." You barely recognize him as one of the Fielder children.

The residents of Smallstream have suffered the most from Betrayer's manipulations. The Horror twisted the secret desires and resentments of the villagers, setting husband against wife, mother against son, neighbor against neighbor. At least twenty people lie buried on all sides of the village, including many children. When the characters come into view, the few surviving villagers cower in fear. Three adults, seven small children and Grandma, who looks ill and grief-stricken, are all that remain of the village. Grandma begs the characters to leave them alone, saying, "Don't bring this evil to others."

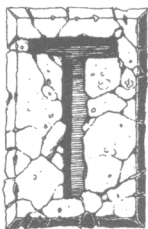
TROUBLESHOOTING

The Horror constructs are tough opponents, and one or more of the characters may die fighting them. Let the dice roll as they may. At this point, the characters are Eighth Circle or better and should be prepared for nasty battles. And they are facing an enemy that wiped out an entire brotherhood of obsidimen—no mean feat. If the characters survive, they will have quite a tale to tell.





LOOSE ENDS



he information in this section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **With an Axe in Hand** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and provides statistics for important gamemaster characters.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

The characters have learned the Name of Betrayer, but at a cost that will stay with them for a long time to come. They may wish to make amends to the settlements that suffered in the wake of their visits. The villagers

won't appreciate the characters' direct intervention, but the characters may be able to finance the rebuilding of Smallstream through indirect sources. The characters can also make sure to deliver any messages left with them in Ridge to their intended recipients. If they want to provide for Pon and Mara's surviving child, the boy they found just outside Smallstream, they must do so indirectly—Grandma refuses to let them take the boy away.

As the characters travel across Barsaive, they may run into refugees from Cliffstone or Smallstream who do not view them as heroes. This could hurt the legendary status of the characters who do not make amends, not to mention bringing up recurring feelings of guilt.





CREATURE/OPPONENT AWARD TABLE

Creature/Opponent	6 Players	7 Players	8 Players
Ice Flyers (5)	400	400	400
Horror Constructs (7)	3,500	3,500	3,500
Total	3,900	3,900	3,900
Award Per Character	650	560	490

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award the characters Legend Points as described in the **Introduction**, p. 8. The Adventure Award for **With an Axe in Hand** is 1,250 points.

CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING AND HEROICS

Award characters Legend Points for taking any of the following actions:

Helping to heal Mara in Smallstream	25
Swearing an Oath of Peace in Cliffstone	100
Agreeing to deliver messages from Ridge	25
Moving the boulder at the Liferock	25
Healing Asmersious	50
Making restitution to the villages	100
Offering to provide for Smallstream's orphans	100

DEFEATING CREATURES/OPPONENTS

Award Legend Points for defeating creatures/opponents in this adventure as shown on the Creature/Opponent Award Table.

TREASURE

If the characters slay any ice flyers in Cliffstone, they may collect ice feathers from the fallen creatures. The feathers are worth a total of 5D6 x 10 Legend Points each.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

A single character who completes **With an Axe in Hand** receives an average of 2,110 Legend Points. This average assumes 7 players in a group and does not include points earned for battling additional opponents or finding treasure created by the gamemaster.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

This section contains game statistics for major gamemaster characters in the encounter.

GRANDMA

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8
Strength (8): 5/D8
Toughness (7): 4/D6
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Initiative

Dice: D6

Movement

Full: 57
Combat: 29

Damage

Death Rating: 27
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: 18
Recovery Tests/Day: 1
Recovery Dice: D6

Combat

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 8
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

Skills

Arcane Mutterings (2): 8/2D6
Knowledge/Farming (2): 8/2D6
Physician (5): 13/D12 + D10

Equipment

Medicine pouch
Staff





TRAWET

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (19): 8/2D6
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Initiative

Dice: D8

Movement

Full: 60
Combat: 30

Damage

Death Rating: 39
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 31
Recovery Tests/Day: 3
Recovery Dice: D12

Combat

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Skills

Climbing (3): 9/D8 + D6
Knowledge/Hunting (4): 10/D10 + D6
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Hardened leather armor
Trispear
Troll sling

DOLRETTEA

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (7): 4/D6
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (12): 5/D8

Initiative

Dice: D10

Movement

Full: 65
Combat: 33

Damage

Death Rating: 27
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: 18
Recovery Tests/Day: 1
Recovery Dice: D6

Combat

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

Skills

Etiquette (2): 7/D12
Read and Write Language (3): Human, Sperethiel
Wilderness Survival (4): 8/2D6

Equipment

Bola
Elfweave robe
Knife





ASMERSIOUS

Asmersious is a Third Circle warrior and the sole surviving obsidiman of the Liferock corrupted by Betrayer. While deep in the Dreaming, Asmersious became aware of Betrayer within the Liferock and emerged to find the Seven Spokes in combat with what he first thought were his obsidiman brothers. He soon realized that they had become Horror constructs and tried to fight them, but he succumbed to lingering traces of Betrayer's taint and turned on the ork heroes in a delusional rage. The Seven Spokes drove the maddened obsidiman into the crevasse near the Liferock and imprisoned him. Asmersious drifted into hibernation, in which he has remained until the characters arrive and awaken him.

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (20): 8/2D6
Toughness (19): 8/2D6
Perception (9): 4/D6
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Initiative

Dice: D8

Movement

Full: 40
Combat: 20

Damage

Death Rating: 61
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 49
Recovery Tests/Day: 3
Recovery Dice: 2D6

Combat

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 6
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

Skills

Artisan/Sculpture (1): 5/D8
Knowledge/Obsidiman Lore (2): 6/D10
Knowledge/Obsidiman Weapons (2): 6/D10

Karma

Dice: D4
Points: 3

Talents

Acrobatic Strike (3): 8/2D6
Air Dance (3): 8/2D6
Avoid Blow (2): 7/D12
Durability (Warrior) (2)
Karma Ritual (3)
Melee Weapons (3): 8/2D6
Unarmed Combat (3): 8/2D6
Wood Skin (3): 8/2D6

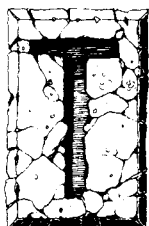
Equipment

None





AS WET AS BLOOD



T'chava V'ardegon K'elemin shuddered, and not from the chill of the underground cavern. T'chava had lived far beneath the Tylon Mountains all his life. He had never seen daylight. His world was one of sunless rivers, of cool, embracing darkness. But he had seen something strange the last time he had paddled his raft through these caverns, down this winding tributary. This time, he had a passenger with him who did little to calm his apprehension: the shivalahala, the revered leader of the pale t'skrang of the Tylon Mountains. Young T'chava had only heard rumors about her until yesterday, most of them concerning various strange supernatural powers she was reputed to possess. And now he was ferrying her, alone, to his private fishing hole.

If only he hadn't told his lahala what he had seen! T'chava had always believed that problems left untended eventually vanished of their own accord. His experience had been a mere curiosity to him—a somewhat alarming one, true, but nothing of significance. He told the tale of it only to please the folk of his *niall*, to cater to their love of diversion. He had not expected the reaction of the old ones: furrowed brows, clenched jaws, wrinkled crests. Before he knew it, they had bundled him onto a raft and taken him to the Great Dome. There he had repeated his tale for the shivalahala, his knees knocking together as he spoke. She had gazed at him with terrifying grandeur and power, dull green light pulsing through her skin. When she ordered T'chava to take her to his fishing hole, he had nearly fainted.

During the journey he had made a few attempts at conversation with his lofty charge, but she paid him no heed. For much of the trip he had paddled in silence. Now, as he reached the final bend, he said softly, "This is the place, Most Honored One."

The thing he had seen was still there. In fact, it seemed to have grown bigger. The water was discolored in a way that only magic could explain—a pattern of deep red lines had appeared on its surface. It looked as if someone had poured pigment into the water, except that the pigment had found a shape it liked and did not wish to disperse. The pattern was circular, resembling a wheel with seven spokes. Where an eighth spoke should have been, there was a break in the pattern.

The Most Honored One looked at the water, shuddered, and addressed T'chava for the first time. "Take me back. I have seen all I need to see. It is true. The time our tales warn us of has returned. We must prepare, young one, for the Time of Betrayal."

T'chava scampered to the other side of the raft and began to paddle. He was far from displeased to be leaving immediately, but the mystery of it all frustrated him. He wanted to ask the Most Honored One to explain, but he knew better than to seem idly curious. He thought for a while, phrasing a proper and legitimate question.

"I reached into the water and touched the pattern, Most Honored One. Am I in danger?"

The shivalahala sighed. "We are all in danger, young one. We deal with Horrors, and therefore nothing can be said for certain. I shall have the nethermancer T'simon V'astamil Chandas examine you for signs of taint on our return to the Great Dome. But I do not think you have been tainted. The gravest danger is to those who carry the Blades reflected in the pattern—and to any unlucky enough to cross their path. It is our poor luck that their path and ours will doubtless intersect, and soon."

The shivalahala looked into T'chava's face, the light cast by her skin warming slightly. "I have confused you. Allow me to begin the tale at its proper place, at the beginning."





PURE LIQUIDS



Pure Liquids sends the adventurers to the underground rivers beneath the Tylon Mountains for a confrontation with Betrayer, the Horror that lives within the Blades of Cara Fahd. The adventure assumes the characters already know that the Rank 8 Deed consists of traveling to the spot where Betrayer was slain, and that the Rank 8 Key Knowledge is the means the Seven Spokes used to originally defeat the Horror. The adventure is intended for a group of six to eight players using Seventh to Ninth Circle adept characters. As with all of the **Blades** adventures, the gamemaster should be thoroughly familiar with the adventure before running it.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

As described in **Interludes** (p. 25), the characters have learned that they must travel to the place where the Seven Spokes defeated Betrayer and learn the manner the ancient heroes used to defeat the Horror. The characters learn that their destination lies deep beneath the Tylon Mountains, somewhere in an underground river system inhabited by Pale Ones. The Pale Ones are t'skrang who live underground in a more primitive way of life than their better-known cousins of the Serpent River. The adventurers stumble across an old account that suggests they must find the community of Pale Ones known as Great House Ch'elann.

In their search for House Ch'elann, the characters hook up with the Vodanicus family, a group of disreputable dwarfs. These scavengers know the underground rivers of the Tylon range well, because they often venture down them to search for deposits of True Water. The family claims to know the location of the Great Dome of Ch'elann and agrees to take the adventurers there for a sizable fee.

The characters face many dangers during this underground journey, natural and otherwise. Among other things, the Blades' influence prompts some of the dwarfs to try to kill them. When the characters finally arrive at the Great Dome of Ch'elann, they meet Shivalahala Ch'elasmo, the Pale Ones' leader. She tells them the legend of the battle between Betrayer and the Seven Spokes. She also supplies them with the Key Knowledge they need to weave the Rank 8 threads to the Blades, as well as the ritual means to cast the Horror's spirit into a new body composed of blood and elemental water. Once the adventurers have accomplished this feat, they can try to kill Betrayer and rid Barsaive of the Horror's baleful influence once and for all.

Having acquired the necessary information from the shivalahala, the adventurers travel to the place of Betrayer's defeat. There they meet, learn from, and ultimately battle the ghosts of the Seven Spokes. The adventurers then perform the blood magic ritual and re-form the Horror, which they must try to destroy in a truly titanic battle.

BETRAYSER'S INFLUENCE

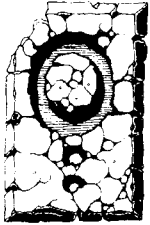
In this adventure Betrayer causes quite a few problems for the adventurers. First, the Horror causes their guides along the subterranean river to attempt to kill them. Later in the adventure, when the characters arrive at the Great Dome, the Horror works its way through the t'skrang population, resulting in an attack against Shivalahala Ch'elasmo.

In addition to these incidents, the gamemaster may have the Horror attempt to make one of the player characters betray the others at some inopportune moment. For more information about the extent of Betrayer's power and influence over the adventurers, see **Running Blades**, p. 13.





GETTING SOAKED



INTERVIEW

Getting Soaked describes the dangerous journey to the Great Dome, including the first meeting with the Vodanicus family. Along the way, the characters must fight numerous enemies and surmount various natural hazards.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following text assumes that the characters have found the document described in *Interludes* (p. 24), and that the document has led them to the Tylon Mountains. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly.

The Tylon Mountains loom up before you, dark and cold and threatening. Somewhere beneath these massive peaks lies the Great Dome of the House of Ch'elann, home to a foundation of Pale Ones. In the House of Ch'elann, you will find the final Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The long and arduous road you have traveled since you first claimed the Blades has taken you across Barsaive and back, to the ultimate destination of your quest—the site of the final battle between the Seven Spokes and the Horror called Betrayer. In this place, the final secrets of the Blades and Betrayer await discovery.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Emphasize the discomfort and danger of the arduous journey to the Great Dome. Make the players feel the dampness soaking into their characters' clothes, the chill in their bones, and the restless movement of the underground river beneath their rafts.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventure begins with the characters traveling to one of the settlements at the base of the Tylon Mountains and seeking help in getting to the Great Dome. The gamemaster may make this as difficult a trek as he wishes. Add encounters with slavers, raiders, and assorted wild creatures if desired. Eventually the characters should hook up with the Vodanicus family, a thoroughly unscrupulous band of non-adept adventurers who make a living scrounging for True Water. Place the family in whichever town the characters end up in—raising a ruckus at the town's seediest tavern. The family found some True Water several

months ago and they are carousing their way through the last of the generous payment they received for it.

ABOUT THE VODANICUS FAMILY

Game statistics for the Vodanicus family appear on p. 103. The family has many members, all of whom are Named Vodanicus. To tell each other apart, they address one another by family relationship. The leader and spokeswoman for the group is Mother Vodanicus. The other family members are Grandmother Vodanicus, Father Vodanicus, First Brother Vodanicus, Second Brother Vodanicus, Junior Vodanicus (a male), Sister Vodanicus, Cousin Vodanicus (a female), Second Cousin Vodanicus (a male), Uncle Vodanicus, Aunt Vodanicus, Great-Aunt Vodanicus, and Wife Vodanicus (the latter is married to First Brother Vodanicus).

Do not worry about creating individual characterizations for all of these dwarfs, because they all possess the same character traits. They're greedy, crude, and a little sadistic. The males are all afraid of the women, especially of Mother Vodanicus. Grandmother Vodanicus has gone a little crazy and drools a lot. All of the dwarfs speak in rough, growly voices.

The Vodanicus family so enjoys having money to squander that the family members are willing to risk their skins again and again by going deep into the underground river system beneath the Tylon Mountains in search of their chosen loot. They are the only living surface-dwellers to repeat this feat, a feat they remind the adventurers of at every available opportunity. They gladly confess that several Vodanicus family members have shuffled off this mortal coil as a result of their exploits, but follow up this admission with the boast, "There's always more of us where the dead ones came from!" If the characters ask around about the Vodanicus family, they discover that the dwarfs are well-known and heartily disliked.

If paid handsomely for their services, the Vodanicus family is more than willing to escort the adventurers to the Great Dome. The dwarfs neglect to mention, however, that the Pale Ones of House Ch'elann consider them deadly enemies. The dwarfs' base fee is 1,500 silver pieces per character. Each Vodanicus has *Haggle* as a skill at Rank 6/Step 9. They negotiate with only one of the characters, and so the adventurers may only make one *Haggle* Test to try to lower this cost. Each success level achieved in a *Haggle* Test against the Vodanicus family lowers the cost per character by 100 silver pieces.





The Vodanicus family tends to be a close-mouthed bunch, rarely volunteering information. If asked about the dangers of the trip, the dwarfs exaggerate wildly (no mean feat, considering that the journey is plenty dangerous). The dwarfs claim that the river system is crawling with Horrors, aquatic blood monkeys, and cadaver men who are half trout. But the Vodanicuses do not mention any of the real hazards the adventurers are about to face.

MOUNTAIN TREK

The first stage of the journey is a four-day trek up one of the Tylon Mountains, Mount Jhacsaan. For the first three-and-a-half days, the trip is a moderately steep hike. The Vodanicuses haul two massive rafts up with them, insisting that the adventurers do their share of the lugging. (If they can convince the adventurers to do more than their share, so much the better.) Each raft is 10 feet by 4 feet and weighs 150 pounds. The rafts are sturdy enough to survive the punishment they take throughout the trip.

Late on the third day of the mountain trek, when the group has camped for the night, a gang of 10 mountain scorchers accosts them (use the ork scorcher statistics provided on p. 41 of **Bond Breaker**). The Vodanicuses promised the scorchers a cut of their last haul in exchange for safe passage and then double-crossed them. The orks, led by a big bruiser Named Buunpak, insist on being paid double. And they growl and rattle their swords to emphasize that they mean business. The Vodanicuses attempt to get the adventurers to pay them off—the total is 500 silvers.

If the adventurers refuse to pay, a fight ensues. Play out engagements involving player characters. Use simple sketches to describe skirmishes between the scorchers and Vodanicuses. If the dwarfs take part in the fighting, the orks decapitate Second Brother Vodanicus. His family seems little affected by this tragedy. Unless the adventurers insist, they do not even bother to bury his corpse.

The final leg of the mountain trek involves a climb up a 200-foot rocky cliff (see p. 206, **ED**, for climbing rules). The Difficulty Number for climbing this cliff without the aid of ropes is 12. The Vodanicuses scale the mountain like spiders, hauling up the rafts after them with ropes and pulleys. If a character uses these ropes and pulleys, he gains +6 Steps to his Climbing talent or skill. If the character uses Dexterity to climb, he receives the bonus to his Dexterity Step.

After the climb, the Vodanicus family leads the adventurers to a cave mouth in the side of Mount Jhacsaan. To enter the cave, the characters must make an additional climbing roll to scale the jutting lip of rock that forms the cave floor.



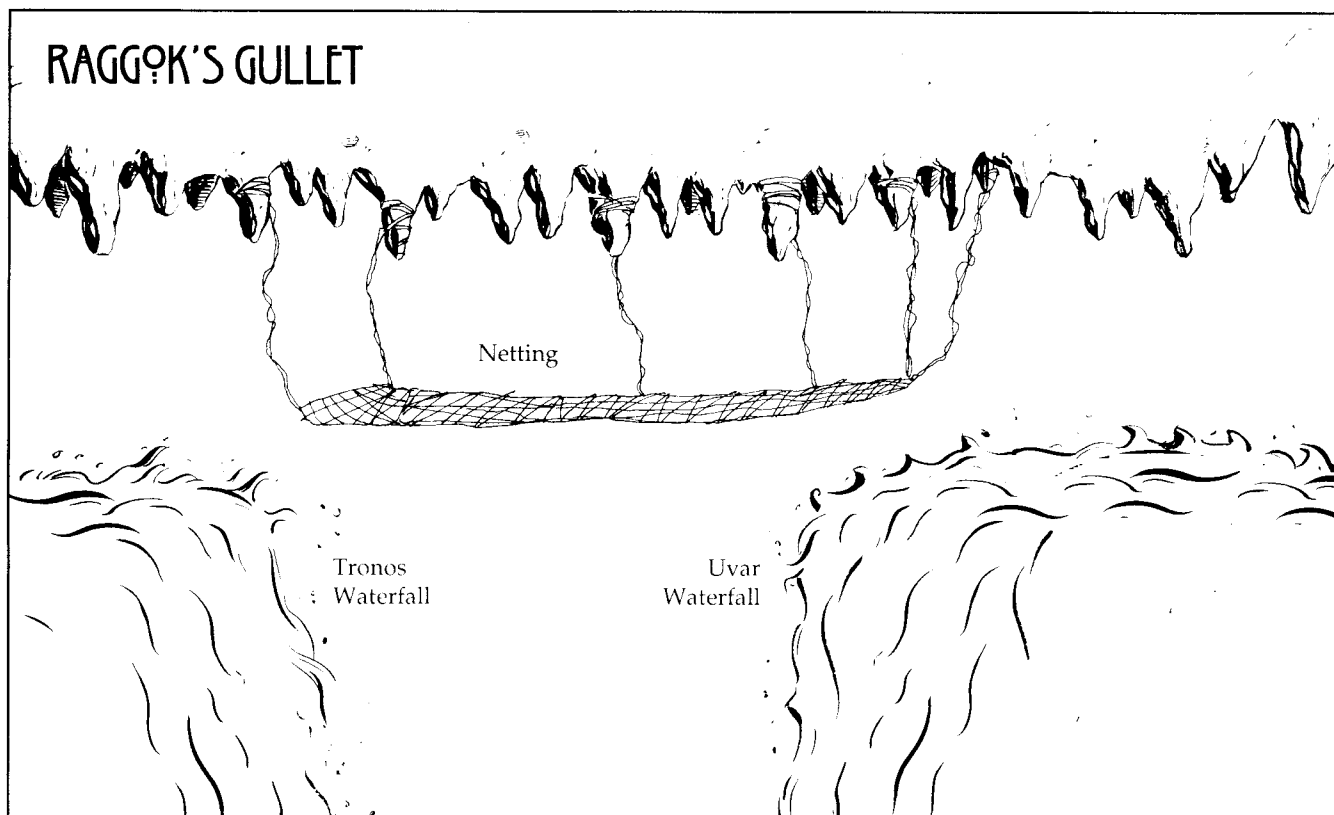
This cave opens onto one of the several tributaries that feed the underground River Uvar. As rain-bearing clouds hit the Tylon Mountains and burst, the water floods down the mountainside, then gets caught by the rock lip and channeled into the mountain. The cave is a bad place to be in a rainstorm or when the snowcaps melt, as flash flooding can easily sweep someone away.

TO THE RIVER UVAR

The cave leads to a vent that slopes downward to a huge underground pool. To carry their heavy rafts through this passage without slipping, the characters must make successful Climbing (5) Tests. If a character's test fails, the character plunges into the frigid river water below. Any character who hits the water risks catching cold or pneumonia and must make a Toughness (6) Test to resist getting sick. Characters who become ill suffer a cumulative penalty of -1 Step per day to all actions until they are cured. Characters may be cured by magical means (a questor of Garlen's healing ability will do the trick) or through a week's rest in a warm, dry environment. (Unfortunately for sick characters, the Great Dome does not fit the bill.) Characters who enjoy the benefits of protective spells such as Weather Cloak do not catch cold or pneumonia if dunked.

Needless to say, the Vodanicuses all make their nimble way down the vent with no problems, drop the rafts into





the water and jump onto them. Each character must make a Dexterity (or appropriate Talent) Test against a Difficulty Number of 6 to jump onto a raft without tumbling into the drink. The Vodanicus family openly ridicules anyone who gets soaked.

The dwarfs paddle the rafts from the pool down the tributary, which soon feeds into the River Uvar. The Uvar is a fast-moving river that courses down through the mountain at a steep angle. The rafts drift at an average speed of thirty miles an hour. This speed varies with the slope of the river—sometimes it slows to a crawl, and sometimes it speeds up.

RAPIDS

At one point the raft begins to accelerate rapidly. Aunt Vodanicus shouts, "Hold onto your loincloths! Raggok's Gullet ahead!"

Give the adventurers just enough time to get nervous at this name, and then describe the wash of whirling white foam the rafts are speeding toward at a breakneck pace. The adventurers are about to hit the worst rapids in this underground thrill ride. The Vodanicuses grab for leather straps fasted to the rafts, and the adventurers should do the same. Even windling characters have to hold on for

dear life, as the roof of the passageway is lined with sharp stalactites that make flying above the rafts hazardous.

To stay on their rafts, each character must make a successful Strength Test (or appropriate other Talent Test, at the gamemaster's discretion) against a Difficulty Number of 8. Any character who fails this test is thrown from a raft and hits either the stalactites or a wall. Characters thrown from a raft immediately take Step 12 damage, which armor does not reduce. The character is then thrown across the rapids (included in the above damage) and tossed into the deeper river water past the rocks. At this point, the character is in danger of drowning (see below). After 3 to 6 rounds, the Vodanicuses throw a rope to any character who ends up in the water, at which time the character stops taking drowning damage.

Only one member of the Vodanicus family—Uncle Vodanicus—is thrown from his raft. The impact kills him instantly. Aunt Vodanicus looks a trifle upset, but the others brush off his death. They want to get on with the journey and collect their fat fee.

Drowning

The adventurers have numerous opportunities to drown in the course of this adventure. A character can





hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Toughness step, but as soon as he runs out of breath he begins to take damage from drowning. To determine the damage the character takes, make a Damage Test in each round, using a Step Number of 4 plus the number of rounds the character has spent under water since running out of breath. For example, the first Damage Test uses a Step Number of 5 ($4 + 1 = 5$). No type of armor protects against drowning damage. Continue to make Damage Tests for drowning until the character dies, is rescued or breaks the surface of the water.

RAGGOK'S GULLET

After the rapids, the rafts briefly slow down. Suddenly, Mother Vodanicus shouts to the adventurers, "Hope you're good jumpers—Raggok's Gullet is coming up!"

If the adventurers ask for more information, Mother Vodanicus continues. Read the following aloud:

"This river ends in about ten minutes. We've got another two minutes or so in level water—then we hit a steep slope. The river gets faster than an ork on his wedding night and shoots us over a waterfall. Two rivers converge there, with a waterfall on either side. We call this place Raggok's Gullet because the Passions only know where all the water goes. We've hung a net between the two waterfalls—when the raft shoots over the falls, you've got to grab the net and scuttle over to the other side. There's just enough rock to stand on there so's you don't go plunging over the other waterfall. Get to them rocks and we'll tell you what to do next."

The adventurers have one chance to leap up and grab onto the netting strung over the tops of the two waterfalls. Each character must make a Dexterity Test (or Lizard Leap, Great Leap, or other similar Talent or Skill Test) against a Difficulty Number of 9. Any character who fails this test misses the netting and goes over the Uvar Falls. The drop is about 45 feet; anyone going over suffers appropriate falling damage and is pounded by the plummeting water after hitting bottom. Such characters must make three Damage Tests to see how badly they are injured. The first two Damage Tests are at Step 15, the third at Step 10. No type of armor protects against this damage.

Windling characters can attempt to fly across the falls, but the mist from the churning water may well get their wings wet and prevent them from flying. To avoid plummeting into Raggok's Gullet while flying across, windlings must make successful Toughness (8) Tests.

Non-windling characters attempting to fly or levitate across by some means must contend with a powerful

downdraft between the two waterfalls. To navigate through this, such characters must make appropriate tests against a Difficulty Number of 15. For example, an illusionist using a Flying Carpet spell must make a Willforce Test to keep the carpet properly airborne. A character using Gliding Stride must make a Gliding Stride Test, and so on.

Characters who grab the netting must make it across the net while hanging upside down over Raggok's Gullet. This feat requires a successful Dexterity (6) Test. Air sailors and sky raiders can substitute Dexterity-based Half-Magic Tests. Any character who fails this test falls into the pounding water and must make two Step 15 Damage Tests to determine the extent of his injuries.

Characters who make it across the net can jump onto a rocky outcropping beside the Tronos Falls. Those who end up in Raggok's Gullet must be rescued. Junior Vodanicus rescues the rafts and any adventurers who fail to get across. He rappels down a long rope attached to the netting and then attaches a set of ropes to each raft. These ropes are connected to a pulley system; the Vodanicuses stand on the rocky outcropping and heave the rafts up. Characters at the bottom of the gullet can rappel up the rope after Junior by making successful Climbing (7) Tests.

DAGGERS IN THE SOUL

As Junior is attaching the pulley rope to the second raft—after any adventurers have scuttled back across to the outcropping—Betrayal seizes Aunt Vodanicus. Deciding that Junior was particularly callous when Uncle Vodanicus died in the rapids, she pulls a sling and some stones from her backpack and starts firing at Junior. Unless the characters quickly intervene, the other Vodanicuses struggle with Aunt and knock her into the water. She plunges over the falls and is never seen again.

Once Junior, the characters and the rafts are all on the outcropping, the group follows a portage beside the raging waterfall. The outcropping next to this new waterway, the River Tronos, continues for several miles until the waters grow calm. At that point, the dwarfs put the rafts back in the water and paddle upstream to the Great Dome, home of the Pale Ones' Great House of Ch'elann.

Partway through the portage, someone notices that Wife Vodanicus is missing. The family assumes that she must have missed the netting on the way over the falls. About halfway through this part of the journey, the adventurers and their guides make camp for the night on the outcropping. Emphasize the extreme discomfort of sleeping, soaked to the skin, on hard rock. It is likely the characters have lost some of their gear and provisions while going through the rapids and over the falls, but make sure they still have the Blades.





defray the costs of replacing their grandmother. Characters can use appropriate social skills or good roleplaying to calm the dwarfs down, pointing out that Grandmother Vodanicus did attack one of them without warning.

The journey to the territory of the Pale Ones takes one more day after Grandmother's psychotic episode. Sometime during this final day, Father Vodanicus makes a Surprise Strike against an unsuspecting adventurer. If the characters kill him, the Vodanicus family again demands a reparation payment.

ARRIVAL

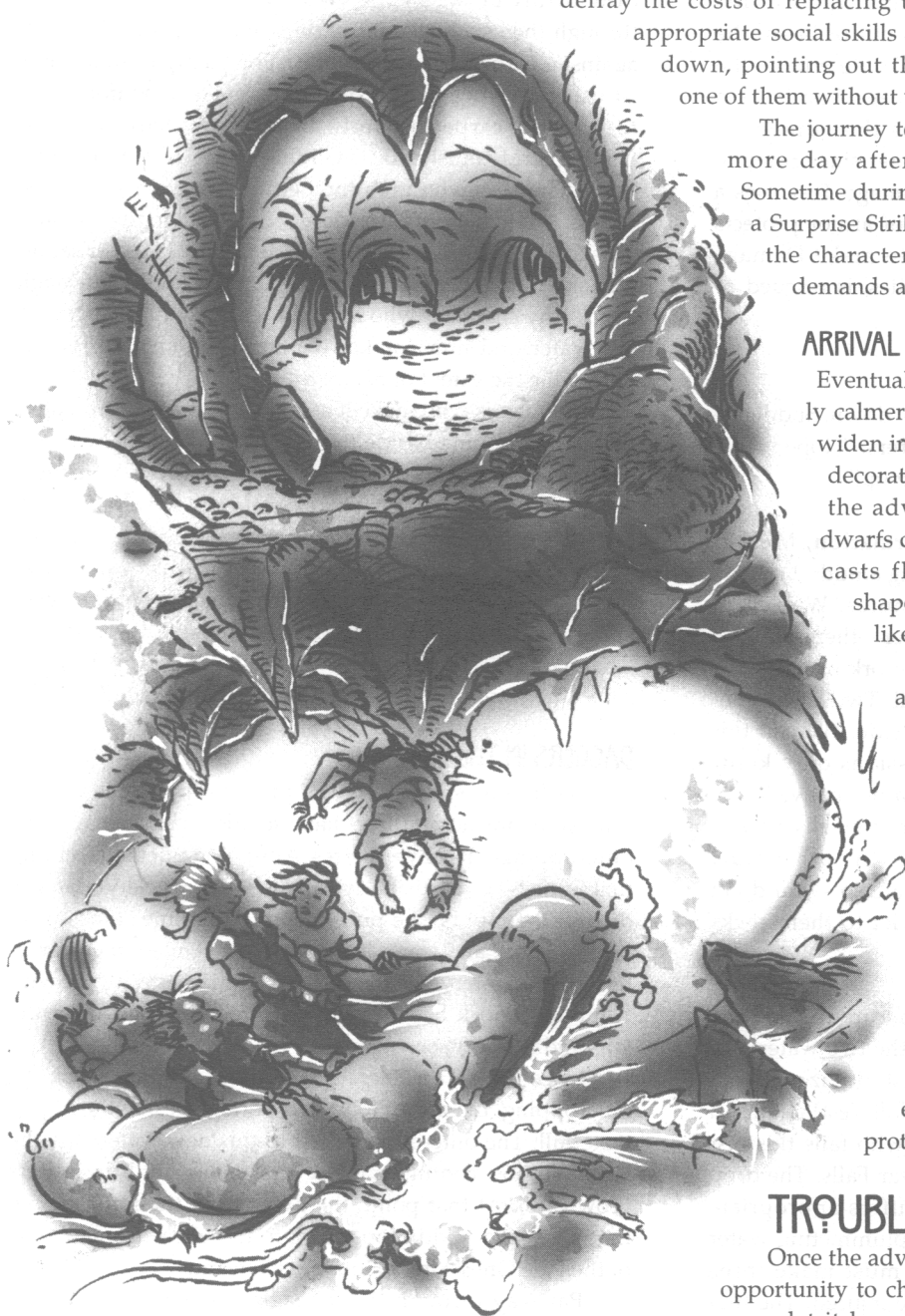
Eventually the raft reaches an area of progressively calmer water, as the underground passageways widen into huge and beautiful caverns elaborately decorated by centuries of dripping limestone. If the adventurers are using a light source (the dwarfs don't need one, as they have heat sight), it casts flickering shadows on these baroque shapes, making the pillars and columns look like mocking, hideous faces.

After a few minutes, another raft appears in the distance. As it approaches, the characters can see that it is full of spear-wielding Pale Ones. When the Pale Ones draw closer, they demand the immediate surrender of the adventuring party in the name of Ch'elasma, Shivalahala of the Great House of Ch'elann. The surviving Vodanicuses shift from foot to foot nervously, confessing to the adventurers that the Ch'elann want them dead for a list of offenses too long to detail. The dwarfs suggest surrender but first extract from the adventurers a promise of protection.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Once the adventurers start the journey, they have little opportunity to change course. If anything disastrous happens, let it happen. Don't fudge or save anyone at this point. This journey is one of the Deeds associated with the Blades and is worth 5,500 Legend Points—it should be extremely dangerous.

If the adventurers are having too easy a time of it, have other members of the Vodanicus family make Surprise Strike attacks. Adding more natural hazards, and even an attack or two from aquatic monsters—underwater versions of espagras (p. 295, ED) or gargoyles (p. 296, ED)—increases the challenge as well.

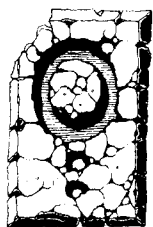


During the night, the influence of the Blades inspires Grandmother Vodanicus to creep up to the character who has suffered the least damage and attack using Surprise Strike. Grandmother Vodanicus makes this attack at Step 16 and does Step 18 damage. If the characters restrain Grandmother Vodanicus, they soon realize that she is completely insane. If they kill her, the other Vodanicuses angrily insist on an additional payment of 2,000 silvers to





RAIN OF BETRAYAL



VIEW

The adventurers reach the Great Dome, the vast cavern where the Pale Ones live. There they gain an audience with Shivalahala Ch'elasmo, who recounts her peoples' legends of the battle between Betrayer and the Seven Spokes. She then supplies the adventurers with a blood magic ritual concocted by the Pale Ones' ancestors to remove the Horror from the Blades. Meanwhile, the presence of the Blades is tearing the once-peaceful t'skrang community apart.

SETTING THE STAGE

As the characters enter the Great Dome, read the following aloud:

You have heard the term "great dome" used before to describe the fantastic underwater structures of the Serpent River t'skrang. Among the Pale Ones, the term refers to a gigantic underground cavern, at least a hundred feet high and possibly three hundred feet deep. A few light crystals glimmer here and there; evidently the Pale Ones, like dwarfs, can see by means other than bright light. In the lit areas, t'skrang of all ages practice various artisan skills, read books or perform other tasks that require extra illumination. Elsewhere, the t'skrang move through the gloom like walking lanterns. Many of them have luminescent skin that gives off a soft glow of white, green, and blue.

Enormous limestone columns run from ceiling to floor, disappearing into dark water. Centuries of dripping lime have produced a number of natural platforms in the water. Each platform contains one of the t'skrangs' leather tents. Some are small dwellings—others must serve purposes you can't even guess at.

Your t'skrang escorts, their spears at the ready, signal for you to stop. One of them scuttles nimbly up several wet limestone platforms, then disappears into the largest of the leather tents. Several minutes later, a glowing t'skrang clad in robes of silver brushes through the tent doors and peers down at you.

"I am Ch'elasmo Iffion H'uinmar Ch'elasmo, Shivalahala of the House of Ch'elann," she says, her age-brittle voice echoing from the surrounding rock. "I am the one you have journeyed so far to petition. You may approach."

If any members of the Vodanicus family are left alive, the shivalahala adds:

"As for those dwarfs, take them out and kill them."

THEMES AND IMAGES

Emphasize the strangeness of the atmosphere. The dark and wet underworld of the Pale Ones should seem exotic and unnatural to any surface-dweller. Portray the Pale Ones, especially Ch'elasmo, as grim and aloof. They help the adventurers out of a sense of duty, not friendship.

The theme of this section is betrayal, as the supernatural power of the Blades turns this tightly knit community into a spawning ground of discord.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Ch'elasmo is very worried about her people. About a week ago, a youngster saw the pattern of the Seven Spokes manifest itself in the grotto where the ancient heroes forced the Horror Betrayer from its body hundreds of years ago. This event has long been prophesied in the chronicles of House Ch'elann.

In their fateful confrontation with Betrayer, the Seven Spokes received aid from R'ashani, the shivalahala at that time. The Horror had taken up residence in the labyrinth of underground caves that surrounded the Great Dome and had Horror-marked many of R'ashani's people. When the ork heroes came to destroy Betrayer, R'ashani used her vast knowledge of sorcery to develop the blood magic ritual that the orks used to separate Betrayer from its material form and imprison its spirit in their magical daggers.

After the orks departed, seemingly in triumph, R'ashani had a series of visions about the Blades. The visions showed her that imprisoning the Horror in the Blades had merely provided a means for it to spread its influence and threaten later generations. Her visions also showed her that the fates of House Ch'elann and the Horror were intertwined. R'ashani prophesied that one day a new group of heroes would come to the Great Dome, bearing the Blades. A great battle would ensue. The harbinger of this dread period, which R'ashani dubbed the Time of Betrayal, would be the appearance of the sign of the Blades in the grotto where the original bearers of the Blades fought and defeated Betrayer.

Appalled by her visions, R'ashani spent the next several years creating a new blood magic ritual. This ritual enables





heroes who have woven Rank 8 threads to the Blades of Cara Fahd to create a new form for the Horror—a corrupt mingling of Horror spirit, Name-giver blood, and True Water. Once recreated in this form, the Horror can be truly killed, though doing so is extremely difficult. R’ashani knew it was possible that the Horror wanted to be recreated in this manner, but her visions told her that allowing it to live would place her people in even graver danger.

THE FATE OF THE VODANICUS FAMILY

If the characters object to the t’skrang hauling the Vodanicus family away, Ch’elasma huffily dismisses their concerns. She tells them that the effect of the Blades guarantees that the dwarfs will attempt to betray them. By now, the adventurers have seen enough evidence of such betrayal to confirm this statement. If they press the issue, the shivalahala tells them that she is the only Name-giver alive who has the Key Knowledge they seek. She then gives them a choice—they can save these base and vulgar dwarfs or they can save Barsaive from Betrayer.

If the adventurers seem inclined to fight for the dwarfs, the remaining members of the Vodanicus family immediately hurt their own cause by bitterly cursing Ch’elasma and all t’skrang, as well as the characters for not immediately leaping to their defense.

If the characters decide to fight for the dwarfs despite this provocation, Ch’elasma warns them that they are making a terrible mistake for which all of Barsaive will pay the price. If they persist, the t’skrang attack without mercy. Ch’elasma casts Silver Shadow spells on characters attacking with metal weapons and then fires Dragon’s Breath at them. With this spell, she can hammer up to eleven characters per strike with an average of 30 points of damage.

Dragon’s Breath appears on p. 75 of the **Earthdawn Companion**; the spell’s statistics are reprinted below for convenience. Each victim catches fire after the first hit, suffering Step 7 of damage each round until the fire is extinguished by a successful Willpower Test against Ch’elasma’s Spell Defense. Ch’elasma has her Dragon’s Breath spell in an Armored Matrix, so one of the threads is already woven.

Dragon’s Breath

Threads: 3 **Weaving Difficulty:** 15/20
Range: 50 yards **Duration:** 1 round
Effect: Willforce + 12
Casting Difficulty: Target’s Spell Defense

DEALING WITH CH’ELASMO

If the adventurers cause no trouble over the Vodanicus family, Ch’elasma invites them into her tent, a huge affair

decorated with stark and primitive-looking artifacts of the House of Ch’elann. As always, the shivalahala is attended by a group of spear-carrying t’skrang who watch the adventurers closely.

Ch’elasma asks the characters to introduce themselves and to recount their legends. She then quizzes them carefully about the Blades, especially the manner in which the adventurers acquired them and gained their various Key Knowledges.

Having heard what she needs to hear, she tells the adventurers that she will give them the final Key Knowledge they seek if they promise slay the Horror once and for all. She acknowledges that killing the Horror involves a blood magic ritual but reassures them that the great good of slaying Betrayer would far outweigh any taint from this desperate measure. Finally, she assures the adventurers that they will never rest easily until Betrayer is slain; until they kill the Horror, they will spread betrayal and bloodshed wherever they go.

If the adventurers impress Ch’elasma as honest and capable and they agree to her demands, she freely gives them the Key Knowledge and teaches them the ritual. If the adventurers do not impress her, she demands that they swear a blood oath to slay the Horror. This special oath, also designed by R’ashani, causes each adventurer to suffer a Wound with an amount of damage equal to the character’s Wound Threshold if they have not done their best to accomplish the sworn deed after a month and a day have passed. This Wound cannot be healed until the deed is accomplished. In either case, paraphrase the information provided above in Ch’elasma’s formal speaking style.

GRIM PREPARATIONS

The characters spend a week learning R’ashani’s blood ritual, and during this time they see the effects of the Blades on the Pale One community. Numerous brawls break out between families and even within families. On the second-to-last day of the training, all seventeen occupants of one family tent are found murdered. Ch’elasma’s guards track down a suspect and beat him to death instead of bringing him before the shivalahala as the law decrees. Ch’elasma, clearly grieving over these events, tells the adventurers that this rain of betrayal will fall on all Barsaive if they do not slay Betrayer. She confesses that even she has been tempted to betray them by teaching them the wrong ritual, even though such an act would be senseless and suicidal.

The ritual takes fifteen minutes to perform. As it unfolds, each adventurer takes his blade and cuts one-eighth of the wheel pattern into the back of his hand. This action causes each character 3 points of damage, and the injury does not heal for a year and a day. If Betrayer is still





alive after a year and a day, the damage remains until the Horror is slain. The characters then mix the blood from these wounds with a ball of True Water supplied by Ch'elasmo. They must then throw the bloody True Water into the middle of the pattern that floats at the site of Betrayer's first defeat.

By reaching the Great Dome and learning the ritual from Ch'elasmo, the adventurers have fulfilled the Rank 8 Key Knowledge and Deed requirements for the Blades. (Getting to the Great Dome is close enough to "the place where the Seven Spokes defeated the Horror" for magical purposes.) This means the characters receive 5,500 Legend points each. However, weaving the next thread rank to the Blades requires 8,900 Legend Points. If the characters choose to weave these threads, they gain abilities that will help them against the Horror, including a +6 Spell Defense bonus. If they do not think to increase the thread ranks, Ch'elasmo suggests doing so.

THE FINAL TREACHERY

Just as the adventurers have gone through a final dry run for the ritual and Ch'elasmo pronounces their training over, the shivalahala's tent is invaded by crazed t'skrang guards, as well as any members of the Vodanicus family who were taken off to be killed. (The devious dwarfs, aided by the effect of the Blades, have convinced their captors to help them take vengeance against Ch'elasmo.) The marauding band includes three assailants for each adventurer. Ch'elasmo cannot bear to harm her own people, and uses her magic against them only if the adventurers are having a hard time handling them.

Statistics for the dwarfs and t'skrang guards appear on pp. 102–103

SETTING OFF

When the adventurers are ready to depart, Ch'elasmo introduces them to T'chava, an adolescent t'skrang. She



reminds the t'skrang that he is risking his life and says he can still refuse this mission if he wants to. The brave young t'skrang takes a deep breath, then replies that he is the only one aside from her who can lead the adventurers to the right place—and that the shivalahala is too valuable to the House to risk losing her. Giving in, Ch'elasmo hands the adventurers the True Water they need to complete the ritual. T'chava then leads the adventurers to a raft, bids them board it and begins poling down the River Tronos.

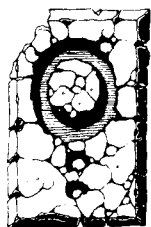
TROUBLESHOOTING

The adventurers are unlikely to feel honor-bound to save any surviving Vodanicuses from execution, considering that several of the dwarfs have already tried to kill them. If the characters decide to ignore Ch'elasmo's warnings and attack the t'skrang guards anyway, they have made a disastrous error and must pay for it. They never learn the Key Knowledge they need, never destroy Betrayer and are forever after shackled with cursed weapons that bring chaos to any community they enter.





DREAD REBIRTH



INTERVIEW

T'chava leads the adventurers to the grotto where the Seven Spokes destroyed Betrayer's body and imprisoned its spirit in the Blades. They encounter and fight the ghosts of the Seven Spokes, then conduct the blood magic ritual to force Betrayer into a new physical form so that they can kill it once and for all. (Or so they hope.)

SETTING THE STAGE

When the adventurers have embarked, read the following aloud:

Tense and quiet, T'chava paddles the raft down what seems like endless winding passageways. Then you pass under an overhanging arch and onto a wide, swift-running stretch of river. T'chava speaks for the first time, identifying the waterway as the River Tronos. Almost immediately, he lapses back into his shy silence.

After poling for fifteen minutes or so down the Tronos, T'chava expertly shifts the raft from the fast mid-river undercurrent and turns a corner into another passageway where the water runs much slower. This passage is about thirty feet wide at its mouth but soon narrows until the raft almost brushes its sides.

"It is not far now to the grotto," T'chava whispers, turning one last corner. You've not found it easy to keep track of all of the twists and turns, but you think you may be headed east.

The passageway widens into a cavern, and you see T'chava's jaw drop in surprise. You follow his gaze and see why—another party of rafters has beaten you here. A pair of dim lanterns shines on seven orks, all girded for battle.

THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter is the climax of several adventures. Make every scene in it as dramatic and horrific as you can.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventurers are face to face with the shades of the original Seven Spokes, the legendary heroes for whom the Blades were first forged. The ghosts are under the control of Betrayer, their spirits shackled forever to this plane by their blood link to the Blades, this place, and the monstrosi-

ty that dwells in the daggers. Because betrayal feeds Betrayer, the Horror wants the Seven Spokes to befriend the adventurers and get them to let their guards down, then attack them.

The ghosts must carry out the Horror's wishes, but want to do as much as they can to subvert it. They want Betrayer dead so that their spirits will be freed. These desires prompt them to honestly answer any questions the adventurers pose to them. Betrayer will not permit them to state directly that they are the ghosts of the slain heroes; the adventurers must arrive at this point by asking the right questions.

Once identified, the ghosts can tell the adventurers any part of the background of the Blades that they do not yet know. They can also give the adventurers details on what Betrayer looked like when they fought it—the Horror was a seething wall of flesh from which massive tentacles and clawed legs formed to strangle and tear at them. It regenerated as quickly as they could damage it, so they decided that the only way to slay it was to separate its twisted soul from its obscene body. The adventurers may not realize that this description is of little use, as the blood ritual will create a new physical form for the Horror.

As soon as the adventurers seem to be running out of questions, the ghosts abruptly attack, screaming that they are controlled by the Horror and are sorry for what they are doing. The ghosts attack by touching their opponents, causing the living matter they touch to decay. Any Wounds they inflict look and smell like decomposing flesh. They do not attack T'chava, as Betrayer considers the young t'skrang inconsequential.

The ghosts can only be damaged by the Blades of Cara Fahd. However, any character with a normally low rank in Melee Weapons can use the number of threads he has attached to the Blades as his Melee Weapons rank for attacks against these ghosts. If the adventurers are losing badly, one of the remorseful ghosts suggests this to them.

The ghosts are not destroyed when they take damage equal to their Death Ratings. Instead, they dissipate and return later if the adventurers slay Betrayer.





GHOSTS (7)

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 8 TOU: 4
PER: 8 WIL: 2 CHA: 8

Initiative: 8

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 16

Damage: 12

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Death Rating: 28

Wound Threshold: NA

Unconsciousness Rating: NA

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: NA

Social Defense: 6

Armor: 0

Mystic Armor: Immune

Knockdown: Immune

Recovery Tests: 0

Combat Movement: 100

Full Movement: 200

Legend Points: 950

Equipment: None

Loot: None

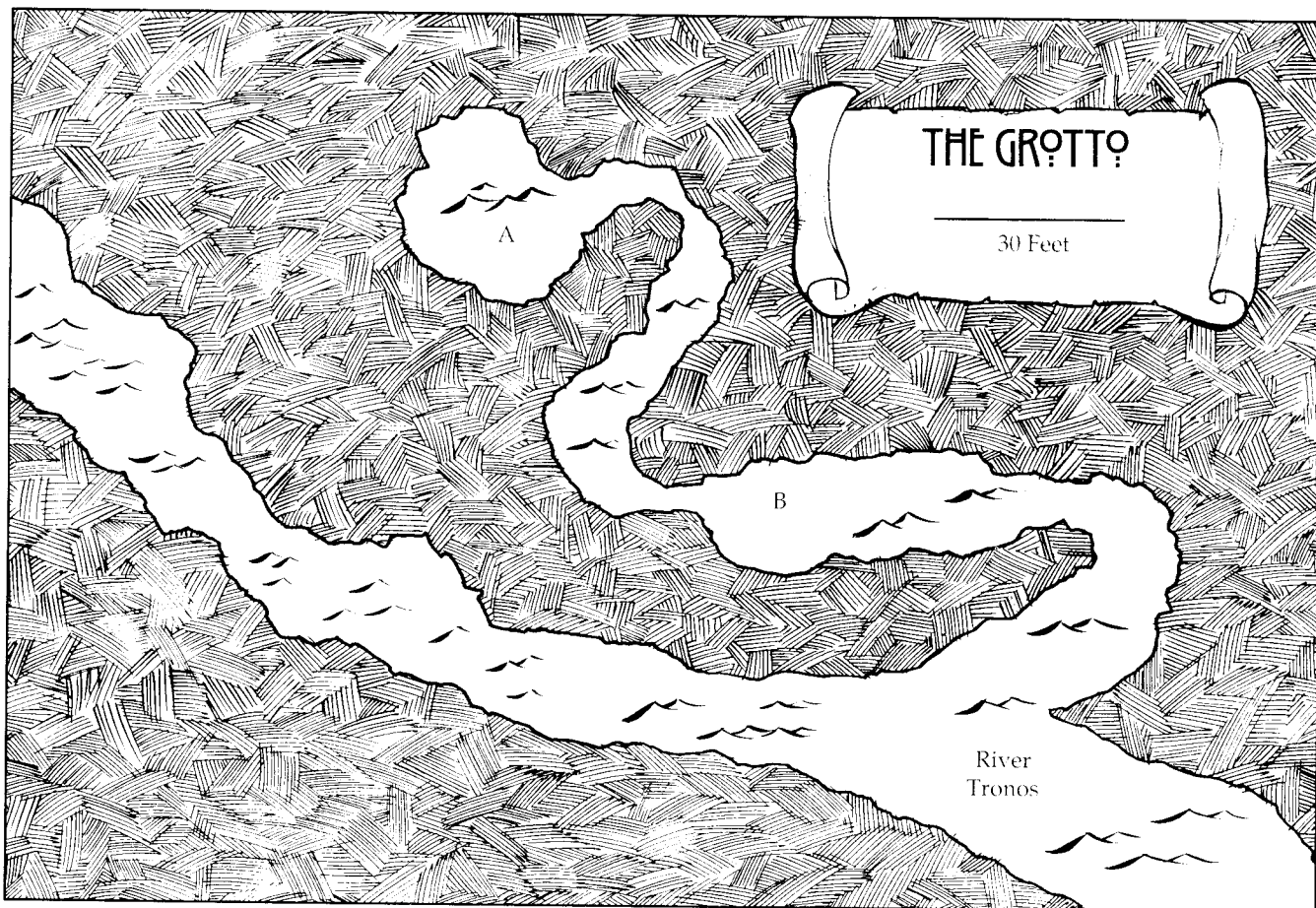
BATTLE IN THE GROTTO

When the adventurers finally reach the grotto (marked A on the map below), T'chava points out the pattern he discovered several days ago. It has grown to fill the grotto's entire thirty-foot diameter and is bubbling and foaming. If the players do not immediately recognize it as the wheel symbol on the backs of the Blades, secretly roll a Perception (7) or Evidence Analysis (7) Test for each character. A successful test enables a character to realize this.

The adventurers can now commence the blood magic ritual to coax Betrayer out of the Blades. They may search the grotto first if they wish but they find nothing of interest aside from the pattern in the water. The grotto is just an ordinary underground cavern with no other exits.

When the ritual begins, a terrible howling sound echoes throughout the grotto. Once the ritual is completed, the pattern stops bubbling and abruptly disappears. The howling stops, replaced by an eerie silence.

Then suddenly a tendril of red water erupts through the bottom of the raft and hurtles towards T'chava. It smashes through his jaw and down his throat, then back out again, literally tearing him apart. The tendril rips back





below the surface of the water, leaving T'chava's mutilated corpse lying on the raft.

The chamber echoes with a disembodied, burbling voice. Read the following dialogue aloud:

"Glorious, glorious to be physical again! I have missed the pleasure of killing for myself. I thank you, my deliverers! I owe this new shape to you, and I promise that I shall wreak much havoc in it. Pardon my ingratitude in slaying you—fools!"

The showdown begins; statistics for Betrayer appear on p. 100. Betrayer intends to kill all the characters, savor-

ing each death like fine wine. Exulting in its new incarnation, it lashes out physically at first, trying to kill as many of the characters as possible with its razor-sharp tendrils.

At the same time, its voice rings out in the adventurers' minds (Betrayer's tie to them through the Blades works as an effective Horror mark). The Horror offers "mighty power" to any adventurers who betray their fellows by striking against them. (In game terms, the Horror will provide the "mighty power" by using its Karma Tap ability to substitute its Karma step for a character's and allow that Karma to be applied to any Attack Test made against another adventurer.) Betrayer also offers to spare any traitorous character's life and to grant him immortality. This last offer is a blatant lie, and the Horror greedily devours any such converts at the first convenient opportunity.

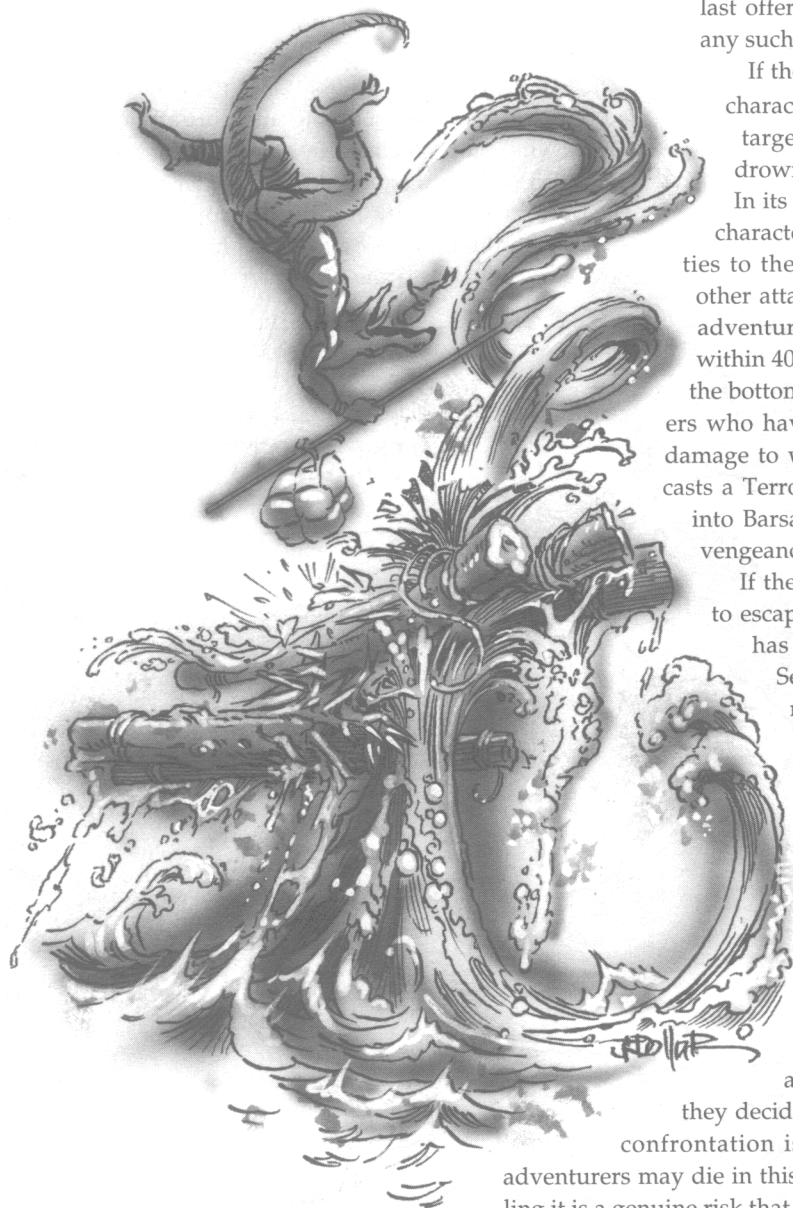
If the Horror has trouble damaging one or more of the characters, it changes tactics and attempts to grapple its targets (see p. 197, ED) and pull them underwater to drown. For drowning rules, see **Drowning** (pp. 90–91).

In its new form, Betrayer can be truly damaged only by characters using talents that have been enhanced by their ties to the Blades of Cara Fahd. The Damage Step of any other attack ability is reduced by 10 steps, and so only the adventurers can kill Betrayer. If Betrayer takes damage to within 40 points of its Unconsciousness Rating, it retreats to the bottom of the grotto and casts Skin Shift at the adventurers who have been most effective in damaging it. If it takes damage to within 20 points of its Unconsciousness Rating, it casts a Terror spell and flees down the River Tronos and out into Barsaive. The fleeing Horror howls an oath of eternal vengeance against the adventurers as it goes.

If the characters manage to slay Betrayer before it tries to escape, they immediately feel as if an immense weight has been lifted from their spirits. The ghosts of the Seven Spokes reappear before them, this time surrounded by light. The ghosts tell the adventurers that the curse has been lifted from the Blades of Cara Fahd, and the spirits thank their benefactors for freeing them to go on to the afterlife (whatever that might be). They remind the adventurers to use the Blades as they were originally intended—as a force for good—and then they vanish.

TROUBLESHOOTING

By this point in the adventure, the characters are unlikely to make many surprising choices. If they decide to back out at the last minute, so be it. This final confrontation is meant to be tough, and so some or all of the adventurers may die in this battle. They are facing a legendary Horror—tackling it is a genuine risk that may bring a heavy price.





LOOSE ENDS



his section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Pure Liquids** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and provides game statistics for the cast of characters.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

If Betrayer escapes, the Horror regards the adventurers as its most dangerous foes—because only those wielding the Blades of Cara Fahd can seriously damage it. The Horror will corrupt other adepts and Name-givers and send them to threaten the adventurers, either through direct attacks or by more devious means such as framing them for crimes, causing problems for them with local authorities, spreading false rumors about them to tarnish their legends, and so on. Some of Betrayer's corrupted allies will spy on the adventurers, and when they are weakened by other struggles, the Horror will send its minions to finish them off. If Betrayer is near the adventurers when an opportunity to harm them presents itself, the Horror will attack them personally. Whenever they encounter it, they will discover that it has grown stronger because it is constantly feeding on the discord it sows. To reflect this, add 2-3 steps to each of the Horror's abilities and attributes and raise Betrayer's Defense Ratings each time the player characters run into it.

If the adventurers kill Betrayer, all the people that it touched through the Blades will instantly sense the Horror's death and know that the adventurers did the great deed. As a result, the adventurers' fame will spread instantly throughout Barsaive.

Whatever happens in the grotto, any surviving adventurers may return to the Great Dome. Ch'elasmo will arrange for an escort to take them back to the surface through a secret and much safer route than the one by which they came.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award the characters Legend Points as described in the **Introduction**, p. 8. The Adventure Award for **Pure Liquids** is 2,250 points.

CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING AND HEROICS

Award characters Legend Points for taking any of the following actions:

Haggling down the Vodanicus family's fee	50
Avoiding a fight with the mountain orks	200
Getting across Raggok's Gullet unharmed	500
Arriving at the Great Dome and agreeing to perform Ch'elasmo's ritual*	5,500
Arriving at the Great Dome with Vodanicus family members still alive	400

*Each character earns the listed Legend Points for accomplishing this Deed.

DEFEATING CREATURES

Award Legend Points for defeating creatures/opponents in this adventure as shown on the Creature/Opponent Award Table.

TREASURE

The characters gain no treasure in this adventure.

CREATURE/OPPONENT AWARD TABLE

Creature/Opponent	6 Players	7 Players	8 Players
Betrayer	30,000	30,000	30,000
Mountain Orks (10)	1,800	1,800	1,800
Ghosts (7)	6,650	6,650	6,650
Vodanicus family members (7)	1,710	1,995	2,280
T'skrang rebels (3 per character)	570	665	760
Total	40,730	41,110	41,490
Award Per Character	6,790	5,870	5,190

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

A single character who completes **Pure Liquids** receives an average of 14,120 Legend Points. This average assumes 7 players in a group, and does not include points earned for battling additional opponents or finding treasure created by the gamemaster.





CAST OF CHARACTERS

This section contains information and game statistics for Betrayer (in the physical form provided by the blood magic ritual), Ch'elasma, members of the Vodanicus family and the rebellious t'skrang. Feel free to modify statistics or create additional characters to better suit your players and campaign.

BETRAYER

Betrayer is hard to see, because its new body is made of water and blood and it is attacking from underwater. If the characters manage to get a clear look at the Horror, the new form appears as a series of wheels within wheels, a complex and twisted three-dimensional version of the wheel design on the Blades. The center of this wheel contains a grotesque, ever-changing face, surrounded by seven tendrils. Betrayer uses the elastic tendrils to make physical attacks. The Horror can sharpen the ends of the tendrils to spear-like points at will.

Betrayer has spent centuries imprisoned in the Blades, and for the moment wants to physically destroy as many victims as possible. If it escapes from the final encounter, it gradually returns to its usual *modus operandi*: psychologically tormenting and destroying its victims from afar. It can feed on any negative emotion, but especially enjoys jealousy, the shock of betrayal and the remorse of traitors.

Attributes

DEX: 15 STR: 15 TOU: 15
PER: 18 WIL: 15 CHA: 18

Initiative: 15

Number of Attacks: 7

Attack: 18

Damage: 25

Number of Spells: 2

Spellcasting: 20

Effect: see below

Physical Defense: 17

Spell Defense: 22

Social Defense: 22

Armor: 10

Mystic Armor: 20

Knockdown: NA

Recovery Tests: 7

Death Rating: 180

Wound Threshold: 18

Unconsciousness Rating: 160

Combat Movement: 75

Full Movement: 150

Karma Points: 30

Karma Steps: 13

Powers: Damage Shift 20, Horror Mark 15, Karma Tap 15, Skin Shift 15, Terror 15

Legend Points: 30,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None





CH'ELASMO

Ch'elasma is a Twelfth Circle elemental, polite without being warm or friendly. Portray Ch'elasma as a distant and forbidding figure—she should seem a little menacing when the adventurers first meet her. As they learn what is going on, they gradually realize that she is interested in the greater good of her people and all of Barsaive.

Ch'elasma keeps the following spells in her matrices: Dragon's Breath (Armored Matrix), Earth Darts (Enhanced Matrix), Silver Shadow (Enhanced Matrix), Perimeter Alarm, Blade Fury, and Water Wall.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (18): 7/D12
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Damage

Death Rating: 87
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 66
Recovery Tests/Day: 2
Recovery Dice: D10

Combat

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 13
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 3
Mystic Armor: 3

Skills

Artisan/Juggling (3): 10/D10 + D6
First Impression (3): 10/D10 + D6
Streetwise (3): 10/D10 + D6
Tactics (3): 10/D10 + D6

Karma

Dice: D6
Points: 25

Talents

Animate Object (11): 18/D20 + D12
Armored Matrix (11)
Bargain With Summoned Creature (11): 18/D20 + D12
Durability (Elementalist) (13)
Elemental Hold (11): 18/D20 + D12
Elemental Tongues (11): 18/D20 + D12
Elementalism (Thread Weaving) (13): 20/D20 + D8 + D6
Enhanced Matrix (11)
Enhanced Matrix (11)
Karma Ritual (11)
Read and Write Language (11): 18/D20 + D12
(all major languages plus several dialects)
Read and Write Magic (11): 18/D20 + D12
Spell Matrix (11)
Spell Matrix (11)
Spell Matrix (11)
Spellcasting (13): 20/D20 + D8 + D6
Summon (11): 18/D20 + D12
Summoning Circle (11): 18/D20 + D12
Temperature (11): 18/D20 + D12
Willforce (11): 18/D20 + D12

Equipment: Leather armor

Special: Tail attack 8/2D6 damage.

Note: Ch'elasma can spend Karma on Perception, Charisma, Recovery, Willpower, and Willforce Tests. She knows all published elemental spells.





T'SKRANG GUARDS

Use the following statistics for all Pale Ones other than Ch'elasmo or T'chava.

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 6 TOU: 5
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 5

Initiative: 6
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 12
 Damage: 10*/9+
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
 Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 6
Mystic Armor: 1
Knockdown: 6
Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 32
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 24

Combat Movement: 40
Full Movement: 80

Legend Points: 95
Equipment: Leather armor, footman's shield, spear*, short bow+
Special: Tail attack 9/D8 + D6
Loot: None





VODANICUS FAMILY MEMBERS

The Vodanicus family has long made its living through sheer grit and a total lack of scruples. They all bear a strong resemblance to one another, with unusually small and narrow noses, thick eyebrows and recessed lower jaws. (One might suspect inbreeding in the Vodanicus family tree.) All of them wear dirty, smelly clothing and never get clean no matter how many times they plunge into the water. They eternally compete with one another to see who is the loudest eater and the teller of the rudest puns. Possessed one and all by greed, they will do anything for the silver that True Water can bring them.

Each member of the Vodanicus family has Surprise Strike as a skill at Rank 10/Step 16 and Haggle as a skill at Rank 6/Step 9.

Attributes

DEX: 6	STR: 6	TOU: 8
PER: 4	WIL: 6	CHA: 3

Initiative: 5

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 15

Damage: 11

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 5

Social Defense: 4

Armor: 6

Mystic Armor: 5

Knockdown: 6

Recovery Tests: 4

Death Rating: 40

Wound Threshold: 13

Unconsciousness Rating: 32

Combat Movement: 29

Full Movement: 57

Legend Points: 285

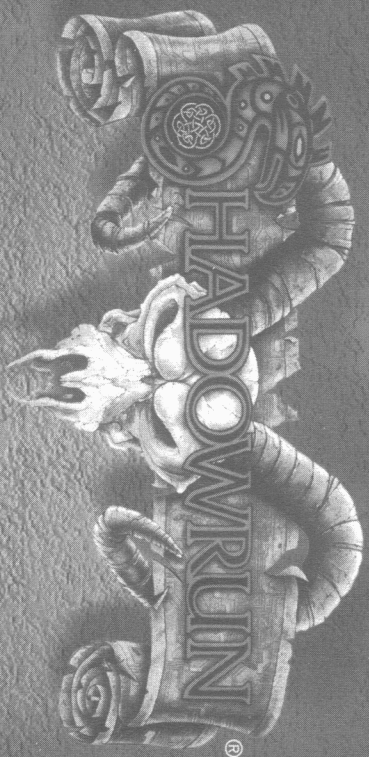
Equipment: Blood pebble armor, buckler, trispear

Loot: 150 silver pieces' worth of small gems



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Fahd Be Kept.

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One Footstep.

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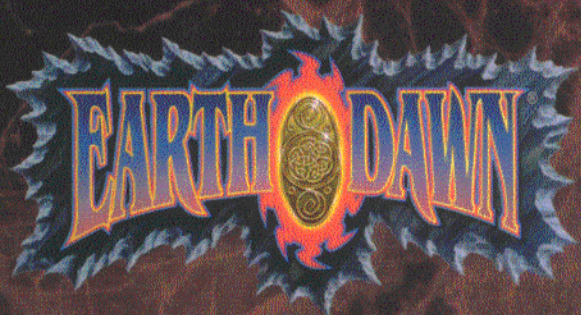
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