

EARTHDAWN[®]

SURVIVAL GUIDE[™]



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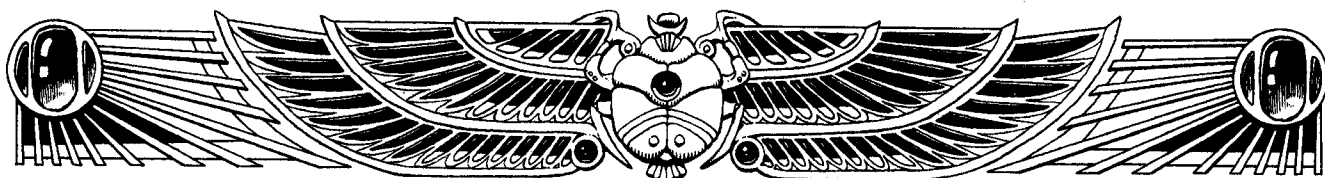
AN EARTHDAWN SOURCEBOOK BY STEVE KENSON

BARBICORN

SURVIVAL GUIDE™

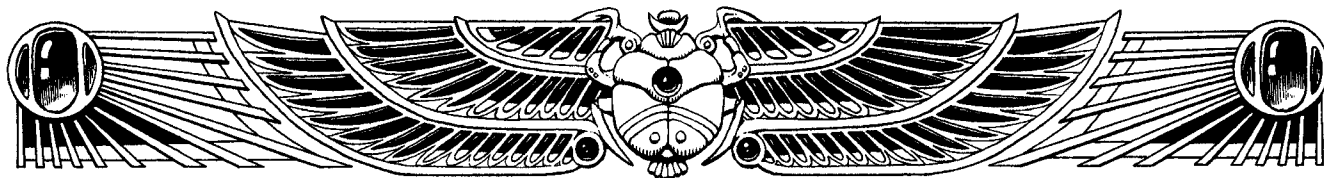


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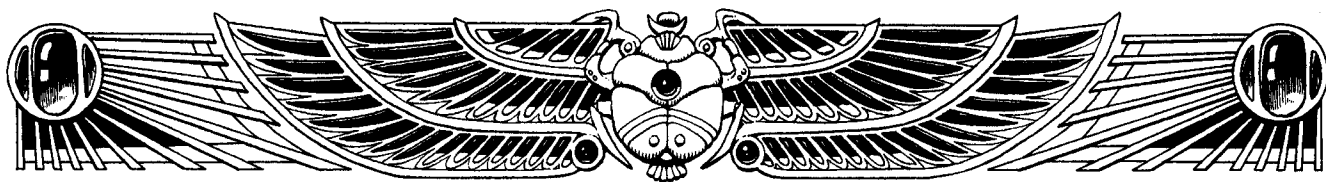
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ON THE NATURE OF THIS GUIDE



Welcome to *A Traveler's Guide to the Land of Barsaive, Its Wonders and Dangers*. Dubbed “the survival guide” by the apprentices who worked on it, this tome is intended to provide all the information would-be adventurers need to safely travel in Barsaive. The information in the *Traveler's Guide* was compiled from the wisdom—and folly—of adepts and travelers throughout the land who brought their stories to the Great Library.

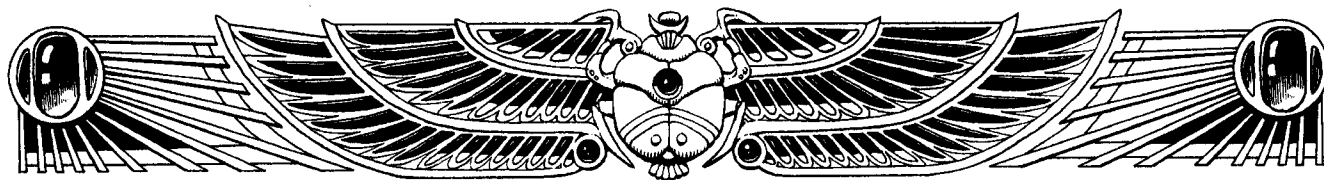
Building on the previous *Explorer's Guide to Barsaive*, this work offers advice on surviving the myriad dangers, magical and otherwise, not addressed in that tome, as well as deeper studies of certain topics mentioned only briefly in the *Explorer's Guide*.

In the course of producing this work, I have noticed common themes in the accounts transcribed and collected by the Library's archivists and researchers. Barsaive has recovered miraculously from the ravages of the Scourge, but its forests, jungles, mountains and other wild places hold many mysteries. Against this vast unknown, all the gathered wisdom of the Great Library is a mere wave on the ocean; it cannot tell us all that we might wish or need to know, because so many things are so different since the Scourge.

In many ways, Barsaive has returned to the untamed land it was in the days of Throal's founding. Adventurers and explorers are blazing new trails for the rest of us, uncovering the secrets of this strange new world in which we have so recently awakened. Exploration of our land has become a new challenge for our people, and I hope this guide will serve to make some few expeditions successful. In return, I ask this of all who read this book; if the wisdom in these pages helps you survive in the wilderness, share what you learn with us.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, 1509 TH





THE DANGERS AND DELIGHTS OF TRAVEL

This account of travel in Barsaive comes to us from the legendary troubadour Hamlin Risingsong, a frequent contributor to the Great Library of Throal. Risingsong has traveled the length and breadth of Barsaive since his youth, and knows as well as anyone how to get safely from place to place. I consulted him before setting out on my own journeys to compile information for our Explorer's Guide, and his advice proved invaluable. Though framed as an entertaining fireside tale, this essay provides much practical advice for the discerning reader.

—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records



The song of the road has called to me since my boyhood in the hinterlands of Barsaive. The confines of Caralle, the humble village where I grew up, suited most of my neighbors just fine—but I always longed to know what lay over the next hill or in the village just beyond our own. We all loved to hear stories of far-off places and heroic deeds from the few wandering troubadours who came our way, but for most of us they were only stories. For me, they were a promise and a spur.

That promise was fulfilled the year Janor came to Caralle. He arrived in the last month of summer and stayed until the moon changed. I sat near him every night along with the rest of the village and listened, spellbound, to his tales of faraway lands: of the fiery sea where Death himself was said to be imprisoned, of the fierce natives of the Servos Jungle, of the shining ribbon of the great Serpent River, of the great Kingdom of Throal and of distant Thera. His troubadour magic made those places come alive, and I dreamed of seeing those wonders with my own eyes.

Almost at once, I knew I wanted to travel with him. But I was afraid to say so. He was an adept, with strong and wonderful magic, a lean and weathered-looking human who had lived more lifetimes and seen more miracles than an ignorant country youth like me could dream of. His hands were callused as much by the bowstring as by harpstrings, and the knowledge of herbs that he shared with the village healer suggested infinitely more wisdom where that came from. All I knew was farming, and the only creature against which I had ever raised a weapon was the occasional rabbit bound for the stewpot. The tigers and brithans and other fearsome beasts that Janor had encountered during his travels could break a slender elf like me in half. I was not strong enough or clever enough to be an adept's apprentice, I told myself. Yet the dream persisted.

I made a point of sitting by Janor's feet, rarely taking my eyes from his face when he told stories or sang. He could not help but notice and seemed to approve of the ardor with which I listened. One night, greatly daring, I brought my pipes to the evening's gathering and began to play along as he sang *The Ballad of the Earthdawn*. Harp, pipes and his clear tenor voice all seemed to blend as if in a wonderful magic spell. Never had I played so well or so joyfully, most of all because in some mysterious way, Janor seemed to have been expecting it.

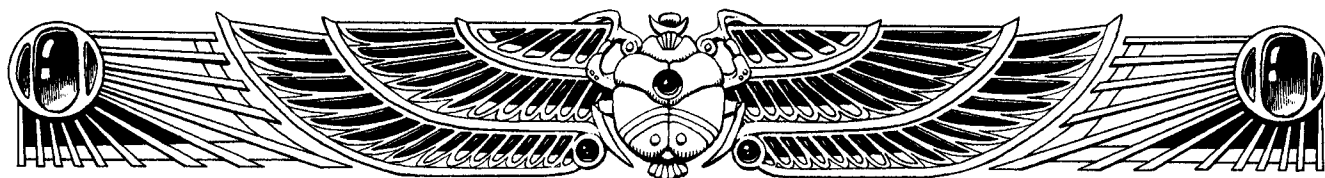
I stayed with him awhile after the others had gone away. We sat in silence for a time, Janor tuning his harp and me fidgeting with my pipes. "You play well," Janor said finally. "And you have the traveling spirit in your eyes." Then he fell silent. I hardly dared to breathe. Now was the time to speak, but the words refused to come.

"Have you a question to ask me?" Janor said.

"I want to go with you," I replied softly. "I want to see beyond the horizon. I want to learn troubadour magic and have a thousand stories to tell. I want—"

He placed one hand over mine, gently loosening my over-tight grip on my pipes. "Careful," he said, sounding as if he was trying not to laugh. "A troubadour's apprentice must take care of his instrument."





"I'll do everything you tell me. I'll listen to every word you say. I'll work hard and I won't be any trouble to you, I promise." Sheer unbelieving joy was making me babble like an infant.

"The Discipline of the troubador is not an easy one," he warned. "And I must journey through more of Barsaive's wild lands before I turn my steps toward Throal. To walk on the path, you must surrender safety, security, peace—all those things that youth finds so dull and old age finds so precious."

"Would you stay here, if you could? Leave off journeying and become a safe, secure, peaceful, *boring* farmer?"

He laughed at that and told me to meet him on the outskirts of Caralle at sunrise.

MY FIRST JOURNEY THROUGH THE HINTERLANDS

We began our journey traveling east, skirting the foothills of the Delaris Mountains in whose shadows I had lived all my life. The sun was barely glancing over the horizon, and I could not help yawning as I stumbled half-awake toward the village boundary. I had not drunk my usual cup of jaal tea that morning; I knew the scent of brewing tea would rouse my mother and sisters, and the last thing I wanted to hear were their entreaties to stay. I wanted to see the wide world, and not even the call of blood could keep me from that dream.

Janor raised an eyebrow at the sight of the loaded pack on my left shoulder but said nothing about it. "Take a last look, Hamlin," he told me. "Say farewell. You will not see home again for some time—perhaps never."

The "never" startled me—I had not truly thought what my desire to see the world might cost me. But even as the whisper of doubt arose in my mind, the song of the road drowned it out. I turned and looked back at Caralle. The early morning light painted its houses and barns in pale tints of rose and gold. My safe, familiar, dull home had never looked so beautiful—and once I turned my back to it, it would no longer belong to me.

Janor stood behind me, waiting. The morning was so silent that I could hear him breathing. Somewhere out of sight, a sun-greeter sang its daily tune to the sky.

I turned to face him. "Let's be off, then."

Janor struck off through the grass, bearing toward the sunrise and slightly south. His sturdy walking stick thudded into the earth at every other step, beating a soothing rhythm that lulled me into something like a trance. I walked along behind him, watching his battered leather satchel and small harp-case swing from side to side in time to the rhythm of his steps. A strap binding them securely to his belt prevented them from swinging far. The satchel was smaller than the harp-case; how could he possibly carry everything in it that one might need for a long journey? My own pack was stuffed to bursting with everything I could think of that might come in handy—a bottle of water and three flasks of strong ale, a loaf of fresh-baked bread, a crock of sweet butter, half of my mother's latest batch of honeycakes, a sackful of salted meat from last autumn's slaughtering, a large hunk of my favorite sharp cheese, a few packets of healing herbs whose uses I knew, a couple of flints, some candles and holders, a spare pair of leather boots, two pairs of leather shoes, several of my favorite books, my pipes, a pillow and a sturdy wool blanket, and as many shirts and trousers as I could fit in the pack. I also carried a bag of potatoes—they make wonderful eating when roasted in coals—and a short bow and arrows I'd fashioned just that summer. I was prepared for everything (or so I believed).

We walked until the sun had climbed high in the sky. Before long my legs began to ache, and the constant jouncing of my bulging pack against my spine began to drive me near to madness. One of my books had somehow lodged itself so that its corner dug into the small of my back with every step, and my shoulders were beginning to throb from the weight of my belongings. But no matter how I tried, I couldn't shift the pack to a comfortable position.

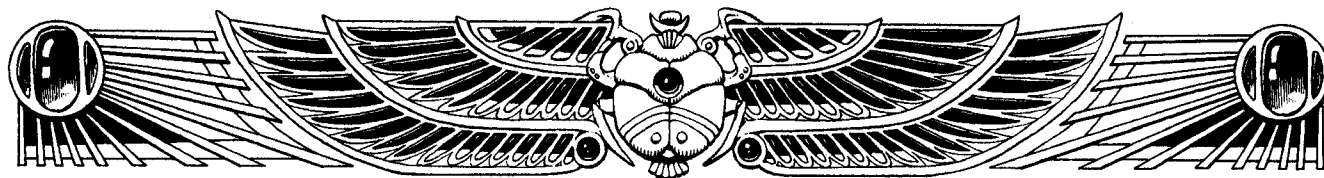
Ahead of me, Janor strode carefree and easy. He was humming a jaunty tune, as if the long hours of struggling up and down countless small slopes were no more than a brief pleasure walk. With relief, I noticed he was heading toward a small stand of trees. "We'll break our fast ahead," he said, glancing over his shoulder at me.

Too spent to speak, I simply nodded.

He grinned at me. "Poor Hamlin. Just a bit longer—then you can have a rest." He sounded amused. I bit back an irritated reply, resolved to prove my worthiness for this path by not complaining. With a sound suspiciously like a snort of laughter, Janor faced forward and kept walking.

The trees had grown up around a small, deep spring. As soon as Janor stopped, I swung my pack off my tortured shoulders and threw myself on the soft, springy grass by the water's edge. I held out my hands to scoop up some water, but Janor stopped me.





"Wait," he said. "It may not be safe. Did you bring any water from Caralle?"

I nodded, and he told me to fetch it. "We'll refill our waterskins here, but I'll boil the water before we drink it. It's probably fine—the trees look healthy enough—but it's best to err on the side of caution."

I dug the water bottle out of my pack and drank. With the edge of my thirst quenched, I was content to lie on the grass and watch Janor for awhile.

He opened his pack, took out a waterskin, and drank deep. Then he took out what looked like two scraps of oiled leather. He shook them out and held them under the surface of the spring, and I realized that they were spare waterskins. They seemed to fill up forever, slowly swelling to the size of large wine flasks. Amazing, that two folded pieces of leather scarcely larger than a man's hand could hold so much liquid. When the flasks were full, Janor tied them shut with short leather thongs and then attached them to his belt.

Next, he pulled a small sack from his satchel and opened it. Then he offered it to me. "Piece of fruit?"

I thanked him and thrust my hand into the sack. I was surprised to feel something dried and leathery, rather than the smooth skins of fresh berries. I drew out my hand and discovered that it was full of dried apple slices.

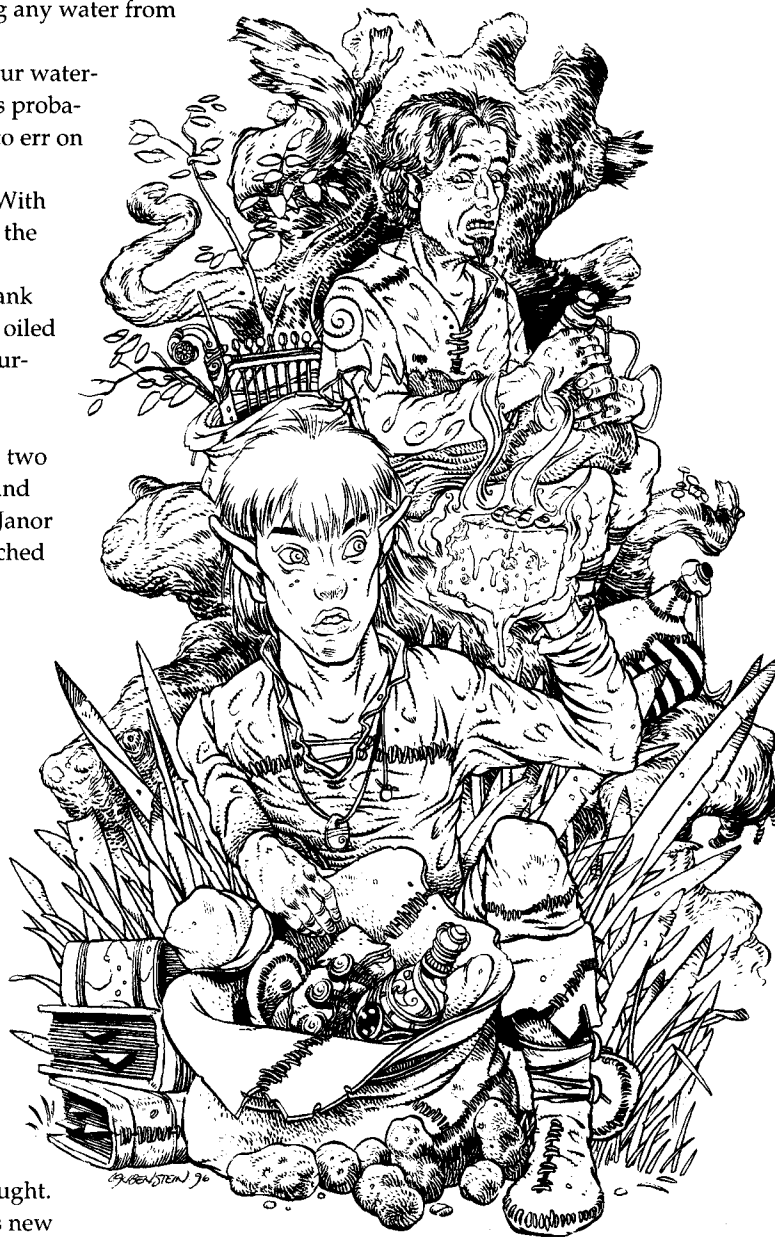
"A good deal easier to carry than fresh ones—and these don't spoil, either," Janor said.

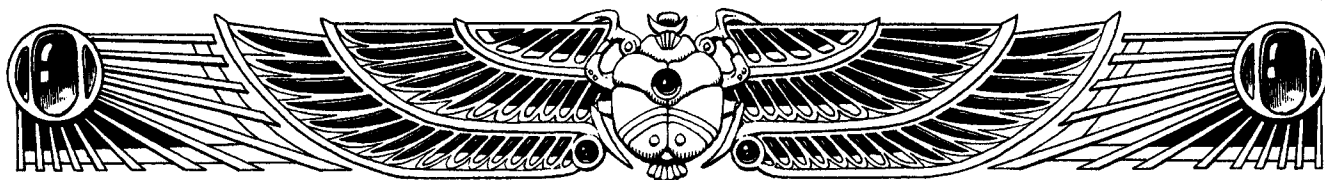
I reached for my own pack and dragged it onto my lap. The effort set my shoulder muscles burning. How in the name of the Passions had Janor—so much older than I—managed to walk for the same amount of time over the same ground as I had, and yet still move as easily as if he'd just risen from a feather bed? Troubadour magic, I thought, and resolved to learn it as quickly as possible.

I pulled out my blanket and spread it on the ground, then carefully set out the provisions I had brought. Janor would surely be impressed at the foresight of his new young apprentice—his little satchel hadn't the room to contain half so much. I placed a flask of ale between us and set next to it a loaf of bread and the salt meat. Then I set two honeycakes down in front of each of us. I knew I should probably be more sparing with the cakes, as our entire supply came only to a dozen—but after so long a morning's walk, I thought we deserved some reward. If each of us ate one a day, the remainder would last four days—and surely by that time we would come to someplace where we might barter for more. (I devoutly hoped so, as I had a weakness for sweets.)

At the sight of the honeycakes, Janor cleared his throat. He seemed about to speak, but instead simply raised a hand to cover his mouth.

I took out the cheese and unwrapped the oiled cloth that covered it. The cheese glistened, as if it had gotten wet. Janor coughed loudly. I set the cheese down and reached for the crock of butter.





As soon as I brought it out of my pack, I knew something was wrong. It smelled strange—a sharp, nose-tickling smell, as if someone had spilled vinegar on it. I opened the crock, then dropped it in dismay as the full strength of the vinegar smell hit me. The butter had gone rancid.

"It was fresh this morning!" I said.

Janor burst out laughing. I gave him a wounded look. He shook his head, but made an effort to control himself.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't mock ignorance—I was just as ignorant myself once." He put the lid back on the butter crock and set it far to one side. "Your first lesson of the road, my boy—fresh food doesn't travel well, especially things like butter and cheese that spoil easily in heat." He gestured toward the bread and honey-cakes. "Those things don't hold up well either, but you can carry them for a day or two before they go stale. That," pointing to the salt meat, "is the most sensible thing you've brought. Dried meat, dried fruit, and parched grains are a traveler's best friend—they're light, you can carry plenty of them in not much space, and they'll keep for a year and a day like as not. If you want fresh food on the road, Hamlin, you hunt for it."

It made so much sense when he said it. I picked up the cheese and sniffed it. "I think this is still all right."

Janor unsheathed his belt knife, cut a small piece of cheese, and nibbled at it. "It tastes wholesome, but it won't stay that way for long." He gave me a crooked smile. "Let us feast on bread, cheese and honeycakes, and then we'll see what else you've got in that pack of yours."

After we had eaten our fill, I spread out all my possessions for Janor to see. The herbs and the flints he approved, likewise the spare boots—"Sooner or later, these will be worth the trouble of carrying them." The shoes he set aside, along with the candleholders, the ale flasks, and most of my clothes. The pillow he also set aside, with a snort and a shake of his head. My pipes, two shirts and two pairs of trousers he placed with the things I was apparently to keep. Beside this pile also went one flask of ale—"We may meet someone with whom we'll need to share this," was his cryptic comment. The other flask he poured out, over my half-hearted protest. "You'll get some use out of the flask—none at all out of what was in it. Ale and wine and suchlike only make you thirstier in the long run, and if you drink it off before sleeping you'll likely never wake up. You'll be sleeping so soundly, a herd of wild thundras could stampe by and not wake you—much less a thief or a starving wolf, sneaking quietly up on you by the light of your banked fire."

The candles he held for a moment, then placed them in the "keep" pile. "We may find some use for good wax, and these don't take up much room." When he came to the books, he looked grave. "I wish you had not taken these. I hate to leave them, but we can't spare the space for so many." He frowned at them, then bade me choose one. I selected *Poems and Lyrics of Ancient Landis*, a slender volume I'd discovered long ago while rooting around in the chambers of Caralle's abandoned kaer. Janor carefully bound the rest of the books in the oiled cheesecloth and tucked them into a fork of the nearest tree. "Someone may find them before the weather does too much damage."

Slowly, I repacked my bag. I was surprised at how much lighter it felt. "You'll find the rest of the morning's walk easier, now that you're no longer dragging your entire house around with you," Janor said.

"Morning's walk?!" I gaped. "I thought it was past noon!"

"Scarcely mid-morn," Janor replied, grinning. "Look at the sun, boy. Nowhere near overhead yet."

I looked up, squinting against the dazzle. It was true. I felt as if we'd walked forever, but the sun had made less than half its daily journey across the sky.

"We'll rest awhile longer, as it's your first day," he continued, taking my pack from me. From his own pack, he drew a piece of soft leather and a square of bright red silk. He cut the leather into strips with his belt knife, then opened up the silk square—which, I now saw, was actually a small purse—and took out a ball of thick thread and a bone needle. With quick, neat stitches he sewed the leather strips low down on the sides of my pack. "There," he said, tossing it at my feet. "Tie those round your waist and it won't swing so much. It'll also spread the weight across your whole back—much easier on your shoulders!"

"Is that the second lesson of the road?"

"No. The second lesson of the road is this: take all that you can, but no more than you need." He got up and walked over to a sapling. Holding it lightly near the top, he eyed it up and down, then looked over at me. "Stand up, Hamlin."

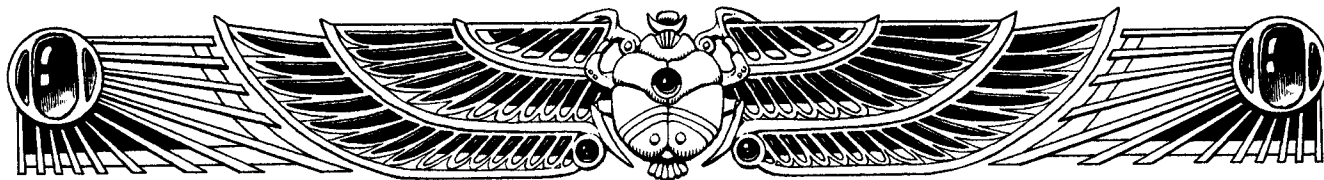
I stood. "But how will I know what I'll need? Apart from obvious things like food and water."

Apparently satisfied with whatever he saw, Janor gestured for me to sit again. "After this journey, you'll know—at least enough not to make too many foolish mistakes, or else I've lost my touch." He knelt and began sawing at the sapling with his belt knife. "For the rest, experience is the best teacher."

I watched him cut the sapling free and then trim off its few spindly branches. "What are you doing?"

He tossed the sapling at me. Startled, I caught it. "Your walking stick," Janor said.





THE FIRST NIGHT AND ITS PERILS

By the time we made camp that evening, I ached in places I'd forgotten existed. The rest of the day had gone more easily, just as Janor had said it would, but I had never spent all day on my feet before and I felt it in every muscle. At least we had fresh meat for our dinner—Janor and I had both shot rabbits that afternoon. The two tiny bodies now swung at his belt, as did the much-lightened sack of potatoes. Like the fresh bread and cheese, they wouldn't keep long on the road, and so Janor had selected only as many as we were likely to eat that evening. We also had a bagful of fresh apples, plucked from a copse of wild apple trees through which our path had led us. On seeing them, Janor had stopped and extracted from his satchel a folded cloth sack. He proceeded to fill the sack with apples—"Some for our supper, some for tomorrow's breakfast, and a few to dry if we get the chance," he told me. "Always watch for what you can scrounge—fresh fruits and vegetables found on the road can make a day's journey pleasanter than eating nothing but dried trail food. Take advantage of Nature's abundance whenever you can—Barsaive contains many places where you won't dare eat anything but dwarf mine rations and such. They'll keep you alive, but they won't sweeten your temper much if you have to eat them for long."

My skill at hunting had pleased him, as had my small bow and arrows. "A bow like this is a treasure to a traveler—small and light enough to carry easily and well-made enough to survive rough handling on a journey. A short bow and a knife are the only weapons a traveler really needs, unless he's going off to war."

"Why not carry a sword?" I was thinking of highwaymen and ork scorchers and the like. "Suppose you meet some fearsome enemy on the road—would it not be easier to slay him with a broadsword than a belt knife?"

Janor snorted. "If you meet a truly fearsome enemy, a sword won't be enough to rout him. Better to keep a sharp eye on the road ahead and avoid trouble wherever you can. Unless you're a swordmaster or a warrior adept with particular skill at swordplay, carting around an iron blade as long as your arm will only weigh you down and attract the attention of those who would wrest it from you—without making you any more capable of protecting yourself."

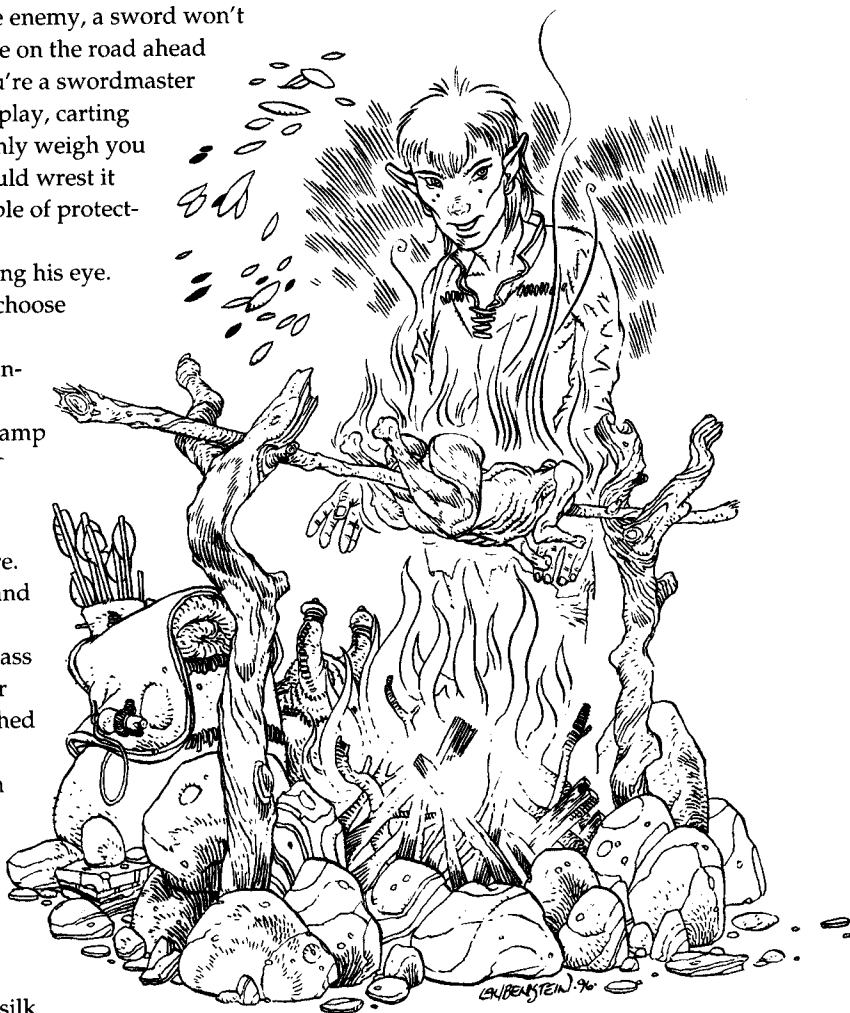
"The third lesson of the road," I said, catching his eye. "Weigh advantages against disadvantages and choose what you bring accordingly."

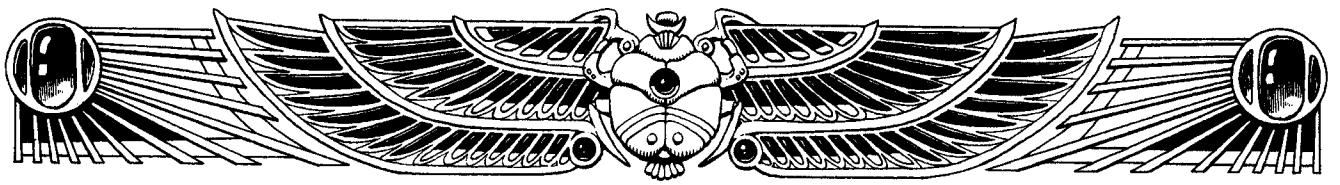
"Congratulations," Janor said. "You're beginning to think like a traveling man."

As the sun touched the horizon, we made camp in the lee of a small, shrub-covered hill. I sat down hard, feeling that I would be perfectly happy never to move again. Janor, however, roused me with a frown and an irritated gesture. "No rest yet, boy—not until we've made a fire and set our dinner to cooking."

Wearily, I got up. Janor bade me pull up grass until I had cleared a small circle and then gather stones to put around it. Meanwhile, he unsheathed his belt knife yet again and began to cut wood. After a few minutes he had a sizable pile of thin branches, which he placed in the circle of cleared earth. I ringed the spot with stones, while Janor pulled a handful of dried moss and a long stick out of his satchel.

I held out my flints, but he waved them away. He knelt down and spread the moss beneath the wood, then freed the stick from its silk





wrappings. It was of polished wood, as thick as my first two fingers together. Attached to one end of it was a cylinder of gleaming metal that could only be orichalcum, about the length of my thumb. I realized that the stick must be a firestarter.

Janor pointed the stick at the kindling and briefly closed his eyes. I saw a flash, and suddenly the moss blazed up. The wood caught in seconds, and I couldn't help but smile. We didn't need fire for warmth that night, but the sight of it cheered me nonetheless.

"Come and help me, Hamlin," Janor said, walking up to one of the bushes. When I joined him, he pulled one branch slightly away from its fellows and showed it to me. "See where it forks up there? We need two branches like this, plus another straight one about so long." He tapped me lightly on the wrist, then the shoulder. "And another thing; look at the color of the wood a moment."

I looked. The branch was pale brown, with a hint of green in its depths.

"That color means green wood—wood with life left in it. Two forked branches and a straight branch of green wood make a spit for roasting rabbits. You want green wood because it takes a long time to catch fire—which means our spit won't burn up while we're using it."

I nodded, and searched for a second forked branch while he cut the first one. I soon found one, and beckoned him over to cut it. As he worked, a thought struck me. "Weren't all those green branches?" I asked, pointing toward our fire.

Janor nodded. "That's why I used my firestarter. It has a kernel of True fire in its tip, and it will burn green wood or even wet wood as easily as bone-dry deadwood. Not much deadwood to be had around here, and grass burns too quick—we'd end up pulling armfuls of the stuff just to keep the fire going long enough to cook our meat, let alone keep the coals burning through the night. We're far enough from the Wastes that there's no taint to the magic hereabouts, so there's not much risk to using magic for our comfort." He picked up the three sticks and walked back to the fire. "Were we closer to some tainted place, I'd use flints rather than risk attracting the attention of the Passions-know-what. A wise traveler carries flints *and* a firestarter, so he can make a fire quickly and safely anywhere he goes."

The scent of roasting rabbit made my mouth water. I couldn't remember the last time I'd felt so hungry. To keep myself from tearing the half-cooked meat off the spit, I walked a little way from the fire and washed my face and hands using my bottled water and the long tail of my shirt. The light had faded quickly while Janor was setting up the spit, and the brightness of the fire made the shadows beyond it that much darker.

Something growled close by, and a gray shape launched itself at me out of the darkness. I yelled and swung my water bottle at the thing even as it knocked me to the ground. I smelled sour breath, felt it hot on my face as sharp white teeth descended toward me and buried themselves in my shoulder.

A bowstring twanged, and the night-demon fell away from me with a choked-off yelp of pain. Wincing, I rolled over and sat up. Janor was walking toward my attacker, his own short bow dangling from one hand. He knelt beside the thing with a sorrowful look on his face.

My "demon" was a wolf, gaunt and wasted. Janor's arrow had pierced one of its eyes. He touched the corpse tenderly, as a mother touches her child. "Poor thing. It must have been starving—wolves don't just attack Name-givers like that, especially with a fire nearby. Must have been after the rabbit." He turned to me. "It bit you?"

I nodded. "My shoulder. Hurts a bit."

Janor retrieved his satchel, pulled a waterskin and a soft cloth out of it, and then came to sit beside me. "This will sting," he warned, pouring liquid from the skin onto the cloth. He touched the wet cloth to my wound, and I yelped as the wolf had done. The liquid wasn't water, as I had thought—it was wine.

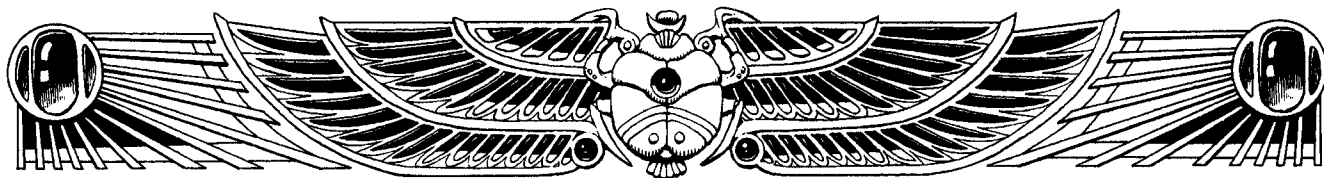
"You're carrying wine, but you wouldn't let me carry ale," I said, to distract my mind from Janor's ministrations. "Why not?"

He laughed softly. "I've no intention of drinking this stuff—it's as sour as month-old milk. It is, however, excellent for washing wounds—especially wounds like yours, where there's the danger of infection." He wetted the cloth again and swiped it gently across the bite one last time. "Believe me, sour wine will kill just about anything."

He inspected his work by the firelight and nodded as if satisfied. A sprinkling of healing moss and a bandage finished the job, and by then the rabbit was ready to eat. Janor took the laden spit and stuck one end of it in the ground between us. "Try a leg," he said, and reached behind him for his satchel.

I was hungry, but determined to wait for him as a mannerly guest should. I watched him drag his satchel onto his lap and take from it one of the waterskins he'd filled at the spring that morning. Next, he took out what looked like a circular mat of woven reeds. He shook the mat and it became a basket with high sides and a flat bottom. Attached to the bottom was a small circle of metal. Plaited reed thongs dangled from the basket's rim on either side.





Janor tied the thongs to the forked sticks where the spit had lain, so that the basket hung suspended over the flames. Then he poured the spring water into the basket. It held every single drop; nothing leaked through. "T'skrang workmanship," he said, noting my fascinated gaze. "A V'strimon sailor traded it to me for a song; they weave the best baskets in Barsaive. You can find them in Bartertown, also in any village along the Serpent River. It's quicker and easier to boil water this way than the usual way—heating handfuls of small stones in the coals of your fire and dropping them into the water." He leaned forward and tore off a rabbit leg. "But enough lessons for one day. Eat!"

We feasted on roasted meat and potatoes, and I felt content. The pain in my shoulder had died down to a dull throb, which somehow seemed only fitting for my first night as a bold adventurer.

SOME DIFFICULTIES AND HOW WE MET THEM

The second, third and fourth days of our journey passed much like the first. I learned to pace myself throughout the day, so that I felt less exhausted when we stopped for a meal. I began to learn the trick of sleeping deep enough to refresh myself but lightly enough to spring awake at any sound that might betoken danger. Janor was much better at this than I, of course. For a few days I slept so poorly that I stumbled drowsily through most of the mornings; but by the fourth day I had begun to awaken fully before the sun was more than a handspan above the horizon.

On the fifth day, the land around us became rugged and rocky. We made several brief stops, both to accustom ourselves to the greater effort of moving through such terrain and so that Janor could mark certain distinctive outcroppings on the map he was making. "A clear, accurate map is a treasure beyond price," he told me. "These wilds contain dangers enough, even for experienced travelers. When you can't be sure of what's ahead of you—well, that's when people are likely to go adventuring and not come back."

"But there's so much of Barsaive that no one knows, except the people who live there," I said.

"Which is exactly why folk like me—who know how to keep a course without a map when they must—are spying out the unknown lands for everyone else. When the two of us get back to Bartertown, the Great Library of Throal will have another set of reliable maps for those with the wit to read them." His eyes flicked back and forth from the rocks he was drawing to the parchment in front of him. "There—that's done it." He rolled up the parchment and placed it and his stylus in a pouch beneath his shirt.

"Won't it smear?"

He shook his head. "Quick-drying ink. Someone at the Great Library dreamed it up. They mix in a pinch of True earth, and the ink dries almost as fast as you can put it to paper. The stylus is their invention, too—it actually holds its own store of ink, which comes out in a steady stream when you press down on its tip. My guess is, Master Merrox got tired of spattering his sleeves with ink every time he dipped his quill in the bottle, and so he invented his way around it."

"You know Master Merrox?" Here was a legendary Name—or as good as. Even folk in sleepy Caralle, halfway across Barsaive from the Kingdom of Throal, had heard of Merrox, the dwarf who ruled over the Great Library and all the treasures of knowledge within it.

"Certainly I do," Janor said. "If he didn't buy my maps, I couldn't afford to go on these expeditions."

A roaring sound ahead of us told me we were nearing a river. The ground sloped slightly upward, and when we reached the top of the low ridge we saw the waterway before us. It was narrow, but fast-running—possibly too fast-running to ford. I gazed up and down the banks but saw no bridge.

Janor picked his way down the side of the ridge until he reached a spot from which he could safely lean out over the rushing stream. Holding tight to his walking stick, he lowered it into the water. The fierce current nearly twisted it from his hand, but Janor gripped the stick strongly. He lowered it until it touched bottom, then leaned a little further out to judge the depth.

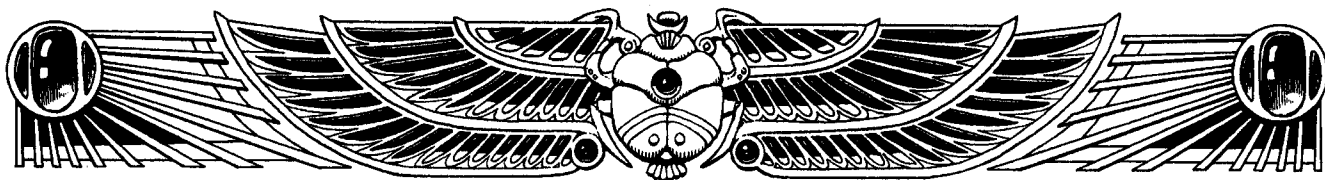
The pouch with his parchments and stylus chose that moment to tumble free of his shirt and into the water. Janor grabbed for it, but the current was quicker—it wrenched the pouch away from him, snapping the thong that held it around his neck and sending the little pouch bobbing swiftly out of reach.

Janor closed his eyes and cursed. Then, with a shake of his head, he drew his staff out of the stream.

"I knew that thong was going," he said. "Just last night I noticed it was fraying at the back. Take a lesson from this, Hamlin—if you notice that anything of yours needs repair, tend to it as soon as possible. Otherwise, it may cost you when you least expect it."

"Can we get across?"





He nodded. "It's shallow enough to ford, but that current's likely to sweep us off our feet unless we've got something to hang onto." He looked across the river, studying the trees on the other side. Clusters of them, too thin and patchy to truly be called woodland, marched almost to the water's edge. One tree, sturdier-looking than the rest, leaned out over the stream.

"You're a good shot," he said, untying his satchel-straps. He swung the bag to the ground and took out a coil of slender, silver-gray rope. He tied a knot in one end of it, then walked back up the rocky ridge and wedged the knotted end in a cleft between two boulders. The other end he handed to me. "Tie this to one of your arrows and shoot that tree. Mind you sink the arrow in the thickest part of that branch—the one farthest out over the water. Aim for where that branch meets the trunk and sink the arrow deep."

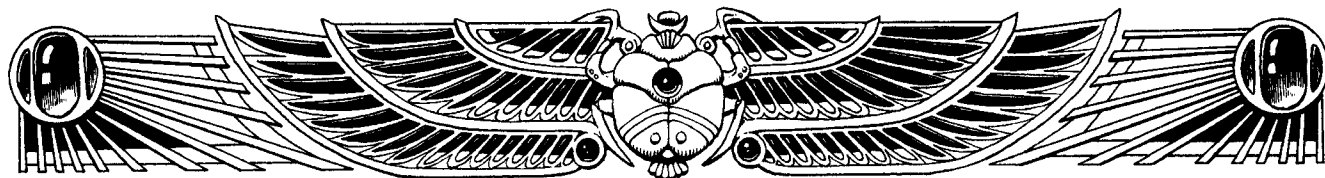
I took an arrow from my pack and picked up the end of the rope. It was barely as thick as my thumb, and felt far too light to bear our weight against the furious current. "Janor, will this really hold?"

"That's spider-silk rope, boy," he answered. "Woven from the same silk that the great spiders of the Servos Jungle use to ensnare well-armed trolls. It's strong enough."

I tied the rope to the end of my arrow, raised the bow, sighted carefully and shot. The arrow flew true and buried itself deep in the base of the branch.

"Well done," Janor said. He picked up his satchel and retied it, double-knotting the leather straps. "You go first. Hold that rope as tightly as you can while you walk across."





I secured my belongings, then walked to the edge of the stream and grasped the rope firmly. It came slightly higher than my chest. I murmured a brief prayer to fortune and stretched one foot out over the stream—then drew it back and stared at Janor. “How will *you* get across? Or will we leave the rope behind?”

“Not this rope. It’s far too valuable.” He grinned at my bewilderment. “Just you get across, my boy—then watch.”

The current grabbed at my knees like a throng of impatient children the minute I stepped into it. I gritted my teeth and concentrated on walking, picking my footing with care. Twice I nearly slipped and fell—only my grip on the rope kept me upright. Finally I reached the far shore. I turned to watch Janor, rubbing my aching calves.

Janor plucked the knotted end of the rope from its cleft, then walked the rest of the way up to the top of the ridge. He pulled the rope taut, wrapped it securely around both wrists, and swung out over the churning water with an exultant yell.

He landed just shy of the shore and dragged himself the final few steps onto dry land. “Told you we wouldn’t have to leave the rope behind,” he said as he untied the other end from my arrow. “Your arrow is another matter, I’m afraid. An obsidian might be strong enough to pull it out, but not us.”

I shrugged. “I can make more.”

“So you can,” he agreed, “which is why arrows are expendable, to a certain extent. But spider-silk rope—well, any rope, really—is not.” He wound the rope back into its small, neat coil as he spoke. “A good rope not only gets you across otherwise uncrossable streams, it also helps get you down cliffs and ancient kaer entrances if it’s long enough. You can also use it to hang goods from high trees out of reach of predators, as a trip-line if something’s chasing you, as a snare for catching game—and for all kinds of purposes I probably haven’t thought of yet.” He finished coiling the rope, and I saw that its entire length made a ball hardly larger than the mouth of the t’skrang cooking basket.

We resumed our journey, walking for a little way down the bank of the stream. Janor paid particular attention to the trees we passed. “Ha!” he cried suddenly, and stopped so abruptly that I almost walked into him. “This is it exactly. Exactly!” Unsheathing his belt knife, he made a shallow cut in the tree trunk, hardly enough to do more than pierce the bark. Then he wedged the knife blade under the cut edge and pried it up. Carefully, he pulled a long strip of thin bark off the tree. He did this four more times, each time gaining a curling strip of bark almost as long as he was tall. Then he placed all but one of them in his satchel. He cut a piece off the end of the fifth bark strip, then put the rest of it away as well. Finally, he dug a stylus out of the bottom of his pack and quickly sketched from memory the outlines of the rocky outcroppings through which we had lately passed.

“Always carry a spare,” he told me, tucking the stylus and his new map away. “When that runs out, I’ll have to make some ink if I want to keep drawing. Do you know what calantha berries look like?”

“Purplish, about the size of my thumbnail,” I answered. “The leaves of the calantha bush are grayish-green and always come in pairs, like a fork in the road. Our healer taught all of us that as children—she said the berries are poisonous.”

“Only if you eat them,” Janor replied. “They’re perfectly harmless otherwise, and they make excellent ink. If you see any, we’ll stop and gather some.”

I followed him out of the trees, marveling anew at his wisdom. It seemed there was no end to the lessons the road could teach.

WE FIND A LOST KAER

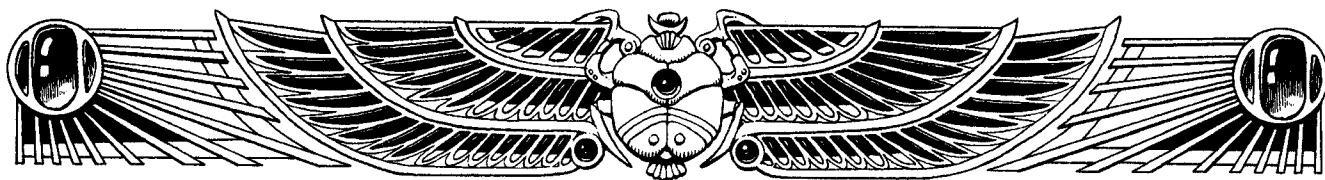
On the eighth day it rained—in torrents. My wool blanket, which I had half-hoped to use as a cape, quickly became too sodden to wear. I followed grimly behind Janor, wishing heartily for a fine dwarf winternight cloak such as he wore. The elemental magic woven into its folds shed the rain and kept him warm and dry. I resolved to buy or barter for such a cloak as soon as I had the opportunity (and the silver).

It rained all morning, slowing our progress considerably. We briefly took shelter under an overhanging rock while we ate our noon meal, but as the rain showed no signs of letting up, Janor decided it was worth pushing on. We were nearing the westernmost foothills of the Twilight Peaks, he said, and with luck we might find a village to pass the night in. “Or at least an outlying village building—a byre or a storage shed would be just the thing.”

I hoped for a storage shed. I knew the smell of sheep all too well.

As we drew nearer the mountains’ feet, the country grew rockier and more barren. Grass became sparse, replaced by mosses and occasional, spindly shrubs. We found ourselves climbing across tors and picking our way through narrow gaps between outcroppings of stone. The mountain slopes loomed above us like vast gray shadows. Far off to the north, we heard the rumble of thunder.





"Curse it," said Janor, sounding mildly exasperated. "Up into the mountains, Hamlin, and keep an eye out for a cave."

We found one just before the storm struck in full force. Janor spotted a wide, dark opening at the top of a gentle granite slope and led the way to it with some caution. He stopped just shy of the entrance, took a light crystal from his satchel, and unwrapped the many layers of gauze that kept its brilliance quenched. Unwrapped, it shone cool and steady, unaffected by the wind and rain as a torch would have been. He held the crystal up before us and led the way step by step into the cavern.

The wind was driving fistfuls of rain against my back, and so I made to step ahead of Janor. He gripped my wrist hard and bade me stand still. "Take care," he hissed. "Caves are rarely uninhabited. For all we know, this one may be home to shrieker bats, stingers—or worse. You walk in unheeding like that, and you may well find yourself facing something far more dangerous than a thunderstorm." Apparently satisfied that he had made his point, Janor let go of me and walked farther inside, sniffing the air as he went.

By the light of the crystal, the cave appeared empty—not only of living creatures, but (so Janor said) of any sign that anything had ever lived there. "No droppings, no hair tufts or feathers or bits of discarded skin or shells, no burrow-holes through the rock or scratches that might have been made by talons. All those may be signs of some creature or other. So may bone fragments—they're usually left when something eats prey. Some creatures you can also smell—basilisks, for example, leave behind a musk so strong that even our feeble noses can pick up its scent."

I sniffed. "All I smell in here is musty air."

"Exactly," Janor said. He leaned the light crystal against one wall of the cave, sat down and began to tune his harp.

I listened awhile to the harp and the howling wind, but soon grew restless. I got up and began to walk around the cave, half-hoping to see a thread of silver or some gemstone embedded in its walls.

Instead, I found a thin, dark line running down the back wall from a spot just above my head. The light crystal illuminated only part of this corner of the cave; I could not see where the dark line ended. I touched it and realized that the line was actually a thin crack. I ran my hand down its length; it extended all the way to the cave floor. Brushing my fingertips lightly across the stone to either side, I was startled to feel shallow carved patterns.

"Janor!" I cried. "I've found something!"

His music had ceased with my first cry. He strode over, light crystal in hand. Together, we looked at the carvings around the bottom of the crack.

"Wards," Janor said, with ill-suppressed excitement. He slid his knife off of his belt, gripped the sheathed blade and rapped the crack sharply with the knife hilt. The rap chipped a flake of stone from the cave wall and reverberated down some unseen shaft behind the wall.

I gazed at him wide-eyed, hardly daring to speak my thought. He said it for me. "A kaer." A smile of wonderment crept over his face. "I believe we've stumbled on the entrance to a kaer."

Foolishly, I tried to wedge my fingers into the crack. They wouldn't fit. "How do we get in?!"

"We don't—yet," Janor said.

"But ..." My head whirled with images of hidden treasures and magical artifacts. How could we leave without freeing them from their prison? How could we possibly just walk away and leave this mystery unsolved? Weren't adepts and adventurers supposed to discover lost kaers and bring their secrets out into the world?

It took me a moment to recognize the significance of the word "yet." Meanwhile, Janor had taken out his stylus and a fresh piece of bark and was scribbling furiously.

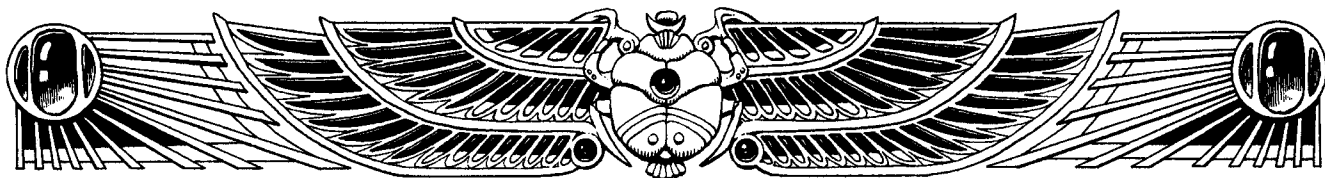
"We'll come back," I said. "We have to come back."

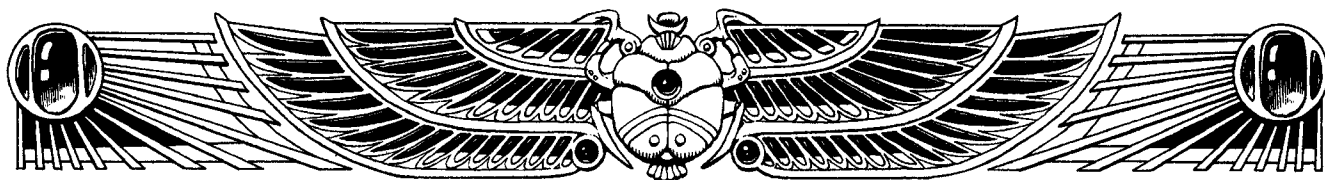
He nodded, intent on his work. "That's what this map is for. This one won't go to the Great Library, not just yet. You and I and a couple of friends whose skills we need will have a crack at it first." He held up the map, nodded as if satisfied, then tucked it carefully away.

The storm seemed to be abating. Lightly, I ran my hand across the carved wards. "I wish—"

"I know. But exploring an unknown kaer is too risky for just the two of us. We have no idea what might be down there. I wasn't expecting to find a kaer, so I didn't come prepared. I came prepared to travel open country, see some lands new to me, and map them." He peered out at the rain; it was letting up. "Spending the night here may not be as safe as I thought. We've enough hours of daylight left to find a village or some other shelter." He put his harp back in its case, while I shouldered my pack once again. Then he led the way out into the thinning rain.







BARREN LANDS AND ISOLATED SETTLEMENTS

For the next few days we trekked across the foothills of the Twilight Peaks, keeping a sharp eye out for crystal raiders. Fortunately, we saw none. Navigating by the Passion Stars and his own innate sense of direction, Janor kept us on a steady eastward course. After a time the barren rocks gave way to lightly wooded slopes, and Janor used the moss on the tree trunks as a guide to turn us slightly northward. "Moss grows only on the north side of a tree," he explained. "If ever you travel through woods too thick to see the stars, pay heed to the tree trunks. The moss will keep you from getting lost."

The sparse woodlands, alas, yielded little game or fresh foodstuffs, and we were forced to fall back upon rations. I grew heartily sick of salt meat and dried apples after I had lived on them for three days, and even Janor could not repress a sigh at the thought of parched corn for breakfast yet again.

On our fourth day in the Twilight Peaks, the woods began to thicken a bit. We found a small, clear stream, and Janor looked more cheerful. "Fresh water means there's likely to be Name-givers living somewhere nearby. From the look of these trees, the soil's probably good enough to allow for a little farming. I doubt there's anything sizable along our way, but even a small settlement should be willing to give us a little food in exchange for an evening's entertainment."

After another hour's walk, we caught glimpses of a clearing through the trees—a clearing in which someone had erected a stout wooden palisade. My heart sank at the sight; whoever built it seemed unlikely to be friendly.

Ahead of me, Janor halted. He gazed thoughtfully at the palisade, chewing on a handful of dried corn kernels.

I walked up beside him, proud that I could now do so without stepping on tell-tale twigs or making the leaves underfoot rustle. "They don't look likely to give strangers much. If we need more food, why don't we just take some? You're an adept—surely you can—"

Janor turned on me with a look that made my blood freeze. "If I thought you had any real idea what you're suggesting, I'd send you packing back to Caralle this instant! I do not use my magic to steal or to intimidate unless I must. And if you have a decent soul in you, you won't either. We will consider our options and plan our next move—but we will not use the unfair advantage of adept's magic to take anything from those people that doesn't belong to us. Do you understand?"

"I'm sorry," I whispered after a painfully long pause.

Slowly, the anger died out of his face. Tentatively, he put a hand on my shoulder. "I shouldn't shout at ignorance. But you cannot think of adept's magic as just another way to get what you want. The troubadour's path does not wind that way. If you can't understand that—now, from this moment—you might as well go home because I won't be able to teach you."

I bit my lip and looked down. Absurdly, I felt I might cry.

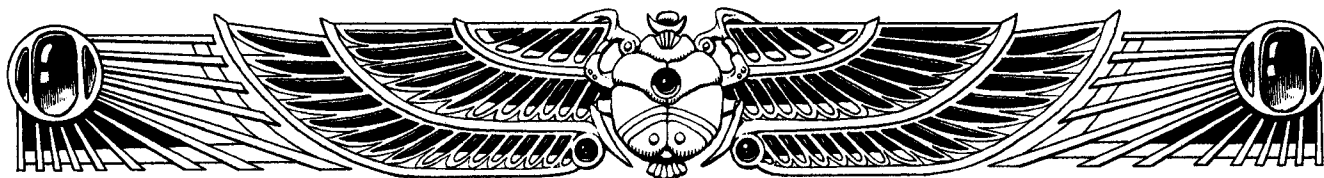
"Sit down," Janor said, doing so himself. When I did, he continued. "There are also sound, practical reasons for not charging in with our fire-cannons blazing, so to speak. In the days since the Scourge, Barsaive has become a dangerous land. The wise traveler acts with caution because he doesn't know what lies around the next bend in the road—or in the next village.

"If you want to walk the world's road and still see old age, travel like a breeze instead of a storm. A breeze is quiet and calm, barely noticed by the people it passes—even welcome, in the right climate. A storm fills the sky with noise and light, attracting everyone's attention and ire. It terrifies and destroys. People do not welcome storms, and they remember them for a long time. So it's best to tread softly and wait to see how people react. Bringing out all your bluster and magic is likelier to antagonize suspicious villagers than to impress them. A village like this one, whose people clearly have danger on their minds, is the last place to stride in and start making demands. Why make yourself unwelcome from the moment you arrive?"

I remembered how Janor had acted when he first came to Caralle. I had forgotten until then just how suspicious of him we were, how cautiously we acted despite our desperate hunger for news of the outside world, for new stories and songs, for the mere sight of a new face. We couldn't simply rid ourselves of the old fear that any stranger might be Horror-touched. He had won our tentative trust, I remembered, by sitting just outside the village boundary and singing us a song. A song about ourselves, about the way we looked watching him, about the hope in our hearts that he might be exactly what he seemed so that we could welcome him. We knew he was creating the song as he sang it, and we also knew that no Horror or Horror's creature could create such beauty. Only Name-givers of pure heart have beauty in them. Perhaps the people of this barricaded village weren't so different from my own folk. They might want to welcome us even as they feared us. If we treated their fears gently and showed them by our actions that we were neither monsters nor brigands, they might overcome their fears and give us what we needed.

"So what do we do next, Janor?"





He stood up. "We look for a marker—a standing stone, a stone circle, something like that set up near the palisade gate. They may even have built a house for it."

"For what?" I was mystified.

"The formal ritual of greeting." He stepped quietly through the trees, looking carefully around as he went. "It's in the *Book of Tomorrow*. At Caralle you'd marked no special site for it, but you expected me to do it all the same. Before I could enter the town, I had to prove I wasn't Horror-touched. Many of Barsaive's smaller villages have erected stone markers or built "ritual houses" outside their boundaries. At such places, people from the village meet travelers, and both villager and traveler perform some action to show that they are free from taint."

"Is that it?" I pointed to my left, where a small wooden house sat between two towering oaks. We went toward it, and as we drew near I saw that every inch of it was covered with elaborate carvings of spirals, triangles, birds and snakes curled and knotted in fantastic shapes.

Janor looked serious. "This may be trouble. All the more reason for us to speak softly. Another lesson of the road, boy: the more elaborate a village's greeting place, the more fearful they're likely to be. If they lavish such care on it, it matters greatly to them. Tread lightly in such places, if you can't avoid them."

We stepped past the last of the trees and into the clearing, and walked up to the closed door of the ritual house. As we reached it, a small panel at eye level slid open. A pair of dark eyes gazed warily out at us, and a muffled voice demanded, "What's your business here?"

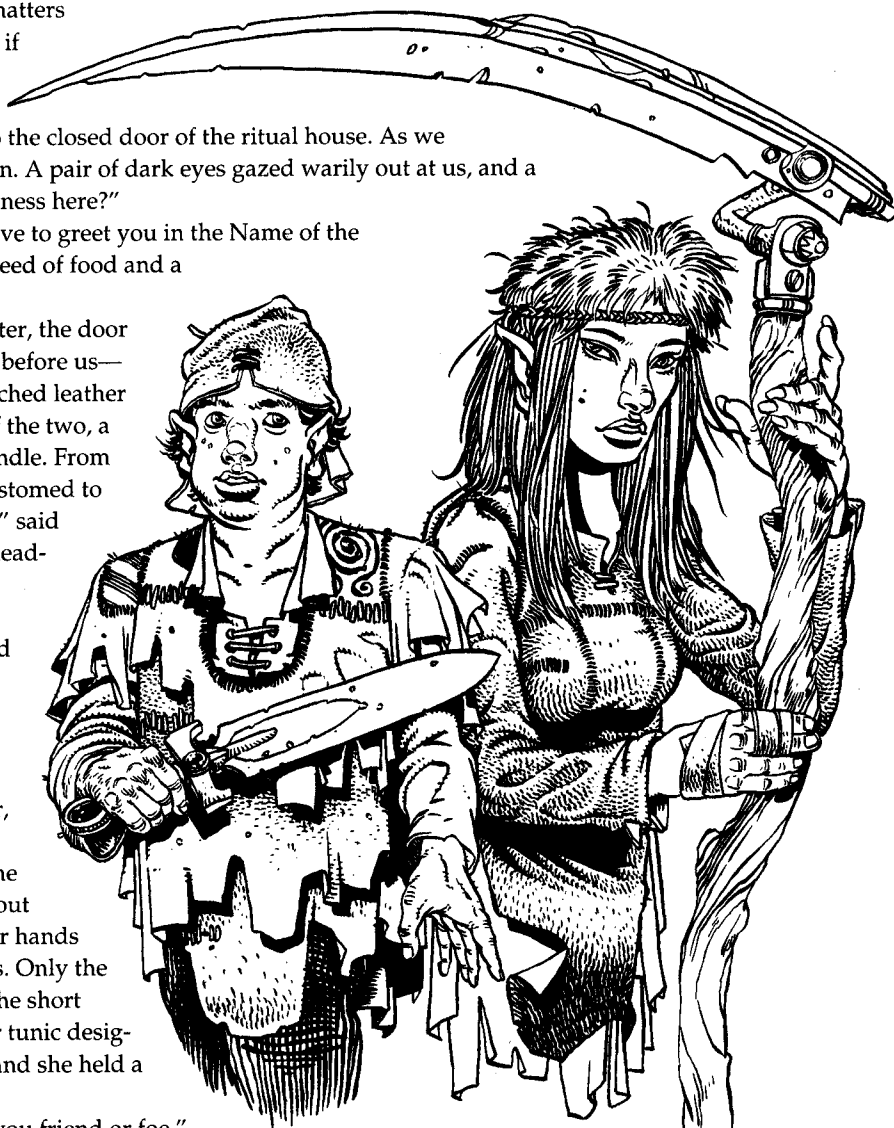
Janor bowed his head. "We ask your leave to greet you in the Name of the Universe that made us. We are travelers in need of food and a night's lodging."

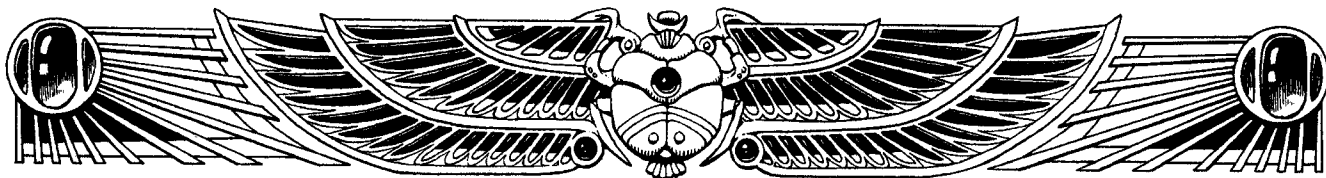
The panel slammed shut. A heartbeat later, the door opened. Our interrogator and another stood before us—youths barely older than I, both wearing patched leather armor and armed with daggers. The taller of the two, a young female human, leaned on a scythe handle. From the way she held it, I surmised she was accustomed to using it as a pike. "Enter in the Name of life," said the dark-eyed young man. "I will fetch the headwoman."

We walked in and sat where the young woman bade us, on wooden benches covered with still more of the wonderful carvings. Janor took out his harp and began tuning it softly. I undid my pack and took out my pipes. Our guardian watched us silently. When she thought we weren't observing her, her wary look changed to one of interest.

After a time the headwoman arrived. She was a tall, muscular elf wearing a tunic, a stout leather jerkin, trousers and sturdy boots. Her hands were as rough and calloused as any farmer's. Only the dignity with which she carried herself and the short gold chain she wore around the collar of her tunic designated her position as headwoman. In one hand she held a parchment scroll and a small leather bag.

"Show us your souls, that we may call you friend or foe," the headwoman said.





Janor coaxed a tune from his harp. I panicked momentarily—I had never heard the tune before. Then I realized what he was doing, and I began to improvise a harmony. As the headwoman and our two guards listened, they slowly relaxed. By the time Janor returned to the beginning of the tune to play it through one more time, they were almost smiling.

As the last notes died away, the headwoman set down her parchment on one of the benches and sat beside it. Then she took a stylus and a small jar of ink out of the bag. She opened the jar, dipped the point of the stylus in the ink, gave Janor and I a long look, then began to draw with quick, bold strokes.

When she finished the drawing, she presented it to Janor. He held it where I could see it. The headwoman had sketched the pair of us with our instruments, in such a lifelike fashion that I almost expected to hear the picture play music.

"Be welcome to the village of Ariyah," the headwoman said.

The people of Ariyah treated us with cautious friendliness; apparently even the most suspicious of Name-givers enjoys hearing news of the outside world, and so a traveler who passes inspection is a welcome thing. We played and sang for them until late into the night, before retiring to bed in the house of the village's best woodcarver. We departed Ariyah the next morning laden with dried fruit and meat, some fresh tubers that the people assured us were excellent eaten raw, and a bagful of bakta leaves, which the villagers said produced the brilliant blue dye with which they colored their clothing. The bakta, Janor said, might fetch a good price from the Dyers' Guild in Bartertown or Throal.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH ORK SCORCHERS

In the following days, we had cause to bless the Ariyahni's unexpected generosity. We were crossing the barren plains of what had once been the kingdom of Ustrect—so Janor told me—plains now home to brigands and ork scorcher tribes. Bandits and highwaymen are a fearsome enough prospect; such motley bands of thieves live by waylaying innocent passers-by and taking their goods, or sneaking up on them while they sleep and relieving them of their possessions. Occasionally, they also relieve their victims of life. Ork scorcher tribes frightened me even more. I had heard bloodcurdling tales of scorcher savagery and hoped we would not be so unlucky as to meet any.

As with many hopes born in the hearts of naive youths, this one died a quick death. On the third day of our passage through these sparse-grown wilds, we reached the top of a small rise and saw a ring of mounted riders waiting for us at the bottom of the slope. Every one of them was an ork, clad in heavy armor and carrying at least two weapons. Most sat on horseback; a few rode massive creatures I correctly recognized as thundra beasts. The riders' leader—or so I took him to be, as he sat on the largest thundra beast and wore the most elaborate suit of armor topped off by a helm with feathers—was watching us with a grin.

"They must have been watching us for some time," Janor said softly in my ear. "Follow my lead, Hamlin, and try not to look so terrified. They won't hurt you unless you offend them."

Swallowing hard, I followed Janor toward the scorchers. His last remark I found less than comforting—orks were known to take offense at just about anything. My chances of long life looked bleak indeed.

Janor walked straight up to the leader, whose wolfish grin widened as he slid down from his giant mount. The pair of them faced each other for several heartbeats, eyes locked. Then Janor did something absolutely extraordinary. He clenched a fist and struck the ork a mighty blow to the side of the head, sending him reeling against the thundra beast's front leg.

The gathered orks shouted something fierce and unintelligible. I wanted to flee but didn't dare move. Had my mentor gone mad? Was he trying to get us killed by these savages?

The leader shook himself, walked slowly back to face Janor, and struck him. The blow knocked Janor off his feet; he sat down hard with a "whuff!"

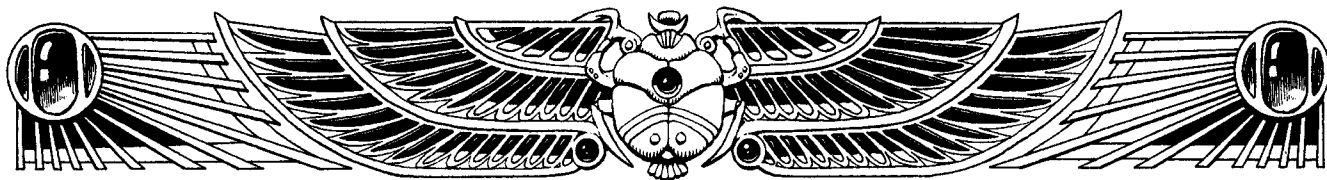
The orks broke into cheers and laughter. Janor, incredibly, was smiling at his assailant. He held out a hand toward the ork leader. "After hitting me that hard, you might at least help me up," he said.

The ork gave a shout of laughter and shook his head. "Anyone strong enough to make Brikna of the Stone Hearts stagger can get up by himself—especially a human who travels almost alone in scorcher lands and so must know the tricks of an adept. I will not be tricked, but I will hear you and your young friend sing by our fire. Be welcome among us."

I heard hoofbeats behind me, and a strong arm grabbed me around the waist. Before I could do more than squawk in protest, I was plucked from the ground and deposited astride a sturdy horse, just in front of its grinning rider. "Don't look so startled, Point-ear. You never rode a horse before, hah? Well, don't be scared. I'll keep you safe."

I looked wildly around for Janor. He was climbing up the side of the leader's thundra beast, and looked perfectly at ease. Somewhat reassured, I tried to relax and enjoy my unexpected ride.





The scorchers were every bit as eager to hear new tales and songs and news from afar as any Name-givers, which surprised me. I thereby learned the most important lesson that the road has to teach—namely, that what we think we know is not always the truth. They welcomed us into their camp and showed Janor rough but genuine respect; apparently, he had earned it by almost knocking their leader sprawling. (Later, I learned the nuances of playing this dangerous game. You must hit hard enough to make the leader feel it, lest the scorchers judge you too weak to be worthy of life; but you must not make the leader lose face, lest the entire tribe take violent offense.) In exchange for our songs and tales, the orks offered us food (some of which I quite enjoyed) and copious draughts of hurlg, a foul-smelling ale (which I avoided).

I HAVE AN UNEXPECTED ADVENTURE

I am not certain whether it was my refusal to drink hurlg or simply the fact that I looked young, nervous, and inexperienced, but the scorchers made me the recipient of a strange honor that ultimately brought Janor and I great benefit. A thundra beast happened to stamp its foot suddenly just as I was walking past it, and I could not help jumping. My riding companion of the afternoon—whose Name, she had told me, was Hrothga—saw my startlement and shouted out: “You like the thundras, little Point-ear? Maybe you’d like to ride one!”

I tried to demur, but my words were drowned out by the laughter and approving shouts of the tribe. The leader offered me his own beast, but before I could reply, Hrothga called out, “Not a tame milk-drinker like yours, Brikna. Point-ear’s a brave lad; he needs a challenge!” She pointed to a thundra beast that wore no saddle or bridle; I had been nervously watching this seemingly half-wild beast all evening, as it seemed particularly prone to stamp and snort and make other unsettling noises. “Let him try a wild one—see if he can tame it for us.”

Janor stood up then, and I breathed a sigh of relief. He was going to get me out of this impossible challenge somehow. Then he spoke, and my mouth went as dry as a creek-bed in drought. “A bargain, noble Brikna. My friend is no cavalryman—indeed, he has hardly ridden plow horses, let alone a spirited beast like that one. He will endanger himself for your entertainment, and such a risk requires higher payment than simple hospitality.”

“What do you ask?” Brikna replied. He was smiling still, but his eyes had narrowed in calculation.

“A pair of your horses, saddled and bridled,” Janor replied. “All of Barsaive knows that the horses raised by the ork tribes of the south are the finest mounts: strong, spirited and brave. I have shown you my mettle already; if my young friend rides a wild thundra beast without grave injury, he will have proved his as well. We are worthy riders of your fine steeds.”

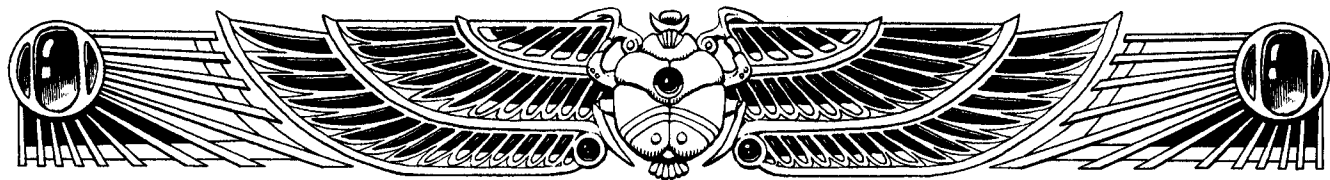
There was a long pause. Then Brikna slapped his thigh and shouted, “Done!” At once, Hrothga and two others came to lead me to the thundra beast. I did not dare refuse outright, but fear made me stammer out a reluctant attempt to evade my fate. Hrothga responded to this with a surprisingly gentle cuff to my head, almost like a gesture of affection. “Nonsense,” she said. “Seize life and shake it, Point-ear; don’t turn away from it. How else can you enjoy living?”

Our approach had made the thundra beast restless; it was tossing its huge, horned head and snorting. While her companions held tight to its tether, Hrothga boosted me high up onto the thing’s broad back. It stamped, making me slide perilously sideways. I dug my fingers underneath one of the ridges of thick skin on its back and held on. With a shout, the scorchers untied the beast’s tether. It rose up on its hind legs, then plunged downward and kicked its back legs into the air. I flopped around on it like a rabbit in a snare as it jumped and reared in frantic attempts to shake me off. Then the beast gave a roar and began to run.

The thudding of its huge feet against the packed earth made my teeth rattle. It galloped around in random directions; the first time it made a sharp turn, I nearly flew off. Instinctively, I gripped the animal with my knees and dug my toes beneath another ridge of skin. The wind streamed past my face, feeling as cold and almost as solid as water. I opened my eyes to bare slits; the ground rushed by below me. Behind me, the scorchers were shouting encouragement. I could just hear the jingle of harnesses as they saddled up to pursue me. Suddenly my terror turned to a crazed kind of joy. I was riding a wild thundra beast—an act of daring I hadn’t even dreamed of just a week ago! I could scarcely believe I was the same Hamlin Risingsong who had spent all his days herding sheep and pulling weeds.

Two scorchers came pounding up beside me, one on a horse, the other on a thundra beast: Brikna and Hrothga, both grinning crazily at me. Brikna pulled his beast to within an armspan of mine, then gathered himself and leaped across the gap. He landed in front of me, high on the thundra’s shoulders. Gripping hard with his arms and legs, he somehow managed to turn it back toward the campfire.





The beast was beginning to tire; the long race and our combined weight forced it to slow from a headlong gallop to something more like a horse's fast trot. Suddenly, it stopped dead. Brikna clung on, but I sailed over the beast's head and landed hard on the ground. Fire shot through my left ankle. When I tried to breathe, agony tore through me. For a moment, I feared I was dying.

Hrothga cantered up, stopped her horse, slid to the ground and ran over to me. She hauled me up to a sitting position, and suddenly I could breathe. It still hurt, but I could manage. "Easy, Point-ear.

Deep in, deep out. Deep in, deep out."

After a time, my breath came easier. With Hrothga's help, I stood up—and would have collapsed to the ground again had she not held me fast around the waist. My ankle refused to bear my weight. "I think my ankle's broken," I said through gritted teeth.

She picked me up and carried me to the fire, then set me down gently next to Janor. "One hurt foot. Lucky and brave, both. Eh, Point-ear?"

I nodded, grinning in spite of my aches and pains. I had ridden a wild thundra beast and lived. I was a hero.

Janor used a healing potion on my ankle. Though he said no word about my feat, his approval—and respect—showed clearly in his face.

"Take your choice of horses," said Brikna as he came up to us. He squatted down beside me and offered me a sour-smelling aleskin.

"Hurlg?"

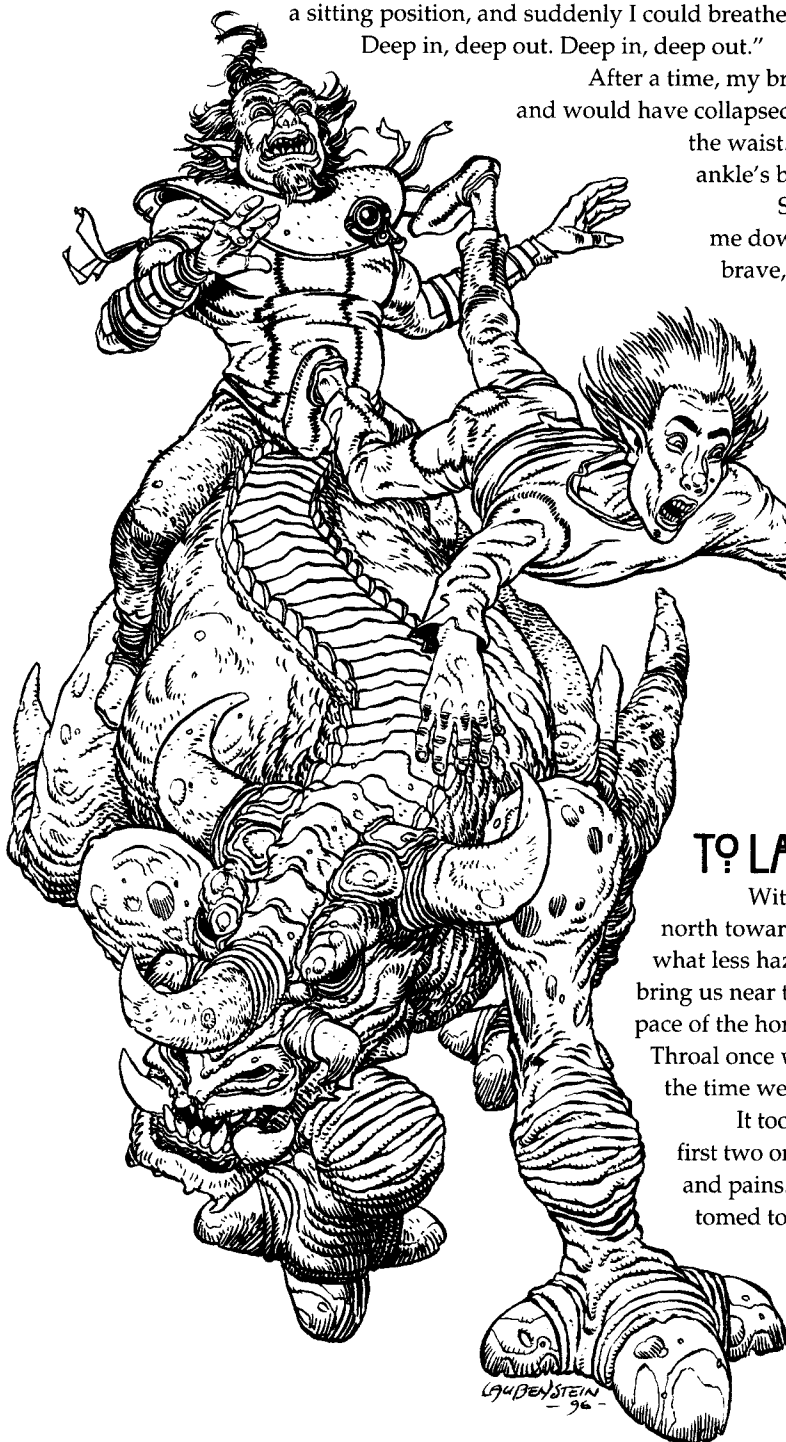
I thanked him and took the skin. The fumes of the hurlg almost blinded me as I raised it to my lips.

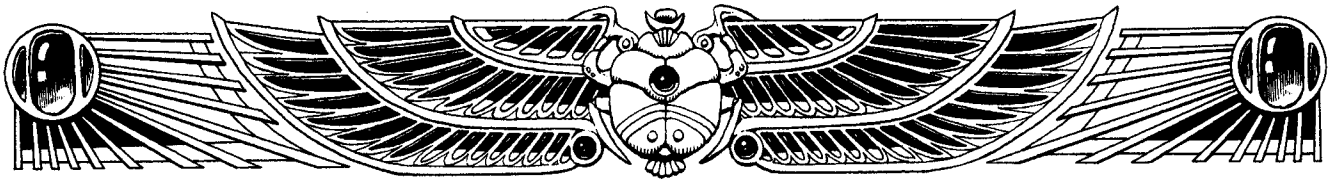
I took as large a swig as I dared. It tasted unimaginably disgusting, but I managed to keep it down.

TO LAKE VORS BY HORSE

With faster transport than our own feet, we turned due north toward Lake Vors. As Janor explained, this route was somewhat less hazardous than a shorter northeast course, which would bring us near the fringes of the Servos Jungle. Between the faster pace of the horses and the chance of picking up river passage toward Throal once we reached Lake Vors, we could easily make up for the time we would lose by making this slight detour.

It took us a mere twelve days to reach Lake Vors, and for the first two or three I paid attention to little besides my own aches and pains. Riding horseback is rough work for those not accustomed to it; my thighs burned with saddle sores, and every muscle in my legs and back ached from the effort of staying upright atop my mount. Janor actually managed to catnap in the saddle occasionally, a trick I envied him. Even at a walk, my horse's gait jolted my spine too much to let me think of sleep.





"Be glad you're not wearing armor," Janor said one evening, after I'd complained bitterly of my exhaustion and cursed all four-legged beasts of burden. "Even light mail and crystal ringlet armor gets uncomfortable after days on the road—as for plate armor, you might as well sling boulders round your neck. And put a couple in your saddlebags for good measure. Nothing wears a mount or a rider out faster than heavy plate armor and weapons. The wise traveler doesn't wear anything so weighty—unless you're going off to war, you won't need it anyway. Hardened leather or light mail, those are the things for folk like us. They protect us against most hazards we're likely to meet and don't weigh you down."

The horses required a great amount of care, which Janor insisted that we administer before either of us even thought of our own comfort. At first I resented this but soon saw the wisdom of it. A horse cannot be expected to take care of itself—if it is to have food and water and rest, as its riders do, the rider must provide it. If a rider does not give it immediately, but lets himself have "just a little rest" first, the little rest is likely to turn into an hour's nap or more—during which time the poor horse that has labored so hard suffers from thirst and hunger. As Janor said, neglect was a poor way to repay an animal whose strong back and legs were sparing your own.

Fortunately, grass was thick and plentiful enough for our mounts to feed well whenever we stopped. The orks had also given us bags of grain, which we fed to the horses in handfuls each day after their first hunger had been sated; Janor said that a steady diet of nothing but plains grass would sap the beasts' strength, much as a steady diet of gruel would soon leave a healthy Name-giver weak. Whenever we came to a wholesome stream, we let our mounts drink; indeed, at first I had difficulty making sure my horse didn't drink too much. "He'll be sick if he over-drinks or overeats," Janor warned me. "I've known horses to drink themselves to death because their riders didn't know enough to make them stop." He also insisted on rubbing down the horses thoroughly after long rides, to keep their muscles from cramping and stiffening.

One day we drew near a road—not a simple track through the grass made by the occasional traveler like ourselves, but a proper road of hard-packed earth wide enough for three farm-wagons to travel side by side. Lining the road for as far as I could see, spaced some distance apart, were three-sided standing stones as tall as a troll. I rode up to one and examined it. An arrow-shape had been carved into it, pointing westward. Beneath the arrow was the sigil of the Passion Floranuus, whose stars lay due west from the stone. Below that, I saw names followed by numbers.

"Jerris 13. Iopos 10 West, 5 North," I read aloud.

"That's a distance marker," Janor told me. "His Majesty's Exploratory Force set these up along the trade routes that Throal opened all across Barsaive. Customarily, all the directions on them point away from Throal—which makes sense when you consider their assumption that Throal is the center of Barsaive. Why point toward Throal, when the travelers who matter will be going from Throal to other places?"

"So five days' travel due north would take us where from here?"

"To the heart of the Scol Mountains," Janor answered, grinning at my amazement. I could hardly believe it, but we had come almost twice as far on horseback as we could have on foot.

As we drew nearer to the Serpent River and Lake Vors, the land became greener and gentler. It was often difficult to make the horses move; they preferred to stop and graze on the sweet, lush grass and wildflowers. We were finally forced to stop at midday when Janor's horse dropped a shoe.

He knelt to examine the beast's foot, looking grave. "Fortunately, we're only about half a day from a town. I can get him re-shod there." He stood up, patted the horse's flank, and then began to lead it along.

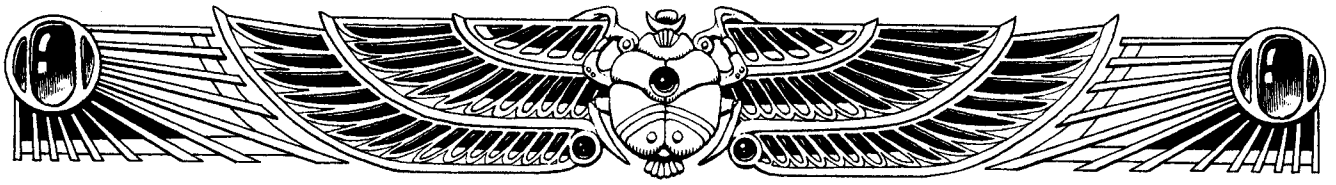
"Tired of riding?" I asked.

He shook his head. "If I ride him shoeless, I'll likely cripple him. Bad enough he has to walk at all, but the ground's soft hereabouts and he's not likely to pick up a stone. Blacksmithing isn't one of my skills, even if I could carry all the necessary equipment—that's why it's lucky we're so close to civilization. If this had happened out on the plains, I'd have had to pray for a chance meeting with a scorcher tribe or resign myself to laming a good horse—which means I'd eventually have to put the poor thing out of its misery. A crippled horse rarely heals properly—once lame, forever lame."

It seemed there was no end to the things a traveler needed to know.

Slightly past noon on the twelfth day, we reached the town of Diiza on the banks of Lake Vors. Diiza was easily six times the size of my former home, full of noise and bustle that I later learned was common to riverside trading towns. Because so many t'skrang traders spend time in these settlements during their journeys up and down the Serpent River, the towns along the waterway invariably adopt something of the t'skrangs' swashbuckling character, even when most of the people living in a particular town are of other Name-giver races.





We took Janor's horse to be shod and ended up selling both horses to the blacksmith's cousin for what seemed a staggering sum of silver coins. This cousin was a breeder of horses who sold to caravans and armies and was willing to pay well for such excellent stock. Janor drove a sharp but fair bargain, and we walked away with more than enough to pay for our river passage to Throal.

Knowing this, I was surprised when Janor booked passage aboard a freight-carrier, the *Swift Wind*, in exchange for our serving as crew. (And entertaining them all, of course—that went without saying.) “Two reasons,” he said, when I asked him why we hadn't simply paid for passage. “First, a little shipboard experience will do you good. Far more often than not, you'll end up bartering work for river travel, so you'd best learn what it's like. Second, it's far wiser to save your silvers for things you really can't do without—or for a rainy day—than to spend them simply to make your journey easier.” Seeing my crest-fallen look, he clapped me on the shoulder. “Besides, you'll enjoy it. Shipping out with a crewful of t'skrang is an experience not to be missed.”

We dined on an excellent fish stew that night at a local inn and slept (thankfully!) in beds with feather-filled mattresses. Just after dawn, we ate a hasty breakfast on our way to the docks and boarded the *Swift Wind*.

OUR JOURNEY BY RIVER

We began by helping load the ship and so did not set off until some time after sunrise. I had done similar heavy labor as a farmer's son in Caralle and so found this less of a hardship than I'd expected. By the time the *Swift Wind* pulled away from the dock, I had made several new friends among the t'skrang crew.

Our river journey, though all too brief for one who had never experienced river travel before, contained some surprises. In fact, I found it impossible to believe Janor when he told me later that he found most river journeys tiresome, with little to do but stare at the passing landscape and swab down the decks. The crewmen were all excellent company and eagerly invited us to join in games of knife-throwing and rope-swinging. They shared stories with us, many of them funny and all of them outrageous. They spoke of giant fish that could swallow whole riverboats (one of which we actually saw a day later, sounding in the distance!), weeds that grow from the river bottom and strangle unwary swimmers, even terrible water spirits that lead ships around in circles until their crew starves to death or who charm crewmen and then pull them overboard to drown. I have traveled among many people since then, but rarely have I heard more jokes fly faster or songs sung more joyously than among the t'skrang of the *Swift Wind*, the first t'skrang I came to know.

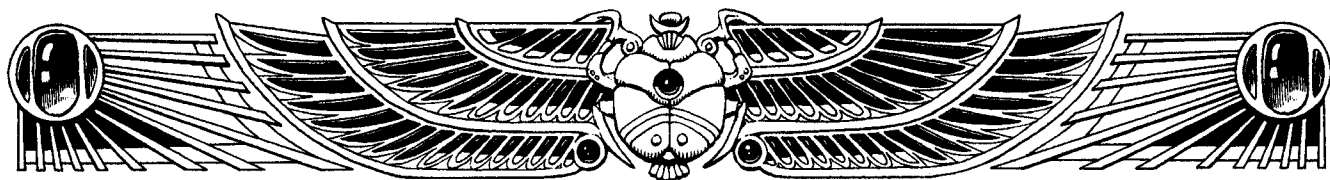
My particular friend among them, a youth Named R'salas who had only just turned adult and female, performed a most extraordinary feat for our entertainment. Upon seeing the wake of a giant river snake passing our boat, she quickly crafted a makeshift harness of thick rope, dove into the water and rode the huge serpent as one might ride a horse. The snake did its best to dislodge her, diving underwater and then leaping several feet straight up above the surface; but R'salas held onto the harness and braced her feet against the snake's broad back, laughing for sheer joy. At length, when the serpent leaped up near the *Swift Wind*, R'salas jumped off. She turned a somersault in the air and landed upright on the deck, absorbing the force of the landing in her legs and tail. The serpent, with its rope harness half off, plunged into the depths and swam away.

R'salas later told me that she came from a long line of cavalymen, all of whom rode river serpents. At first I passed this off as typical t'skrang exaggeration, but Janor later assured me that some t'skrang did indeed ride the great river-beasts—most often in punitive raids against pirate bands, whose lawless ways were the bane of the Serpent and its tributaries. Those the t'skrang called pirates, he told me, were not the same as the ship captains who engaged in the t'skrang practice of bakshevas, or “taking the tenth part.” Bakshevas was an accepted, if sometimes begrudged, practice among ship captains not aligned with greater powers among the t'skrang. True pirates paid no heed to the rules of bakshevas, but stole whatever they wished and often injured or killed the crews of boats unlucky enough to meet them. We were fortunate; neither “civilized” nor “uncivilized” pirates troubled us.

WE JOIN A CARAVAN

We disembarked about halfway to the *Swift Wind*'s destination, when the ship pulled in to a small port to take on fresh foodstuffs. (No t'skrang willingly eats only the hard bread and dried meat that make up most ship's rations; like any other travelers, they need fresh food for the health of body and mind.) The “port” hardly deserved the name; it was little more than a large dock and a few storehouses, plus one small house where the dockmaster lived. I later learned that this was a place where river traders transferred cargo to overland caravans and vice versa.





A trading caravan was already at the port, clearly awaiting the *Swift Wind's* arrival. When Janor found out that the caravan was heading to Bartertown, he determined that we should join it rather than staying aboard ship and going all the way to the mountain settlements on the other side of the Kingdom of Throal. I was sorry to leave R'salas and the rest of the crew but eager to experience yet another of the seemingly endless ways one could travel across our fair province.

The caravan belonged to the Dream Spire Company, which Janor described as one of the larger and more profitable trading companies founded in the Kingdom of Throal. They willingly hired us on as guards, though I suspected our real value to them lay in our musical skills. (They had an overabundance of guards already, all of them better-armed and more warrior-like in their bearing than we. Still, such large, sprawling caravans typically welcome any arm that can wield a weapon.) Most, though not all, of the caravaneers were dwarfs. Some of them wore badges on the shoulders of their tunics that marked them as members of His Majesty's Exploratory Force. Janor said it was common practice for explorers to travel with trade caravans into Barsaive's wilder lands; even large and profitable companies are always interested in opening new trade routes, and smaller ventures depend on such trailblazing to prosper. As they see it, the greater profits are worth the risk; a trading company that finds new places to sell and new goods to trade may earn substantial profits with dizzying swiftness. Of course, blazing such new trails through Barsaive's dangerous hinterlands demands the skills of explorers and travelers, both to map out the new routes and to protect the shipments that pass through them.

(I have since learned the value of traveling with trading caravans when possible. If I know that my way will take me along an established trade route, accompanying a caravan gives me the safety of numbers and the possibility of earning a little extra silver whenever the caravan stops in a sizable town or at a roadside inn. Since becoming a true denizen of the roads, I have also hired myself out as a guide, a service for which Barsaivian traders pay highly.)

The caravan amazed me. The number of wagons seemed endless, and each one was brimful of things wholly unknown to a farmer's son from a small hinterland village: exotic t'skrang spices, bright-colored fish from the depths of Lake Vors, gemstones and beautifully worked metal artifacts from distant Travar, bags full of raw spider-silk and curious bone statues from the Servos Jungle, cunningly woven baskets and bottles made by villagers on the shores of Lake Pyros, and so many other things that I couldn't take it all in. One trader, a gruff gray-bearded ale merchant Named Regath, greeted Janor as an old friend. He insisted that we both join him in a draught of his latest find, a dark and rich brew made from a hardy grain native to the lands around Travar. I had never tasted anything like it before and considered it a vast improvement over hurlg (though it made me extremely sleepy before I had gotten more than halfway through my cup.)

Regath proved an entertaining teller of tales; he said he had once wished to follow the troubadour's Discipline, but the demands of his business left him little time to devote himself to learning the Discipline's ways. He told us about many wonders he had seen on the caravan's journey from Throal to Travar and back. They had passed through the easternmost fringes of the Servos Jungle and seen the ruins of a citadel, a huge thing made of giant stonie blocks that must have nearly touched the sky when the citadel was whole. The traders saw only the faintest echo of its ancient glory—"huge blocks of granite, big as this wagon and carved as smooth as a baby's cheek, covered over by ivy that was slowly cracking them to bits. Hardly a stone still stood atop another, though we could see by the way they were arranged on the ground that they'd once been stacked to make towering walls and a roof. Blocks that size must have reached as high as a mountain. We could even see the remnants of the road that had led to it—smooth, black flagstones here and there, with weeds pushing up between them. The jungle had already reclaimed most of the road, of course. In another generation, there'll be nothing but undergrowth where that citadel once stood."

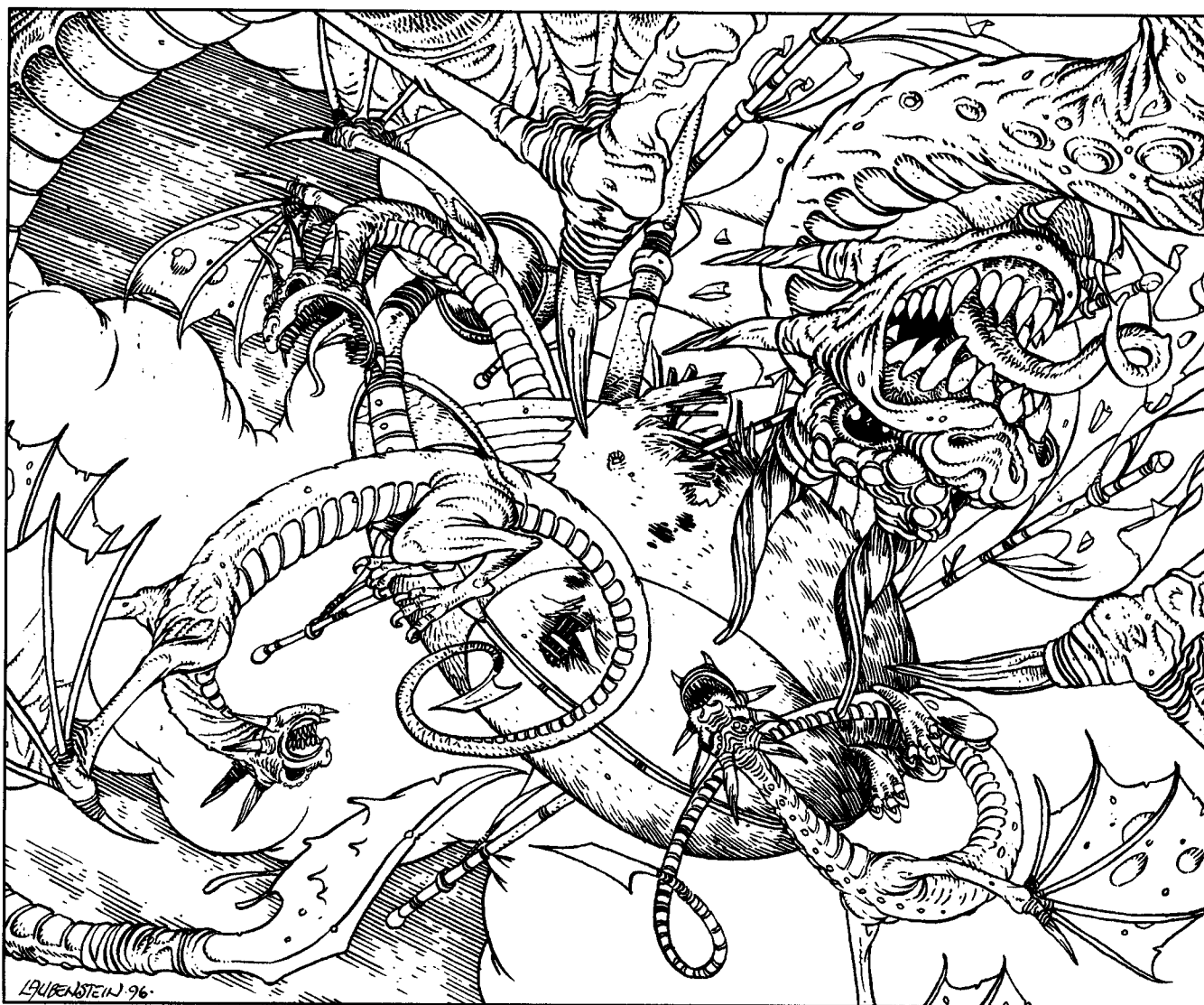
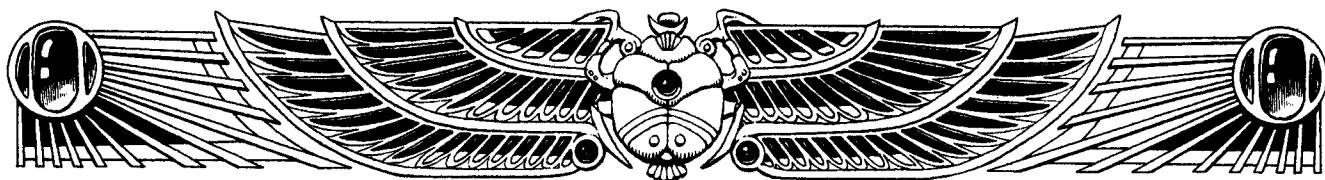
Regath had also traveled in the south of Barsaive, through the ancient kingdoms of Landis and Cara Fahd; he said the ruins of those proud realms had brought him near to tears, making him think how soon all the glories of Name-givers pass away.

Our ten-day journey to Bartertown passed largely without incident, though we did run afoul of a band of highwaymen not long after setting off. His Majesty's Exploratory Force—three dwarfs, two orks and two humans—made short work of them, but the incident clearly disturbed them. From what I overheard around the campfire that night, the highwaymen must have been especially bold or especially desperate to attack a large, well-protected caravan a mere eight days' travel by foot from Throal. The two orks muttered darkly about "feints" and "Theran conspiracies" but came to no real conclusion.

THE DEATH OF AN AIRSHIP

On the fifth day, halfway to Throal, we saw a truly terrible sight—an airship attacked by a flock of huge, winged reptiles that Janor called wyverns. We could do little but watch as the monsters surrounded the airship and struck again and again at its luckless crew. A few archers in our company shot arrows at the beasts, but the missiles fell to the ground with-



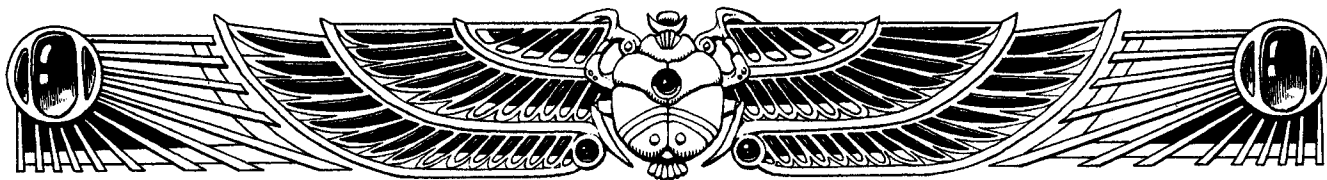


out reaching their distant targets. We could see the sun flashing off sword blades as the crew made a valiant stand, but the airship was doomed. All too soon, it plunged into a stand of trees and was lost to our sight. The wyverns followed. Some little time later, we saw them rising skyward in graceful spirals and then flying off northward. For the next few hours, the caravaneers walked and rode in sober silence; the violent deaths we had witnessed made us all newly aware of the dangers of our beloved land.

An hour or so before sunset, we reached the place where the airship had crashed. Few bodies remained, and those that did were scattered in pieces across the wreckage—wyverns are messy eaters. Torn between revulsion and a strange fascination, I gazed at the wreck along with everyone else. The banner that the vessel had so proudly flown from its prow had been torn by giant talons but it remained recognizable; it bore the device and colors of the Far Horizon Company, a small trading company recently founded by a consortium of merchants that Regath knew.

The ship itself looked salvageable to me; the hard ground had splintered its front end to bits, but the greater part of the vessel appeared intact. I asked Janor if it might be made airworthy again, and how we might do so—I had visions of traveling across Barsaive by airship and earning copious silver ferrying others from place to place. Janor soon brought this wild flight of fancy to earth.





"You might be able to rebuild the front quarter of the hull, but getting enough true air to make it fly again is another matter," he said. "And that's only the first obstacle. An airship flies because of the elemental air woven into its very fabric, and even the smallest drakkar needs huge amounts of it to get off the ground. Only a skilled elementalist can weave the True air into the ship's pattern in the proper proportions, and such service is not cheaply bought. I doubt the Far Horizons Company can afford to salvage this ship and rebuild it—and if they can't, then we couldn't possibly."

Regath told me later that a single drakkar in good condition cost somewhere around twenty thousand silvers. "At that price," he said, "you're spending less to buy new than to rebuild one." He had once been a part-owner of an air-mining concern, which lost ships constantly to wyverns, chimeras, flocks of gargoyles and even fearsome air spirits. The spirits were by far the worst, he said; they seemed to have a grudge against air miners and often made a point of attacking mining vessels. "Like being attacked by a thunderstorm that hates you," was how he described it. "Imagine a storm with an evil intelligence, a storm that can intentionally attack you and even counter every move you make to save yourself. If ever you go flying across Barsaive, my boy, watch out for storms. You won't know if it's just a pile of thunderclouds or a vengeful air spirit until it's too late."

ARRIVAL IN BARTERTOWN

We reached the outskirts of Bartertown ten days after leaving the river. We bade Regath an affectionate farewell, promising to dine with him at his home two days' hence, and struck off into the city in search of lodging. Janor knew of a good inn where rooms and meals could be had for a very few silvers and some songs, and so we went to the Dancing Dwarf. The food was plain but tasty, and after so long on the road a real bed was a welcome luxury.

After a refreshing night's sleep, I was bursting with the desire to explore this vast, bustling traders' paradise. The lake-side town of Diiza, which had seemed so large and exotic, would have fit five or six times into Bartertown, and by comparison was as sleepy and dull as Caralle. Janor and I arranged to meet that evening at the Hare and Hound, an establishment known for well-heeled patrons who paid handsomely for a good night's entertainment. Then he went off to look up old friends, while I went exploring. (Naïve as I was, I had no notion of the hazards that await the unwary traveler in the stone jungles we call cities; I was soon to learn that Barsaive's great cities are as full of threats to survival as the darkest wilderness.)

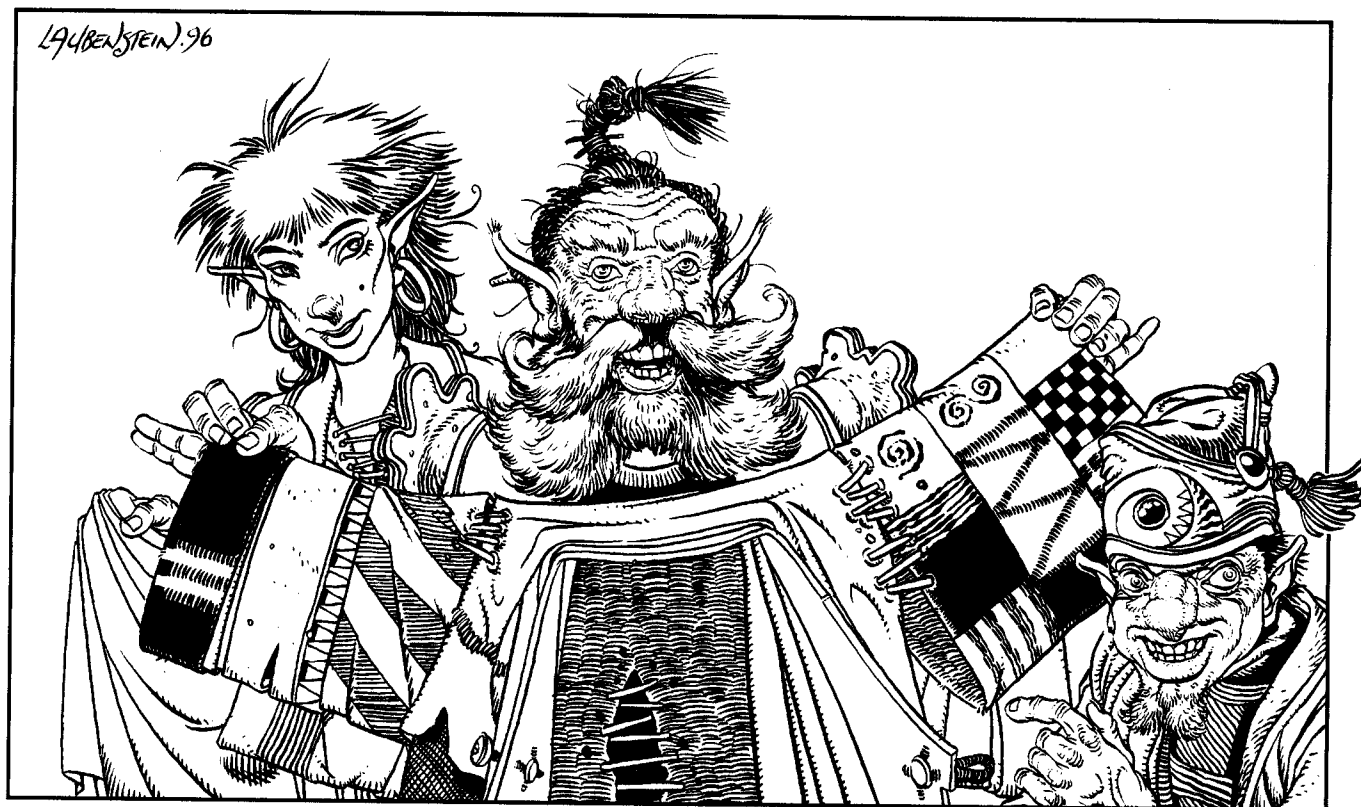
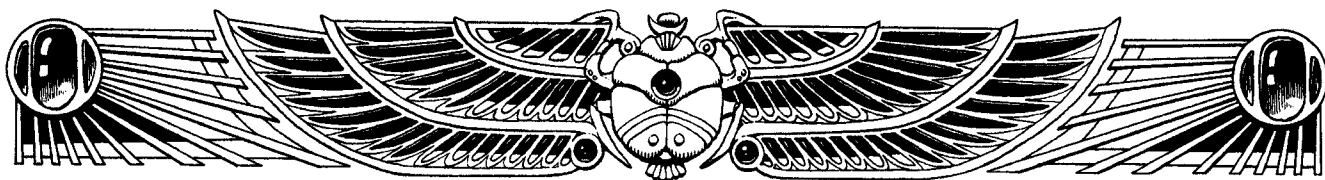
THE WONDERS OF THE BAZAAR

All roads in Bartertown lead swiftly to the bazaar, and so I found myself there in short order. In truth, Bartertown is little more than a giant bazaar surrounded by a few side streets. (I learned later that every city and large town has a bazaar of some kind, whether it be called the Grand Bazaar, the Merchant's Quarter, the Marketplace, Peddler's Row or any number of other Names.) Bartertown's bazaar was (and remains) the most amazing place I have ever seen—everything I could imagine, and many things I'd never dreamed of, seemed to be for sale. Along its twisting avenues I saw dozens upon dozens of booths, shops and tents from which merchants of all Name-giver races hawked goods and services from all over Barsaive: silks, wool, leather goods, jewelry and ornaments of gold and silver and a rainbow of gemstones, weapons, armor, exotic beasts, magical trinkets, books of fantastical lore, maps and charts showing routes to lost treasures, idols and tokens of the Passions, wines and ales, perfumes, rugs, candles, ironwork and a thousand other things.

The people were every bit as fascinating as the goods. We had folk of several Name-giver races in Caralle, but not in such bewildering profusion. Also, farmers and herders tend to look alike, whether they be elves, humans, dwarfs or orks. The people I saw in the streets of Bartertown were as different from each other as the flowers of spring, even when they were of the same race. I saw stout dwarf merchants in bright silk tunics; thin dwarfs in plain wool robes who carried armfuls of scrolls and walked about reading them; chattering t'skrang in dyed leathers, with the rolling gait of sailors recently come ashore; orks in chain mail with a hand on their sword-hilts; mild-faced ork women holding their children by the hand as they haggled over the price of a basket of peppers; scrawny human urchins snatching a piece of fruit here, a fresh honeycake there; well-dressed humans examining bolts of pale silks for flaws; a troll who looked to be a carpenter's apprentice, from the bruises on his fingers and the sawdust that sprinkled his coarse tufts of hair; elves in homespun shirts and trousers, buying flour for the week's bread; elves in velvet coats who meandered through the bazaar with bored looks on their faces, as if they had seen everything too many times; windlings darting over the heads of browsers to look at goods on display; even an occasional obsidiman, moving slowly through the sea of people like the galleons of the Aras Sea.

I saw a troubadour in a patched cloak, playing a small harp and singing as passersby tossed coppers and silvers into his hat. I turned a corner and saw a blue-skinned t'skrang juggling knives in front of an admiring crowd. Two streets over, a





grandmotherly dwarf sat in the midst of a circle of children, telling stories of Throal's heroes. I stopped to listen for awhile, but the noise of the bazaar drew me back to the streets again. Janor and I had made a pocketful of silvers at the Dancing Dwarf last night, and my share was beginning to burn a hole in my belt pouch.

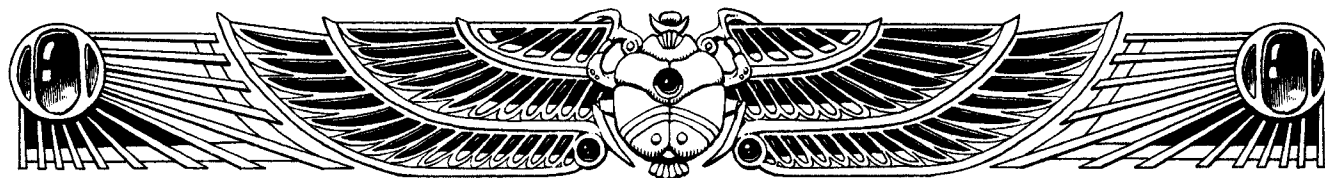
At length I spied exactly what I wanted—a seller of cloaks. I had no idea how much a winternight cloak cost, but I was determined to have one if I could—such a cloak was the only fitting garment for a true son of the road. The proprietor of the booth was most gracious, helpfully pointing out the advantages of a good wool cloak when I regretfully admitted that the 275 silvers for a winternight garment was beyond my resources. He recommended a heather-green cloak over the brown one I first thought to buy; the green one, he said, was of a better grade of cloth that would feel more comfortable if I used it as a blanket. As I planned to do just that, I straightaway bought the green cloak. I shook my silvers into my hand, carefully counted out five and passed them across the counter to him. He handed me the cloak, and I put it on. It felt wonderful to be wearing such a garment, even if it was mere wool with no magic in it; and I was sure I could easily earn enough for a winternight cloak as I advanced in the troubadour's Discipline. My thoughts distracted by this happy prospect, I nearly ran into a small, scruffy-looking human and his ork companion, who were standing close to the cloak-seller's booth. From their hard-eyed expressions and the way they stood, I half-expected some challenge—but to my surprise they graciously accepted my apology for my carelessness. The ork even smiled and wished me good day. I went on my way, resolved more firmly than ever to cease judging others by their outward appearances.

I RUN INTO DANGER

The rest of the day passed pleasantly enough, and as twilight fell I worked my way back toward the Hare and Hound. Janor had given me excellent directions, and though I was later than I should have been, I felt sure I would find the place easily enough. Unfortunately, I took a wrong turn somewhere near a woodworker's stall and soon found myself hopelessly lost.

Janor had told me that a flute-maker's workshop stood on one corner of the street I wanted, and the establishment of the well-known silk merchant Charboyya stood on the other. If I lost my way, he had advised me to ask some friendly passerby





the way to Charboyya's; everyone in Bartertown knew where the silk merchant's warehouse was. I looked around for a flute-maker's, but saw nothing that might be one. I therefore decided to try Janor's advice.

Footsteps sounded behind me, as if in answer to my unspoken wish. I turned toward them, and smiled with relief when I saw the ork and the human whom I'd nearly run down that afternoon. "Pardon me for troubling you, gentlemen," I said, walking toward them, "but could you kindly tell me the way to Charboyya's House of Fine Silks?"

"Of course," said the human.

"For a price," his companion added, with a laugh that sounded not at all friendly. As he spoke, he was circling around behind me. It dawned on me that I had been extremely foolish; when the human drew a knife from his belt, I knew my folly for certain.

Before I could marshal my scattered wits to attack or flee, the ork grabbed my arms and pulled them behind me. The human advanced on me, his knife blade glittering in the fading light.

"Please don't kill me," I babbled. "I've done you no harm!"

The human threw back his head and guffawed. "We're not going to kill you. We just want your money." He lowered the knife and slashed at me. Reflexively, I sucked in my stomach against the blow—then heard the faint clink of silver and realized that he had slit the bottom of my belt pouch. As my silvers poured into his hand, he grinned unpleasantly up at me. "As you've been so very polite about this, I'll give you a gift in return—a little city wisdom for you. Don't carry your belt pouch dangling out for all to see; faster workers than my friend and I might press against you in the crowd and slice right through it without you being any the wiser. And another thing; don't flash your coin around where people can see how much you've got. You'd have been far wiser to bring out the price of that nice new cloak silver by silver, instead of dumping it all in your hand like that." He pocketed my silvers and stood up, grinning wider. "Caught our attention right away, that did. Try that once too often and all of Bartertown'll soon know there's a rich young fool wandering around. Then you'll be a nice target."

"What about the cloak?" said the ork.

The human looked thoughtful. "Won't command much of a price. But if you want it for yourself ..."

"I think I do," the ork said.

"Suit yourself then, you greedy fool," the human replied. But his lips didn't move. At the sound of his own voice, he looked swiftly around with a startled expression.

"Who are you calling fool?" snapped the ork, who couldn't see his companion from behind me. From elsewhere, his voice continued, "I'm not so much a fool that I don't know what you're planning. You want to keep all the silver for yourself. Well, I'm not having that—hear?!"

The human turned angrily toward me and the ork. He raised the hand with the knife in it. "Don't threaten me," he growled, and advanced on us just as the ork let go of my arms and stepped out from behind me to meet him.

I backed away toward the shadows cast by a nearby tent. As I moved, a knife flashed through the gloom and buried itself in the ork's throat. The human swore and turned to run. A second knife thudded into his back, and he collapsed with a moist grunt.

Janor stepped out of the shadows. "You can come out, Hamlin."

Shakily, I moved to join him as he knelt by the fallen human. Blood was spreading in a wide, dark patch across the thief's shirt. Janor pulled the knife out of him with one hand and fumbled in the thief's pocket with another. He took out a handful of silvers and presented them to me. "Yours, I believe. When you buy a new belt pouch, make sure you can tie it somewhere under your shirt."

I nodded dumbly. Janor retrieved his other knife from the dead ork, then wiped both blades clean on a nearby tussock of grass. "Are you up for an evening's performing?"

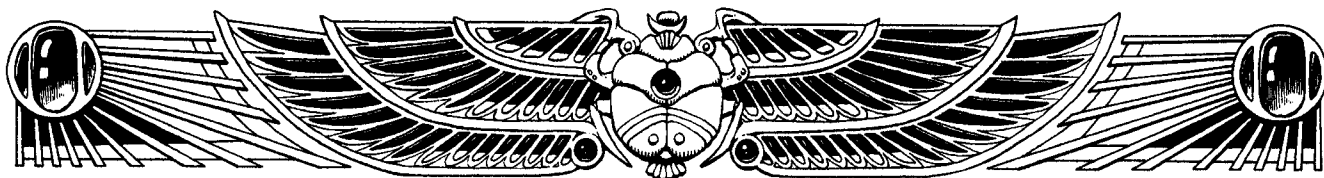
"I think so," I answered, and was surprised to realize that it was true.

"Good." He clapped me on the shoulder, and we strode toward the Hare and Hound.

A LAST BRIEF WORD OF WISDOM

Since that first journey, I have traveled the length and breadth of Barsaive and have found no greater teacher than experience. Those of you who read this account of a novice's travels, heed the mistakes I made and the things I learned—but don't stop with my tale. Before you set out on your travels, learn all you can from those who know the road. Most important, travel lightly and keep your eyes and mind open to the lessons the road itself can teach.





ON EXPLORING THE WILDS

This remarkable essay comes to us from the renowned explorer Luxar Light-treader, a scout and beastmaster who has traveled across Barsaive from the Scol Mountains to the Servos Jungle to the shores of Death's Sea. He is also one of the few Name-givers to gain the trust of the Tamers, the fierce tribal people of the Liaj Jungle.

—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records



"Hope for the best, prepare for the worst and expect anything and everything"—that's what my mentor, the troll scout Del Mak R'shan, used to say, and I can think of no better motto for any explorer. A thirteen-course elven banquet, a night on a t'skrang pleasure barge—such things may delight, but nothing thrills the heart and soul like exploring new lands (well, I've known a few pleasure barges that may come close, but we're talking about exploring here). However, nothing presents greater danger to body and mind than setting out on an expedition without preparing beforehand for what you might encounter. The vagaries of weather, the simplest way to build a shelter, safeguards against cold and heat, the unique hazards of Barsaive's wild places—these are things that any adventurer should know, unless he wants to die in some spectacularly foolish fashion. Therefore, I present the following information—in the hope that it might prevent the deaths of at least a few fools.

ON MOUNTAIN REGIONS

I shall begin with mountain regions—simply because I know and love mountains best of all. I was born in a small village in the foothills of the Scol Mountains, and in my younger days I explored up and down the Scol range. Since then, I have also explored the northernmost fringes of the Throal Mountains, the Scythia Mountains, the Dragon Mountains to the south, the Twilight Peaks where the crystal raiders dwell, and even the Thunder Mountains near the Aras Sea.

During the Scourge, many Name-givers built sturdy kaers in the abundant natural caves in Barsaive's mountain ranges. Today, these ancient kaers and tunnels still riddle Barsaive's mountains and attract many explorers and adepts—most of whom are utterly ignorant of the mountains' dangers.

OF COLD AND OTHER HAZARDS

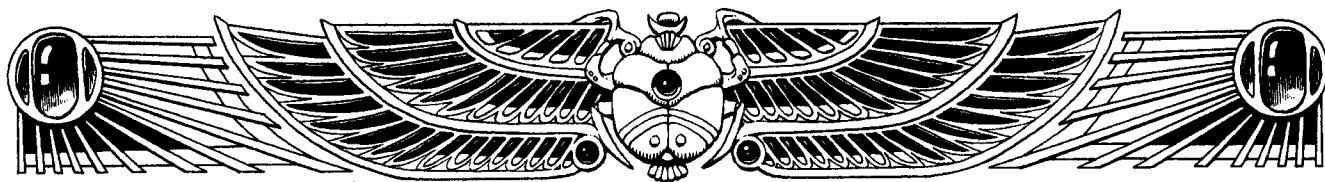
Cold is the greatest peril of the high mountain slopes, simply because few Name-givers understand it or realize its danger. Mountains are close to the sky and therefore close to the source of the element of air. Such pure air is naturally cold—so cold that it turns water into ice. So if your notion of cold is a rainstorm off the Aras Sea or the chill of a night in the Badlands, imagine that sensation twenty times worse and you'll have some idea of just how cold the high mountain slopes are.

The cold air freezes rain so that it falls as snow, a glittering white powder that covers the mountain tops. Although snow may seem harmless enough, it can burn a Name-giver's unprotected skin, like some strange inversion of fire. And sunlight on snow shines so brightly that it makes the eyes water and can blind a Name-giver. (Obviously, the icy, slippery slopes of a snow-capped mountain are not the best place to lose your sight—one false step can send you plunging down a crevasse or over the edge of a cliff.)

Any especially bright-sparkling, new-fallen snow may contain frozen nuggets of True water. When frozen, the element is easy to harvest, though the touch of a warm hand is generally enough to melt the kernels. Still, the hope of finding True water lures many explorers up to the heights, despite the dangers.

Lower down the slopes, where snow doesn't fall, bitter cold winds can freeze the skin and flesh of Name-givers unwise enough to leave their hands and faces bare to the wind's ravages. Such cold-touched flesh turns dead white, as the cold leeches the body's natural fire away. Only careful treatment and healing magic can bring frozen flesh back to life. Without such treatment, the dead flesh must be cut out lest it rot. Otherwise, poisons from the decaying flesh spread throughout the body





and kill the unfortunate sufferer. I know of more than one foolish would-be mountaineer who has lost fingers and toes to the bite of frost as surely as you might lose a limb to a tiger's jaws.

Many Name-givers also find the ice-cold mountain air difficult to breathe—it freezes the throat and the inside of your nose and makes your lungs cringe. The mountain winds often carry a greater danger, however—pockets of True air, which seem to sparkle in the light. Breathing True air for too long makes you “wind-drunk”—you feel invincible, crazed with delight. Worse, prolonged exposure to True air can alter a Name-giver's lungs, making him unable to breathe normal air. Many ancient records speak of unfortunate mountaineers who climbed through several pockets of True air during their explorations and suffocated when they left the last pocket behind.

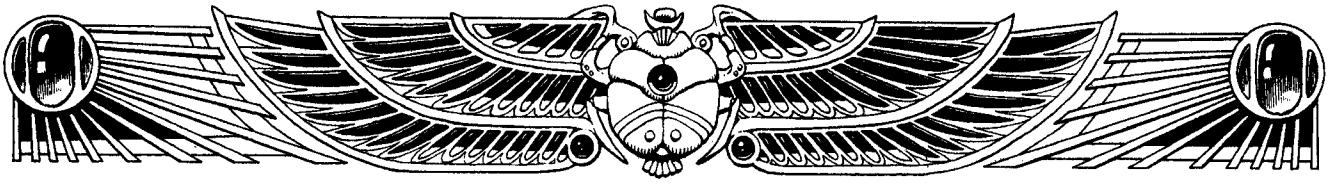
Fortunately, protection from the hazards of cold is relatively simple. Wear warm clothing—furs, wool, or anything else that will hold heat and release water. (If moisture is trapped and frozen close to the skin, it can cause terrible harm.) Wool and many furs are common and inexpensive and work best if worn in several layers. Garments woven with kernels of True fire offer even better—though costlier—protection against cold and snow. You can also use spells to ward off cold, but magic is far less practical than a good wool jerkin and a fur cloak for most adventurers. Also, keep your hands and feet as warm and dry as possible. Wear heavy gloves or gauntlets, sturdy boots with wool socks underneath, and a hat or hood that covers your ears. Ears, fingers and toes are especially vulnerable to frostbite because they are farthest from the fire in a Name-giver's heart and so must be kept well wrapped against the chill air.

Mountain terrain itself presents formidable hazards as well. Steep drops, narrow ravines, twisting canyons and near-vertical slopes all pose challenges to explorers, whether they be on foot, riding mounts or even aboard airships. Occasionally, explorers may find mountain trails, but even these are narrow and winding and provide no protection against avalanches, rock- and mudslides and the like.

Avalanches are a special peril of the highest slopes where snow gathers—these rushing rivers of snow can pour down the side of a mountain without warning and strike with the force of a stampeding herd of wild thunder beasts. Lower down, rockslides and mudslides are common and strike with equal suddenness. Fortunately, an alert adventurer can usually hear the roar of an avalanche or landslide before disaster strikes. However, a slide or avalanche is never far behind its roar, so you must get out of the way quickly. That's why experienced mountain explorers keep constant watch for clefts, caves and overhangs and other terrain that might provide shelter during a landslide or avalanche. Judge the time you'd need to reach the closest place and look carefully at the ground you'd have to cross—if you hear the faraway rumble of an avalanche or a rockslide, you won't have time to choose which way to run.

Be sure to carry plenty of food on your person as well. A rockslide or avalanche may well seal you inside your shelter for several days while you dig your way out. Carrying food supplies in a pack-beast's saddlebags won't do—more than likely, you won't be able to drag the beast to shelter with you. The more you can carry on your own shoulders, the better—lightweight but nourishing dried food, such as dwarf mine rations. (And never mind what they taste like—a few days of dreadful food is better than starving to death behind a wall of snow.)





Mounted travelers face special problems in mountains. Horses, thundra beasts and suchlike are too big to traverse narrow mountain trails and can easily lose their footing in treacherous twists and turns. Very likely, they'll fall and be lamed or killed. Smaller mounts and animal companions, particularly those native to mountain lands, are better suited for mountain travel. The dwarfs of Throal's mountain baronies breed hardy ponies that can pick their way up most slopes and endure the various hardships of mountain travel, but even they cannot cross some of the narrowest ledges and passages.

Similarly, airships face special hazards in mountain areas. Fierce mountain winds can smash the sturdiest airship into the side of a mountain as easily as you or I might crush a boat of straw. True, air sailors learn to ride winds as boatmen learn to navigate river currents and rapids, but disaster can befall even the greatest of air sailors when a fierce mountain storm strikes suddenly.

FLORA, FAUNA AND MOUNTAIN DENIZENS

Plants, animals—even Name-givers—become sparser and hardier as one travels up a mountain. Life abounds in the forests that nestle amid mountain foothills. Here, you may find plentiful game—deer, rabbits, squirrels and other such tasty creatures—as well as countless edible plants. You may also find predators, such as brithans, bears and certain large, wild cats. Dwarf settlements are common in mountain foothills—a dwarf likes nothing better than the combination of fertile soil, useful plants and animals, and vast heaps of rock towering over the hillsides. Dwarf miners also frequently live in mountain foothills, making their homes in natural caves and digging deep into nearby mountains in search of ore and gems.

Higher up a mountain's slopes, fertile earth gives way to solid rock. Small trees, bent and twisted by the wind, sprout from cracks in the stone, and patches of grass cling to exposed soil here and there. Mosses, lichens and other rock-dwelling plants—some of which are edible or useful for stanching wounds—growing on boulders and along rocky inclines. Mountain goats feed off the sparse tufts of grass and occasional bunches of wildflowers, and small hunting cats and bears dwell in the caves that dot these lower slopes. Espagra live in the rocks and sometimes fly out over the lowlands in search of prey, but cold keeps them from venturing into the heights. Brithans may also dwell in such areas, in caves rich in elemental earth.

Trolls are the Name-givers most likely to inhabit the middle heights. To outsiders, life in the rugged land of the trollmoots seems harsh, but the craggy terrain has benefits as well. Enemies find it fiendishly difficult to attack a trollmoot, because safely crossing the terrain is so difficult and because the trolls can spy out the land for miles around. Even airship armadas have trouble reaching trollmoots, thanks to the fierce mountain winds. The crystal raiders of the Twilight Peaks are the best known of Barsaive's trollmoots, but trolls live in every mountainous region—some in sizable moots, sometimes merely a single clan scratching out a living in the rocky soil. The Throal Mountains are also home to tribes of cave trolls, whose ancestors survived the Scourge in the high mountains. Sad to say, these trolls have largely reverted to savagery in our day. Some tales claim that cave troll tribes lived through the Scourge by making bargains with the Horrors, though I do not believe it. Still, they are brutal and will attack without warning any stranger who enters their territory.

Few Name-givers live in the highest mountain crags. The highest slopes belong almost solely to birds of prey, gargoyles, griffins, wyverns, the occasional dragon, and some truly strange spirits of elemental earth and air. Ice flyers favor the cold and snowy peaks that most other living things—even dragons—shun. The griffins and wyverns feed off of goats and mountain sheep, and I have seen dragons soaring on thermal winds over mountain tops. It is said that many of Barsaive's dragons lair in the peaks of the Dragon Mountains; I myself saw one dragon there, hunting a lone griffin for its meal. The high peaks are best known for their raging storms, many of which erupt when powerful air and earth spirits battle one another.

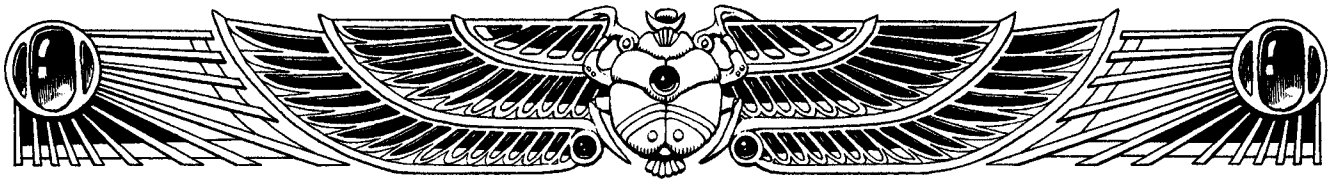
AN ILL-FATED EXPEDITION TO SCYTHA

One of my most memorable expeditions took me to the Scythia Mountains. These haunted peaks contain the ruins of the ancient dwarf kingdom of Scythia, which succumbed to plague, madness and rebellion in the years before the Scourge.

According to what records I managed to find in the Great Library, ancient Scythia had at least three underground cities as vast as any in Throal. The records speak of huge networks of tunnels that connected the cities with each other and with the surface world, and so my companions and I determined to find a way inside the old kingdom. We were certain that Scythia's long-dead inhabitants had left treasures behind when they fled their dying kingdom for the haven of Throal, and we meant to find them.

We soon found a cavern with a long, narrow fissure at its back, just large enough for most Name-givers to slip through (trolls and obsidimen excepted). On the other side of the fissure, we found ourselves in a tunnel that led to a maze of passages. Eagerly, we made our way down this tunnel, certain that Scythia's treasures soon would be ours.





Then we encountered the creatures. None of us knew what they were at the time, but I have done some reading since then and I believe I can name them now. Many Barsaivians may recall old tales of the invae, the strange insect-like creatures that influenced the cult of Chorrolis and brought about the frenzied Invae Burnings, which claimed so many innocent followers of Chorrolis. According to the tales, invae breed by using Name-givers as hosts, and their bodies become twisted combinations of Name-giver and insect—exactly like the horrible hybrids we encountered that day.

At first, the terrible creatures hid themselves under dark, heavy robes and cloaks, so that we took them for another party of Name-givers. Lulled by false security, we let them draw close to us. Then, they suddenly threw off their robes and attacked. We fought back fiercely, but lost half our number in the battle. Taller than the average troll and thinner than the slenderest elf, our foes had spindly limbs covered with sharp spines and hard, black shells as strong as armor. Their faces were terrible to behold—with their huge, opaque eyes and pincer jaws that dripped venom, they reminded me of the giant spiders of the Liaj Jungle. They chittered and squealed unintelligibly and let loose head-splitting screams when wounded or driven back by our weapons and magic. As we pushed deeper into the Scythia Mountains, we encountered more and more of the insect-men until, battered and bleeding, we turned back.

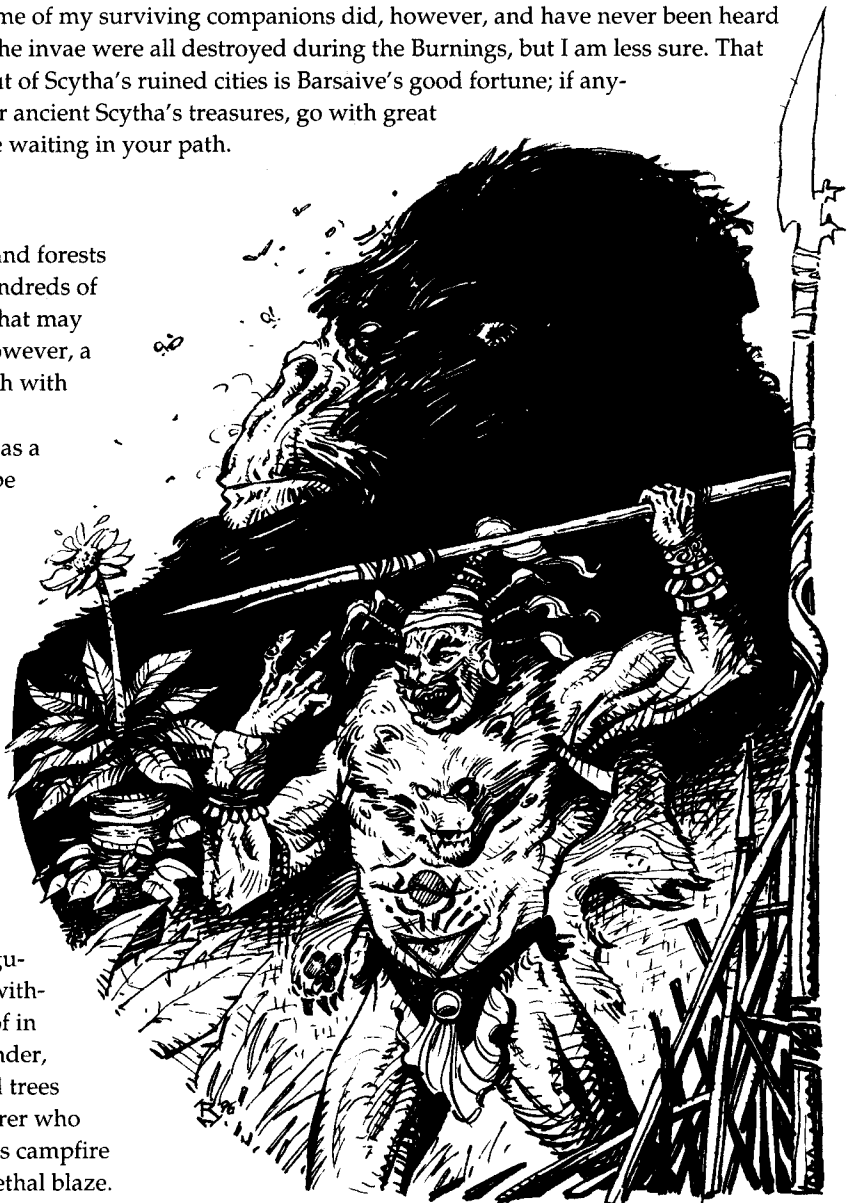
I have never returned to those caverns. Some of my surviving companions did, however, and have never been heard from again. I know most scholars believe that the invae were all destroyed during the Burnings, but I am less sure. That these insect-things have not come swarming out of Scythia's ruined cities is Barsaive's good fortune; if anyone reading this text is moved to go hunting for ancient Scythia's treasures, go with great caution. Any number of these monsters may be waiting in your path.

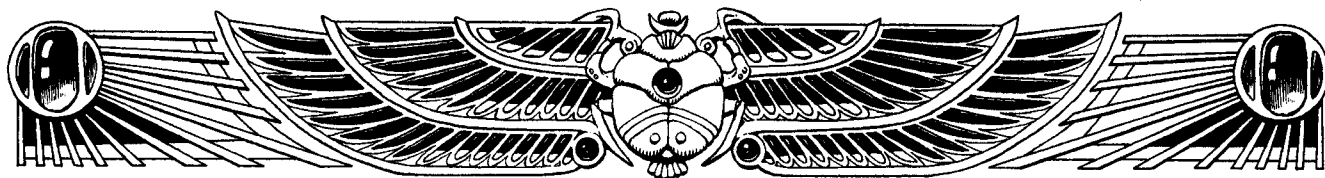
JUNGLES AND FORESTS

To the inexperienced adventurer, jungles and forests seem essentially the same—hundreds upon hundreds of trees, low-growing shrubs and various beasts that may hunt or be hunted by Name-givers. In truth, however, a jungle and a forest are two different places, each with its own wonders and dangers.

No place in Barsaive is so stuffed with life as a jungle. The cycle of life, death and rebirth can be seen more clearly here than in any other place, and all who dwell in the jungle's depths reflect this truth. Forests, by contrast, have their share of dangers, but are more temperate in climate and in nature. Many creatures find it easier to survive and even flourish in the forest's milder environment, and most Name-givers find the woodlands less fraught with hidden perils. A Name-giver may meet a hungry brithan in a forest, but he will not find a lethally poisonous whitemouth fly nestled in the heart of a flower or lean against a sturdy vine that turns out to be a giant python.

However, forests contain one hazard that jungles do not—fire. Though light rain falls regularly in most woodlands, many frequently go without rainfall for long periods (a thing unheard-of in the jungles!). A parched forest will burn like tinder, leaving only blackened earth and stubs of dead trees behind. In such woodlands, a careless adventurer who flings a fire spell at the wrong time or leaves his campfire smoldering, or a bolt of lightning can spark a lethal blaze.





TRAVELING THROUGH THE SERVOS

The Servos Jungle is very isolated from the rest of the Serpent River's South Reach—the Name Servos, in fact, means “alone”—but the jungle teems with inhabitants. T'skrang villages and plantations dot the shores of the Serpent and its branches as they wind their way into the jungle's dark green heart. Deeper in the jungle, tribal settlements abound—jungle t'skrang, Cathan tribes and others live amid the riotous growth, subsisting on the jungle's bounty, along with occasional infusions of trade goods such as metal knives and dwarf ale. Any adventurer wishing to contact such settlements should hire an experienced jungle guide, however; the jungle growth is so dense that one can wander a mere stone's throw from the riverbank and no longer see nor hear the water.

My first journey through the Servos Jungle is one I'll never forget. Though young and inexperienced, I had learned some sense and read all I could about the jungle climate before setting out. I knew the air would be hot and heavy, brimming with moisture that would rust metal weapons and armor. So I chose wisely (or so I thought) when equipping myself for the trip. I wore leather armor and carried a short bow and a bone dagger. I bought copious dried provisions, which can feed a Name-giver well for some days and yet take up little space or weight. I was determined to travel as light as possible, knowing that the sheer effort of breathing the heavy air, holding up under the heat and cutting my way through endless acres of vines and undergrowth would sap my strength. I even bought healing potions lest I succumb to one of the terrible jungle plagues of which I had heard. I thought I had prepared for every eventuality.

The climate proved even worse than I had imagined, however. The water-laden air and frequent downpours made even my leather armor a torment to wear, and by the third day it was beginning to mildew in places. I understood now why the Cathan tribesmen and other jungle-dwellers wear as little clothing as possible. I had brought parchments with me for making maps, but they too rotted from the moisture. (I learned later, from a more experienced scout, to protect maps, scrolls and such with shellac made from the sap of native trees.) Eventually, I learned to live with the constant wet and even to enjoy the rain as the native tribes do. When the warm rain-showers poured down from the green canopy of leaves and vines overhead, the Cathan (among whom I stayed briefly) would dash out of their huts and lean-tos and dance in it. After a time I joined them, stripping off my sodden leathers and letting the rain cleanse me of the day's accumulated sweat and dirt. (The jungle-dwellers are far cleaner than, say, the average Throalic city-dweller, and so are less prone to illness.)

I did fall briefly ill with a mild form of jungle fever, but fortunately I came under the care of a Cathan village shaman. I offered her my healing potions, but she used remedies concocted from jungle plants and animals. I healed with remarkable rapidity and have no doubt that even the king's personal healers could not have provided better care.

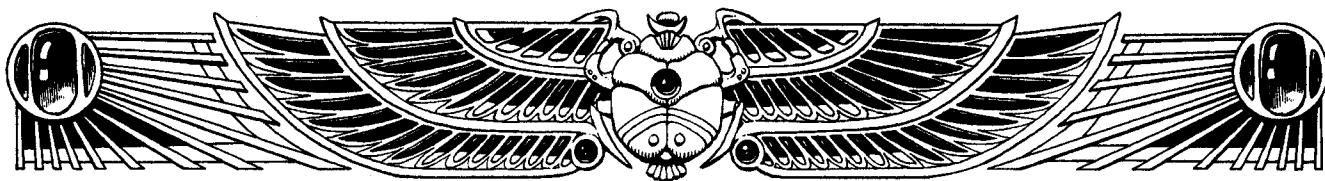
Jungle Terrain and Some Denizens

Several swamps and lakes, such as Lake Pyros, tend to lie along the outskirts of the Servos, but the jungle's interior contains few swamplands. Apparently, the profusion of trees and flowers and vines that grow in riot all around quickly absorb standing water. In some spots, the soft ground cannot hold any more water—but unlike a true swamp, such ground is merely unpleasant, rather than dangerous, to cross. You'll suffer muddy boots (or muddy feet), but you'll not risk sinking and drowning in the muck.

The jungle's lack of undergrowth also surprised me. I had traveled through numerous woodlands, where underbrush abounded, and had expected to fight my way through vast tangles of it in the Servos Jungle. Imagine my surprise when I found the jungle floor almost bare of living plants! After a few hours' observation, however, I realized why. The tall trees and the thick vines that enwrap them consume so much of the vital elements that none can reach all the way to the ground, to nourish plant life there. Undergrowth appears mostly on the fringes of the jungle, where it forms a kind of living wall against intruders such as myself. I surmised that wild tales of the “impenetrable jungle” came from would-be explorers who could not cut their way past the overgrown fringes and mistakenly concluded that the choking growth would only get worse as they advanced deeper within.

Everything grows to immense size in the Servos Jungle. Imagine vines as thick as a troll's arm or shrubs the size of small trees, all covered in blossoms the size of stewpot-lids, and you'll have some faint idea of the jungle's marvels. The trees, of course, tower like giants over everything. I saw trees large enough to hold a small village in their branches, some with trunks so wide that you could conceal a thundra beast on the other side. That such giants could grow so swiftly from nothing provides a living testament to the power of Life, for scarcely a hundred years have passed since the devouring Horrors of the Scourge stripped Barsaive's jungles.





Vines, mosses and other hanging plants bind the towering trees together into a single, vast ocean of greenery. The Cathan and other jungle peoples often travel across the canopy of leaves, branches and vines for miles, walking as easily upon it as you or I might walk upon a high road. A Cathan scout led me through this green twilight for two days, and we never once touched or even saw the ground below. Every moment, some brightly colored bird or reptile seemed to flash its feathers or scales against the glowing emerald of the leaves. I could have stayed and watched these strange, beguiling creatures for days, but my guide hurried me on—for predators can walk across the jungle canopy as easily as Name-givers. Huge hunting cats often pounce from its heights onto unsuspecting prey below, and enormous snakes coil around low branches, where they blend in with the vines. A hunting snake can drop upon unsuspecting prey and crush the life out of even a troll, given the opportunity.

From the great hunting cats that lounge high in the trees, to wild swine and thundra beasts that wander along the riverbanks, to small deer and monkeys that feed off the abundant jungle growth, the jungle is home to a bewildering variety of beasts. The beasts, in turn, provide food for the jungle tribes—and hungry adventurers. One can live very well off the jungle's countless varieties of fruits and nuts and edible fungi, but the Servos can also provide an occasional, welcome taste of meat.

The Cathan and other tribes commonly hunt snakes, lizards, frogs and toads. These reptiles breed in abundance near rivers and pools, and virtually all of them also climb trees. Some trees are a-swarm with so many small frogs that they seem to be covered with boils. Many of the reptiles are poisonous, however, and are not safe to eat. If you can win the trust of the often-suspicious native tribes and learn the wisdom of the jungle from them, so much the better; otherwise, best not to eat any beast or plant whose properties you don't know.

The jungle is most active at dawn, which is one reason why the native peoples tend not to be early risers (except for hunting parties, who find the dawn an excellent time to bag deer or wild pigs). Because the dense foliage blocks the early sunlight, nocturnal hunters often prowl for a short time after sunrise. To avoid becoming a late snack for such beasts, the tribesmen don't rouse themselves until somewhat later in the morning. From an hour or so after dawn to about mid-morning is the best time to hunt, and many a tribesman snares a catch to be eaten later in the day. If you wish to avoid the notice of tribesmen and dangerous beasts, travel during the heat of the day, if you can bear it—the heat makes the beasts sluggish and less likely to attack, while most tribesmen pass the hottest hours dozing.

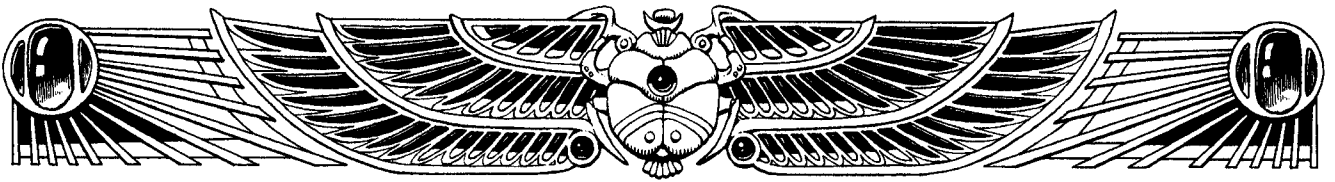
Traveling at night will keep you out of the natives' eyes but you may attract the attention of nocturnal predators. If you must journey at night, choose a clear one; not much moonlight can penetrate the jungle canopy, and on a rainy night you won't be able to see trouble coming at all. Even during daylight hours, a rainstorm or the approach of one brings all the animals out of their dens as if night had fallen. To travel during a rainstorm exposes you to all the perils of the night, as well as the sheer unpleasantness of attempting to cover ground while having buckets of water dumped over your head at every step. If no settlement is nearby, try waiting out the storm in a hollow tree trunk or under the roots of one. (Some trees grow so large that their roots are as broad as the roof of a small hut; many of these stick far enough out of the earth that even an obsidiman can sit under one, if he ducks his head.) You can also build a quick shelter by stripping the branches from young trees, tying them together with thick vines, and then covering the structure with the huge, broad, blue-green leaves of the moydi tree (which grows throughout the jungle). These leaves shed water as if they had been oiled, and even the smallest of them is big enough to serve an ork as a blanket.

A Few Facts about Wild Beasts

My trip through the Servos taught me a great deal about wild creatures—most importantly, how to avoid tangling with them. Battle is often the way of things in Nature, but too many adepts (myself included, once upon a time!) stumble blindly into it. They unwittingly pass too close to a mother tiger's den or blunder into a jungle griffin's hunting ground—and stir the bloodlust of beasts they might have avoided. The beasts of earth and air and water are not Horrors or Name-givers; they do not act out of malice, or for revenge, honor or glory. They attack only to eat, protect their young or escape unbearable pain. Even the foul-tempered hydra's rage stems from the agony inflicted by some fool Name-giver magician who decided he could create a better form of life than Nature. A chakta bird that steals shiny objects to line its nest does not lust for gold or silver as we Name-givers do; the bird finds a polished bit of glass as valuable as the finest gemstone, because it will attract a mate just as easily.

Knowing what a wild creature wants—and does not want—enables the wise adventurer to avoid a battle with it and to defeat the creature if he must fight. Sudden, loud noises generally frighten away a beast stalking you. Many animals associate sudden loud sounds with painful, threatening experiences such as lightning strikes or rockslides. Herdbeasts especially associate noise with death; to them, any sudden loud sound resembles a lion's or tiger's roar just before it strikes.





You can also stop a beast from attacking by showing it that you are the "superior predator," so to speak. Meat-eating animals such as tigers and griffins acknowledge each other with shows of strength and bravado, and they will react to a Name-giver in much the same way. A nethermancer friend of mine once used her Discipline's mastery of fear to stare down a full-grown brithan twice her height. Her stare so overawed the beast that it cowered before her and fled back into its lair. On the other side of this coin, beasts can smell fear. To show fear marks you as prey, and any hungry predator will attack if it thinks you won't resist. Therefore, bravery is essential to avoid combat and survive it when necessary.

Most beasts fear fire over all things. Fire ravages their homes, and they know that fleeing is the only way to survive a fire. A campfire or even a torch will hold many creatures at bay, so wary are they of flame. Night-hunters especially avoid fire; they are often sensitive to bright light and will even flee from a light spell. Of course, fire and light can also attract the most dangerous predators of all to your camp—other Name-givers.

Playing on a beast's fears of fire or stronger predators, however, will avail you nothing if some motive stronger than fear triggers the beast's attack. For example, a starving wolf, a griffin whose territory upon which you poach, or a mother lion who believes you threaten her cubs will attack in spite of fire, shows of bravado, or anything else you may do. The wisest course is to know the signs of these things, so that you can avoid such situations entirely.

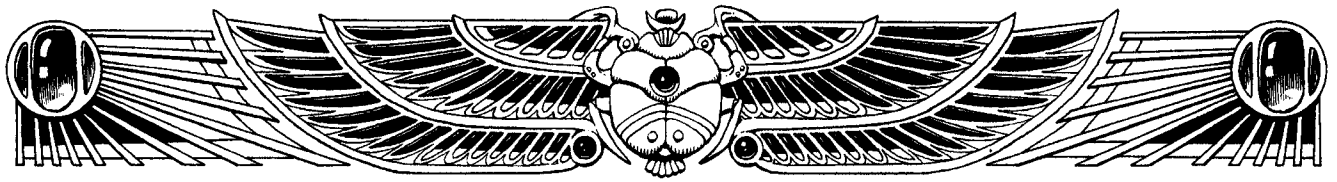
Most attacking creatures try to knock their prey to the ground, where they can easily dispatch it. Pack animals such as wolves work together to drag prey down, and so you must fight several of them at once to stay upright. Most beasts charge straight toward their targets, using their momentum to strike. Hunting cats, such as are common in the Servos and Liaj jungles, charge so quickly that only a skilled adept can sidestep such a charge or block it with a magical barrier. Herd animals may also charge, if sufficiently driven by fear.

Birds of prey and other flying creatures swoop from the sky instead of charging along the ground. Some flying predators swoop down and snatch small prey off the ground whole, crushing it in their claws and then alighting somewhere to eat at their leisure. Such predators attack larger prey by striking at its eyes.

To fight off a flying attacker at the moment it swoops down takes impeccable timing, and only skilled warriors and such can accomplish such feats.

Some creatures can use magic to strike prey from a distance. Lightning lizards hurl magical lightning at their chosen meal, then leap forward in a surprisingly quick, shuffling rush. Their jaws and claws make short work of the helpless victim. Magical abilities are often much harder to defend against than a simple swooping or charging attack, and adepts are advised to learn well the marks of a magical creature's presence so that they can give such beasts as wide a berth as possible.





However, most any predator will give up if you fight back strongly enough. Assuming you survive the initial attack, don't give in for an instant. If you fight fiercely enough, even a pack of predators will give up and go in search of a less troublesome dinner.

Occasionally, blind luck may preserve you during an attack (though no wise traveler relies on it!). Indeed, luck once saved me from a tiger that stalked me in the Servos. Despite the creature's great size, it moved as silently as a shadow through the trees. Its stripes made it all but invisible until the moment it pounced on me from an overhanging branch with no more warning than an arrow shot. Blind good fortune saved me—I had raised my bone knife to hack away at a hanging vine, and when the tiger knocked me down, I instinctively brought my arm up at such an angle that the cat impaled its own throat on the knife-point. Had I not been holding my knife in just that way, the beast would have torn my throat out before I could even scream.

Of Plants that Hunt Animals

In the Servos, I saw for the first time plants with a taste for flesh. These bizarre things grow to astounding size like every other jungle plant, and nearly all are easily capable of devouring windlings. In fact, many are large enough to threaten sizable predators, such as tigers and skeorxes, and a few are big enough to pose a threat to a troll. The tribesmen know these plants well and usually steer well clear of them. Occasionally, however, they use meat-eating plants to defend their settlements against intruders and large predators.

As most plants are rooted to the earth, they must somehow attract prey to them. Many carnivorous plants exude sweet scents to attract a meal or mimic the appearance of their wholesome, edible cousins. Some plants even use illusion magic to appear as other plants. One plant, which the Cathan call *theral'caw*, or "ghost jaws," uses magic to make itself invisible. Once the prey comes close enough, the plant strikes. Some carnivorous plants envelop their victims and exude acidic juices to digest the prey; others crush or strangle the unfortunate victim so that its decomposing body will enrich the soil around the plant's roots. I have heard tales that the elves of Blood Wood cultivate tiny carnivorous plants in their homes to destroy insect pests, but I don't know if this is true. My only visit to the Blood Wood was short, and I did not meet any of the Wood's inhabitants to ask them (as you shall read presently).

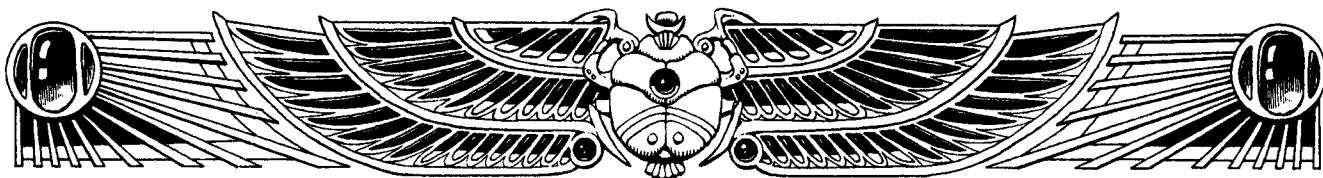
My Days among the Cathan

Of all the things I learned on this first jungle journey, the most valuable lessons came from the Cathan, a tribe of humans who have lived in the Servos Jungle since centuries before the Scourge. Like many people in "civilized" Barsaive, I had believed that jungle life was a harsh, never-ending struggle to see the next dawn. All day and well into the night, I imagined, the poor primitives of the Servos and the Liaj must exhaust themselves in hunting, gathering roots and fruits, repairing their weapons and rude shelters and suchlike. Although the jungle tribes do live among countless hazards, such as falling trees, venomous reptiles, hungry hunting cats and such, I learned that these perils help them to appreciate life's beauties in a way many Name-givers from other places do not. The jungle tribes live as if each day is their last, and they celebrate the survival of their people every day.

Though the jungle tribesmen have little time for "leisure" as most Barsaivians understand it, their lives are full of many joys. To a tribesman, gathering fruits and other edibles for his tribe is not some terrible drudgery; it is the work that gives life a purpose, as carving gives purpose to a sculptor. What's more, he finds his work as interesting as a librarian might find the gathering of new scrolls and adventuring journals. A gatherer moves anywhere he wishes in his own domain, exploring its many delights and wonders, seeing all and missing nothing. As long as he returns with his bounty, he may roam for as long or short a time as he wishes; he need not fear, as a farmer does, the failure to harvest his crops before market day. And because all share in the labor according to their ability, no one tribesman must shoulder an especially heavy burden of responsibility.

Even the dangers of the hunt are not as great as most Name-givers believe. A skilled hunter can set and check a string of snares quite quickly and easily. In any case, gathering provides most of a tribe's food, so hunting large animals is seldom necessary. Indeed, Cathan hunters regard their hunting expeditions as a sort of holiday, with just enough potential danger to make the occasion exciting. They do not minimize the perils, but they know that life can end in many ways and so do not regard hunting as any more dangerous than, say, climbing trees for coconuts. They do take certain precautions when necessary; for example, when going after truly vicious beasts such as skeorxes, they wear armor woven from strips of reddish, wrinkled clemantha bark. The bark is as flexible as reeds when wet but becomes as strong as chain mail when it dries.





Often, a hunt provides moments of drama that extend far beyond the hunt itself. Many Cathan like nothing better than sitting together around a campfire after a successful expedition, watching the hunters re-enact a companion's thrilling brush with death while the meat roasts in a deep-dug pit full of heated stones. Like Name-givers everywhere, the Cathan love a good story well told; the man or woman who tells the best story at each evening campfire is often rewarded with the choicest of that night's delicacies.

The Cathan live as well as they do because they know precisely how best to use the natural bounty of their lush, green homeland. On one occasion, I watched a group of Cathan tribesmen fell a tree. It was one they call *g'nomsha*, or iron-root, and they prize its pale wood. When fire-hardened, *g'nomsha* wood makes spear points and knife blades hard and sharp enough to rival forged iron. Working together, the tribesmen first cut through the tangled net of vines and shrubs that grew around the chosen tree. To my surprise, some of the vine-cutters wielded metal blades; when I asked, later, how they kept the metal from rusting, they told me that a daily cleaning with oiled rags and True water will keep any knife's edge sharp. (They had obtained the blades, I later learned, from an unfortunate party of inept, so-called explorers who had succumbed variously to heat exhaustion, the venomous bites of fire ants and a broken neck received while blindly chasing a monkey that had stolen the adept's enchanted dagger. The latter adept climbed a tree after the monkey, made a grab for a hanging vine to swing along in pursuit and missed. The shocked expression on his face as he fell greatly amused the Cathan—who had watched it all from niches in the trees.)

At first I didn't understand why they didn't simply chop down the tree; but as I watched, I realized that the web of vines and other foliage was so strong that it could hold a tree upright whose trunk had been chopped clean through. Much later, on my way out of the Servos, I passed the fringes of a settlement and saw a partly cut tree where the vines around it had held it up long enough for the cut portion to heal. The tree, perfectly healthy to all appearances, had a small whitish scar in its red-brown bark, like a swordmaster's dueling scar.

Having cleared the vines, the Cathan began to chop the tree with *g'nomsha*-wood axes. As they chopped, the Cathan women sang an eerie, wailing tune. On every third or fourth blow, one or another of the women would fall to her knees with a sharp cry. She would then hold out her arms to the tree, as if begging its forgiveness. An ancient Cathan, who stood watching the tree-choppers, explained that the women were mourning for the tree, praising the spirit that lived in it for its willingness to sacrifice itself so that the tribe could make weapons and utensils from the wood. If the Cathan did not praise and mourn the spirit, he said, it would become enraged and raise up an army of giant tree spirits to attack the tribe as ungrateful destroyers of life. Within a short time, the treecutters had felled the mighty *g'nomsha*.

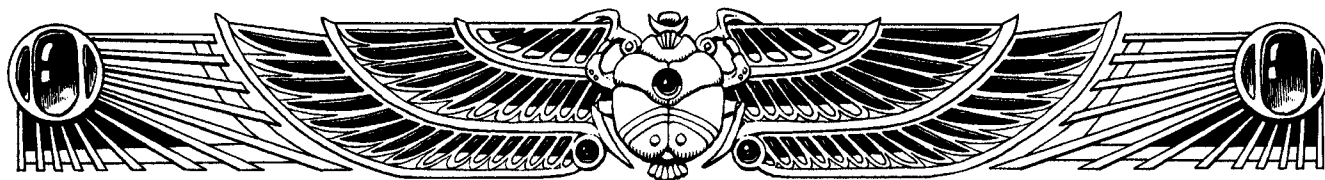
Regarding Plant Spirits

During my stay with the Cathan, I had an opportunity to see just how destructive an enemy—and powerful an ally—a plant spirit can be. Like all living things, every plant has a beautiful and complex astral pattern that houses the plant's spirit. Small plants have relatively simple patterns; the ancient trees of the Servos have patterns of far greater intricacy and power. Some tree spirits in the Blood Wood, which date back to long before the Scourge, possess intelligence and abilities rivaling those of a powerful adept.

Through their unique magic, Cathan shamans (and elementalists, of course) can speak to plant spirits and learn from them. Most plants have limited awareness of the world around them, but what little they know may still be of use to an explorer in unknown wilds. Plants sense the passage of day and night, the weather and the condition of the soil, whether or not anyone has stepped on them or brushed against them recently, and other such things. (Now, I know some readers may wonder how a small flower's awareness of having been stepped on can possibly be of use to anyone; but might it not be useful to know that something large and heavy has passed nearby recently? Or that something is leeching the life from the soil? Or, if you're tracking down a party of slavers, that it has rained recently—which means the slavers will likely have left marks of their passage in the mud?) Larger plant spirits with more complicated patterns can provide additional information, if you've the patience to interpret it correctly. The spirits of carnivorous plants often have the greatest interest in the goings-on of the animal world—they hunt animals, and find it useful to understand their prey. However, elementalists tell me that these spirits are often short-tempered and hostile.

Magic can also arouse plant spirits from their usual half-awake state. The most powerful awakening spells can summon disembodied spirits of the element of wood, the primal essence of all living greenery. These spirits are powerful allies on their home ground, as the Cathan and other jungle-dwellers well know. The Cathan understand the heart of their green homeland, and tribal shamans call upon plant spirits whenever the tribe has need of protection. I was privileged to witness this awe-





some, terrifying sight when a small party of t'skrang wearing the badge of House K'tenshin made the mistake of attempting to capture a few Cathan to sell to the cursed Therans.

One of the tribe's two shamans—an elderly woman, blind in one eye—warned the t'skrang to turn back. When one slaver sneered and pointed his crossbow at her, she gave the merest flick of her fingers, and a nearby creeper reached out and plucked the weapon from the foolish t'skrang's grasp. Then the other shaman—a young man, marked for magic by one blue eye and one brown eye—raised his hands and began shouting an incantation. Before he could utter more than a few words, the trees and vines and even the flowers assaulted the K'tenshin slavers. Vines slithered around their legs and tripped them; tree roots lifted themselves from the soil and stabbed fallen t'skrang through the throats; flowers spat burning juices at t'skrang eyes; bark ripped itself open and flowed around a t'skrang unwise enough to brace himself against a tree trunk, then flowed back together across his screaming mouth. Meanwhile, the old woman was throwing entangling vines and thorny retreat spells to catch those K'tenshin wise enough to flee. The battle was over almost before it began; all the K'tenshin lay dead, and not a single Cathan had taken so much as a scratch.

MY SOJOURN IN THE LIAJ JUNGLE

The Liaj Jungle of western Barsaive lies in the vast basin between the Delaris and Tylon Mountains. Far from any major waterways and trade routes, this vast green land is less well traveled and less well known than the Servos. Small caravan routes skirt the edges of the Liaj and airships follow carefully plotted courses overhead, but few Name-givers enter the Liaj. And between rumors of the Liaj's fierce Tamer tribesmen, the great dragon Usun and "evil spirits," the Liaj Jungle seems destined to attract only the hardest of adventurers.

The Liaj has grown considerably since the Scourge, mainly because of shifting rainfall patterns in western Barsaive. The blight of the Wastes and the nearby Poison Forest do not affect the mighty Liaj in the slightest, apparently because the worst of the toxic ashfall stays on the far side of the mountains. And whenever one of the terrible, twisted creatures of those tainted regions does make its way to the jungle, Usun hunts it down.

A gigantic dragon with an allegedly quarrelsome temper, Usun lives in the jungle depths. He considers the whole Liaj his private hunting grounds and rarely tolerates the presence of other Name-givers in it. Many an airship captain has sighted the dragon flying low over the jungle canopy, hunting the large animals native to the Liaj. To a man, they report that Usun takes no interest in airships that pass over the jungle on their way to other destinations. (None has yet dared attempt to land in the jungle itself, for fear of angering the temperamental dragon.) Reportedly, Usun is served by several drakes that take on the appearance of Name-givers, though I never saw these servants. The Tamers—of whom I shall say more presently—have a somewhat unusual relationship with the dragon (to say the least!).

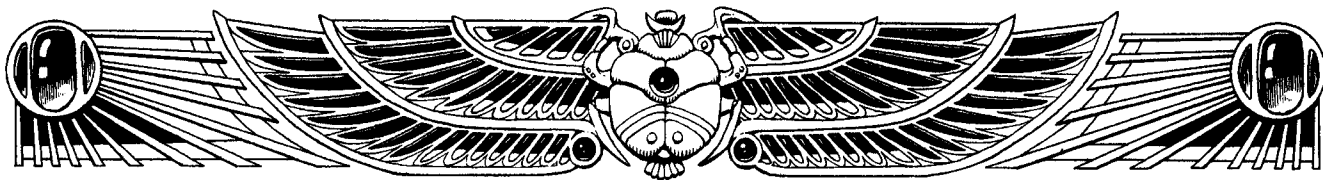
Like the Servos Jungle, the Liaj teems with life. Wyverns roost in the tops of some of the tallest trees, along with huge snakes. Tigers, lions, bears, small herds of deer and wild boar, and countless small burrowers traverse the jungle floor. As dangerous to the unwary traveler as some of these beasts are, they are no match for the truly fearsome inhabitants of the Liaj—insects and their kin. In the southern part of the jungle lie the spider dens, where spiders ranging in size from dogs to small horses spin their webs and cover the jungle growth in a shroud of silk. The spiders live in this silken maze, trapping small animals and others unlucky enough to wander inside its bewildering passages. The spiders slowly drain their prey of vital juices, leaving the dried husks to decorate their webs. I once saw a lion—a magnificent beast, far stronger than I—become entrapped in this spider-silk prison. The lion struggled valiantly to break the webbing, but the poisoned stings of several large spiders overcame it at last. The heavy silk in the spider dens demands a high price from merchants in Jerris and elsewhere, mostly on account of the grave risk one must run to acquire it.

I Encounter Natives

I had not gone far into the Liaj when I met the first of its inhabitants. Almost by accident, I stumbled across a windling village, cunningly concealed among the trees and low-hanging vines of the outer jungle. The villagers had carved out living space from the large trunks of trees or raised huts atop woven mats of jungle vines overhead, where the broad leaves of the trees could hide them. I sensed that I was being watched and called out to whomever it was—my heart told me I was being observed, not stalked.

After a brief time, a small band of windlings flew out from the trees and hovered in front of me. Their wings were the same bright colors as the flowers that blossomed from the surrounding vines, and they carried no weapons that I could see. (I later learned that several warriors were concealed among those bright flowers, training poisoned arrows on me. Had I offered





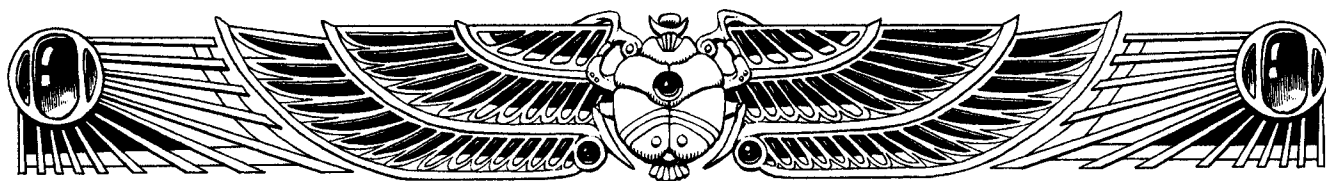
the greeting party any harm, I would have been dead of a dozen windling arrows in an instant.) The leader of the small band asked my Name and where I had come from. I told them briefly of my travels to the Liaj, making as entertaining a story of it as I could. The windlings, highly diverted and wishing to hear more, welcomed me to their village and invited me to share the evening meal with them.

I accepted their invitation, though I feared that an ork like myself might consume more than a fair share of their food—and as for finding me a bed, well, I was certain that would prove impossible. I was pleasantly surprised. They fed me well, without seeming to short themselves, and made me a bed of silk-soft leaves to lie upon. As I was too heavy to sleep high up on the woven vines, they even dispatched three windling warriors to guard me against predators as I slept. The warriors themselves regarded this assignment as a great honor and kept thanking me profusely for it throughout the evening. I told them many tales of my adventures, and they told me a thrilling tale of a boar hunt in which their most skilled hunter single-handedly saved a young warrior's life by plunging a spear into the boar's eye. Considering that a windling spear is barely the length of my arm, I first regarded this as a typical windling tall tale. But the next day, when I joined a similar boar hunt, I learned otherwise.

These windling hunters are bold, brave and skilled enough to take on wild swine many times their size with no more than poisoned arrows and spears no thicker than two of my fingers. Their arrows are tipped with stone, bone and even wood, and are sharp enough to pierce the heart of a tree; I have no doubt they can pierce chain mail with equal ease. The windlings disdain steel and made me leave my metal weapons behind. When I protested, the leader of the hunting party told me that the jungle beasts can smell metal, and he said the alien scent of it would drive them away. Later during my jungle sojourn, when I began to hunt without weapons, I saw the truth of this for myself.

Four windling hunters, with only a little assistance from me, brought down a magnificent boar that day. They gave me one of the tusks; the other, they kept to make spear tips. Watching them battle this beast without a lick of fear, I considered myself lucky to have met them as a friend and not an enemy.





I Seek the Tamers

After a few days, I bade my windling hosts farewell and went deeper into the jungle to seek the mysterious Name-givers known as the Tamers. The Tamers are a small tribe of humans and elves, not more than a few hundred. They live without weapons, clothing, or any other trapping of Name-giver civilization in the depths of the Liaj, in the very heart of Usun's domain. Because they dwell under the dragon's snout without his permission, they are forever on the alert for attack. Whenever Usun feels a craving for Name-giver flesh, the Tamers are his first targets. They do not, however, regard Usun as an enemy. Instead, they see him as one of many forces of Nature that shapes their lives. They measure their cunning against him and would not dream of doing him harm even if they could. Like the beasts whose ways they imitate, the Tamers accept the risk of death as part of life. They would no more attempt to eliminate a risk to life and limb than a jungle deer would seek to destroy the tiger that stalks it.

The windlings had told me that the Tamers live near the Dragon River, and I traveled toward the river for many days without incident, save for a brush with a singing creeper. This rare plant uses magic to draw its unsuspecting prey, making haunting music that lulls the hearer into a false sense of security. Fortunately, the windlings had warned me of this hostile plant, and so I closed my ears to its beguiling song.

At length, I reached the riverbank. I stripped off my clothes, wrapped up my weapons and everything else I carried in them, and placed the entire bundle in the hollow of a tree. I used my scout magic to conceal it from the eyes of others. Then I walked naked along the shore until I came to a sheltered spot among some tumbled stones, near a small waterfall. To mark my birth into jungle life, I plunged into the river and played in the water awhile. When I climbed out, I rested on the bank and gazed around me. The beauty of the place let Jaspree into my heart; I listened to the whispering of the Passion's voice in the cascading water and the rustling leaves, guiding me and my magic in the ways of this place.

As I prepared a bed of greenery in my small shelter, my scout senses felt another Name-giver nearby. As the windling lorekeeper had advised, I did not acknowledge that presence and continued my work. If my unknown companion was a Tamer and I called out to him, he and his fellows would fall upon me and slay me. After a time, I became so accustomed to this dimly felt presence that I almost ceased to notice it.

In the days that followed, I learned how to survive in the deep jungle. I caught fish and small game and ate them raw, as I had no fire over which to cook them. I picked fruits, leaves and roots, using my scout talents to discover which were safe to eat. I followed trails blazed by the jungle beasts until I could move through the thick growth without a sound, like a crojen stalking its prey. Each night, as the green twilight dimmed to blackness, I made a mark on one of the stones near my camp to count the passing of time.

On my twelfth day in the depths, I saw the great dragon for the first time. I was making my way out in the early morning—the best time to hunt, I had discovered—when the jungle fell suddenly silent. The red-tailed monkey I had been stalking vanished into the trees without a whisper. After a moment, I heard a great wind rush through the leaves.

A huge shadow passed overhead. I looked up, and through the trees could just make out a vast, scaly shape, soaring by on wings as broad as the sails of an airship. The dragon circled overhead like some fearsome, giant bird. I called upon Jaspree and all the magic in my being to keep me hidden from the sharp dragon eyes that I knew were searching for prey. I pressed close to the nearest tree and stayed utterly still. At that moment, I felt as the rabbit feels when facing the wolf.

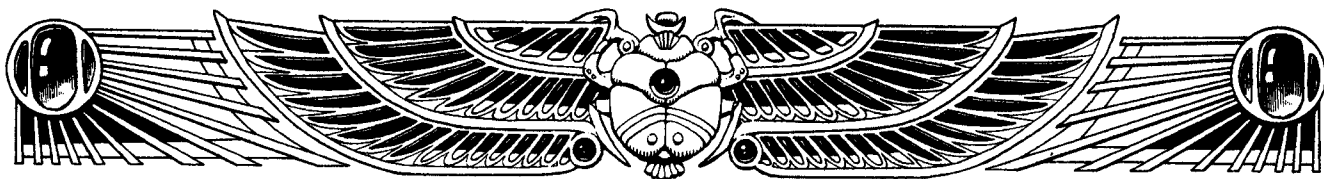
After an eternity of waiting, the shadow moved off and the sounds of the dragon's flight receded into the distance. With relief, I returned to my camp—hungry, dirty and tired, but ecstatic at being alive. When I reached the place that had been my home, I found the Tamers waiting for me.

Two men and a woman crouched by my bed of leaves, accompanied by a mated pair of tigers. The Tamers wore no clothing or other adornment, but carried themselves like royalty. They watched me approach, clearly wary of me—but I thought I also saw respect and even a glint of approval in their eyes.

The woman approached me and spoke. I recognized some of the words, having learned them from the windlings. I did my best to emulate her greeting; my efforts brought a smile from the woman and one of her companions. They led me away from my camp to where the tribe lived, not far away. I had lived no more than a day's walk from the people I sought but had seen no signs of them, so well concealed were they.

By living as they did for a time, without the aids and comforts of civilization, I earned the Tamers' respect. Avoiding the notice of the dragon was my final test, in their eyes. By surviving Usun's hunt, I showed I was worthy of learning the jungle's wisdom. The Tamers took me into their tribe and taught me some of their secrets. I learned to speak their language—broken phrases in ancient human and elven tongues, mixed with words from the jungle windlings' language, along with a vast and





subtle body of gesture and inflection that allowed the Tamers to speak volumes without saying a word.

The Tamers taught me how to see the jungle as the beasts see it. Though many of my more “civilized” brethren would call the Tamers savages, they live in a kind of harmony with their surroundings that few Name-givers can understand. While I was among them, I discovered that they are the source of the legends of “evil spirits” that have long kept outsiders from venturing into the Liaj; by night, they use a combination of illusion magic and eerie wailing to frighten away the ignorant.

Eventually, the call of the outside world became too strong for me to ignore. I bade my brothers and sisters of the jungle farewell, retrieved my long-unused possessions and resumed my travels. One day I will return to the Tamers, to spend my last hours among them in my heart’s home.

The Training of Beasts and Familiars

Of all the things my Tamer brethren taught me, by far the most valuable were their extraordinary ways with animals. Even those among them who were not beastmasters could coax otherwise wild beasts to hunt for them, spy out the land for them, even play with them as if they had been brothers and sisters born. As for the Tamer beastmasters, they created bonds with certain animals that went beyond any I had ever known as a follower of the beastmaster Discipline in civilized Barsaive.

As every beastmaster knows, to train a beast first means gaining its trust. Even those who know nothing of the Discipline can form this kind of bond, if they respect the animal enough from the beginning. The Tamers all knew this truth. In gratitude to them, I will here teach it to the rest of Barsaive.

When forming a bond of trust with an animal, first let it sniff you. Let it know that you don’t smell of fear or anger or danger. Let it know your scent, as a child knows the sound of its mother’s voice. If you work with other animals such as horses, mules or cattle, be aware that you may have picked up these animals’ smells; any beast you try to train will respond accordingly. Some creatures will shy away from the scent of other animals. Others may become hostile, especially if you’re carrying the scent of a beast that traditionally preys upon them. It is unwise, for example, to carry the scent of a wolf pup into the stall of a colt. If you wish to train a predator, like the Tamers’ hunting cats, you will also need to show deference to its territory by acts of submission—crouching on your belly before it, for example, or rolling on your back to expose your vulnerable spots.

Give the beast time to accept your presence and examine you as it pleases. Remain calm—don’t move suddenly or startle the animal in any way. When you’ve given it a good long time to smell you and look you over, offer the beast a choice morsel of food. Place the food nearby, then slowly withdraw. After it eats the food, offer it some more. Gradually, morsel by morsel, bring the beast close to you until it takes a bit of food from your hand. Once it does this, you may touch the animal gently on its shoulder or back. Most beasts are protective of their heads and necks; avoid touching these areas until the beast has had a few days to get used to you. Keep your touch light and speak softly.

Once you form this bond of trust, the hard work of training can begin. Some creatures are easier to train than others, of course. Monkeys and other creatures whose intelligence is near to a Name-giver’s learn tasks quickly and well. Pack animals such as dogs also seem to learn quickly for they are also quite intelligent and accustomed to acting in a group. Horses and other grazing beasts are slower to learn but open to instruction. Teaching solitary creatures such as cats requires great patience—they become defiant if pushed too quickly. Training magical creatures is extremely difficult and beyond the skill of any but a gifted beastmaster.

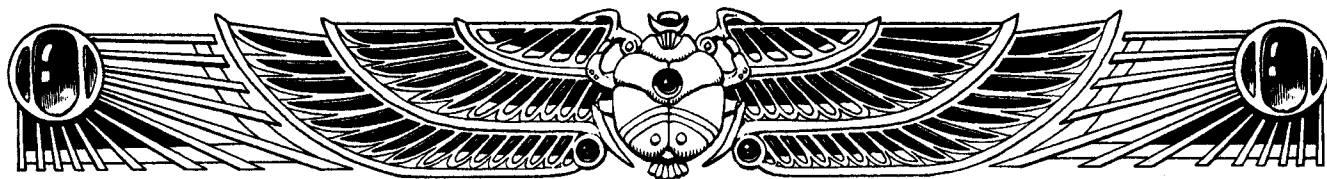
The closest bond between Name-giver and animal is the familiar bond, first created in ancient times when beastmasters swore blood oaths to protect and sustain their animal brothers and sisters. They regarded these animal companions as blood kin, and both beast and beastmaster honored each other with their loyalty. Some say the giving of blood to a beast is a corruption of ancient rituals, a twisted act of blood magic; but this is not so. Such a sacrifice of blood is a sacred offering, a symbol of the power of life and of our devotion to our companions.

Most who choose to bond with a familiar do so only once. The bond is a powerful thing, and few beastmasters ever find more than one suitable companion in a lifetime. Since learning of the familiar bond from the Tamers, I have been blessed with a special empathy for Jaspree’s children and have had two familiars. I know of few others, however, who have been so fortunate.

TRAVELS THROUGH THE UN-NAMED FOREST

Barsaive is filled with hundreds of un-Named forests. Unlike special, Named forests such as the Blood Wood and the Poison Forest, these un-Named woodlands are all quite similar. The vast woodland north of the Caucavic Mountains, which I shall call Luxar’s Wood, is typical of these Un-Named forests.





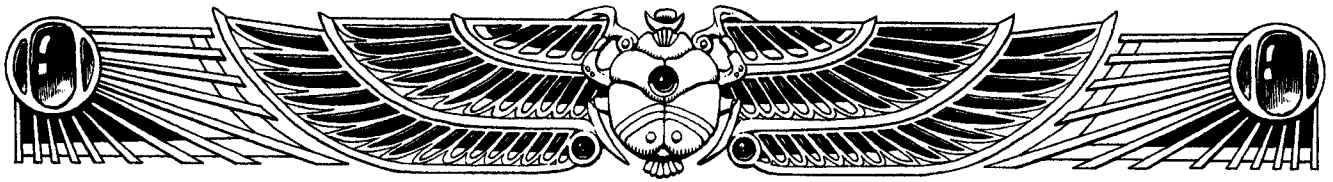
Luxar's Wood, like most other northern forests, is full of towering oak, ash and even pine trees. Along the forest floor, flowers, creeping vines and even grasses flourish. This rampant undergrowth, which appears in all but the darkest spots in the forest, makes passage difficult. A particular danger to watch for is the abundance of low-growing plants that are poisonous to the touch. The leaves of certain ivies, which inevitably grow at about the height of an ork's ankle, raise itchy welts and rashes on bare skin. So make sure your boots are well mended and your trousers are tucked in when passing through a forest.

In the cool shadows of great trees and rocks, mosses and mushrooms grow in profusion. Many of these are edible or have healing uses, but many others are poisonous. By all means, use the bounty of Nature to your benefit when you go exploring—but study such plants first or find a guide who can teach you. Trial and error is not a good teacher in such matters, for Nature is often harsh in its lessons.

As I passed through the woods on my first day, I studied the plants around me to identify the edible and dangerous varieties and learn what they could tell me. Plants are the lore-keepers of the forest, and you can learn a great deal if you understand their language. I'm not speaking of the elementalists's shortcut, waking a plant spirit to ask it a lot of impertinent questions. I mean the language other folk can understand: the many subtle signs that plants leave for us to see. From observing the plants in any part of the forest, I can tell you the tale of the place. If a fire burned there in the past few weeks, new young plants will be sprouting through a thin layer of ash. If it has not rained for days and days, the plants will be a pale green turning toward yellow instead of the lush color of well-watered greenery. If some large living creature has passed nearby, broken stalks and bent leaves will tell how large it was and which way it went; a truly skilled observer can even tell whether the passer-by was beast or Name-giver. All of these things leave impressions on the plants as surely as ink leaves a mark on paper.

On the third day of my woodland jaunt, I noticed my waterskin getting low, and so I went in search of fresh water. Water is easy to find if you know the signs. I first looked for a path broken by some forest creatures; beasts tend to leave clear paths to places they travel to most often—such as watering holes, rivers or lakes. After a little searching, I found a path and started down it. Tufts of fur caught on a few cockleburs along the path's edges told me that bears had blazed the trail, and so I kept a sharp eye out. Any nearby bears would undoubtedly be dozing in the warm mid-afternoon sun, and the last thing I wanted was to





stumble on a den full of cubs and arouse the fierce maternal instincts of a bear mother. As I walked on, I heard the laughter of water sprites and knew I was drawing near the watering hole. Soon the path reached the edge of a small, swift-moving stream. I knew the sprites would keep to the rapids in the center, where they love to play; as long as I kept to the edge and did not disturb them, they'd not grudge me a full waterskin. After checking carefully up and down the bank for dead animals or other signs of taint, I filled my skins and then went on my way. (A dead beast near water is almost always a bad sign. The water may have poisoned it, and a carcass that has lain near or in water for a period of time can itself taint the water. River water may still be safe, provided you take it from upstream of the dead animal; still water containing a carcass, however, is almost always unfit to drink.)

I traveled for some time without seeing any signs of habitation, Name-giver or otherwise. For most of one day, the rabbits and squirrels that scurried out of my way were my only companions. Occasionally, I heard the distant crashes and rustlings of deer and elk wandering through the forest in search of grazing ground. Bird songs filled the air, and I saw intermittent flashes of bright feathers. I had no need of food just then, so I chose to watch the graceful flyers instead of shooting them. I would have time and chance enough to hunt later in the day.

After a few more hours, my belly was rumbling, and so I shot a squirrel. The light was growing dimmer, and I knew the afternoon was turning toward evening. I found a suitable place to camp and built a small fire to roast my meat. While it cooked, I set out snares; they would catch my breakfast for me. And before going to sleep, I banked the fire so that the embers would smolder without flaring up. The red glow would keep wolves and other night creatures at bay, without risking a forest fire. The oft-heard tales of wolf packs attacking travelers are rank exaggeration; only the rare starving wolf pack will attack a Name-giver. Most predators will not approach a fire, and any that do are swiftly driven off by a show of force. After all, a forest holds much easier prey than an armed and dangerous Name-giver.

Of Name-givers, I saw few, which suited me. I passed an isolated cottage or two and walked past the outskirts of an elven settlement. I'm certain I walked right under any number of windling villages without seeing them, for the forest windlings can hide their homes just as well as their jungle cousins. The deeper I went into Luxar's Wood, of course, the fewer signs of habitation I saw. Most Name-givers prefer to live on the outskirts of the forest, where clearing land and farming are easier, and many fear a forest's depths. (Despite the lurid tales folk tell, Horrors rarely dwell in forests—and when they do, they are easily detected. Just as a Horror pollutes and twists astral space, so do they corrupt life in any forest where they dwell. They blight the trees and flowers, and the beasts either flee or turn murderously savage. Most Horrors prefer to lair in already-desolate places, where their pernicious influence is less immediately obvious.)

An Encounter with a Wood Spirit

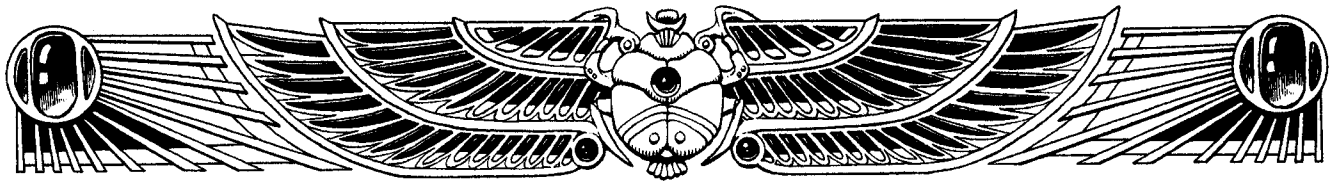
You may occasionally meet wood and earth spirits in the forest, as I did. The one I met was a wood spirit that claims part of my woodland as its domain. This particular spirit lives in a massive oak tree, whose thick, hollow trunk contains a large windling village. The windlings venerate the tree spirit, and the spirit protects them in return. Apparently, the ancient spirit had sheltered the windlings' ancestors during the Long Night of the Scourge and had gained considerable power and wisdom over the course of its existence. I had little conversation with the spirit, as it cared only to know whether I meant the windlings harm; when it saw that I didn't, it left me alone. The sheer power I sensed in it made me glad to be beneath its notice—such elemental spirits can be terrible enemies when roused.

IN THE BLOOD WOOD

I have had the dubious pleasure of visiting the Blood Wood only once during my travels across Barsaive. The memories of it will remain with me for as long as I live.

Beautiful indeed is the Blood Wood, but terrible as well. I went there at the behest of a scholar who sought knowledge of the Wood's unique plants. I had never been to the Blood Wood before and was eager to see such a legendary place with my own eyes. At first, the sheer majesty of it awed me. The Blood Wood is at least as vast as the Servos Jungle, which I had thought endless. The trees stand like giants, their leaves twining together in a green roof that shrouds the ground below in endless twilight. Despite the constant shade, plants of all kinds grow thick over every inch of the forest floor—in defiance of all of the things I thought I knew about forests. Vines, creepers, mosses, grasses, flowers and brambles of every kind formed a green tapestry so tightly woven in places that even my scout's magic could not find a way through. I have since learned that some of these barricades are the remnants of the wooden kaers that the Elven Court built to protect Blood Wood from the Horrors, while the rest have been woven to protect the forest from intruders.





I made my way through the outskirts of the Wood, carefully recording every impression I sensed and taking small samples of the more unusual plants—a leaf here, a blossom there—and disturbing the growth as little as possible. From the moment I entered the forest, I felt as if the forest itself was watching me. I could feel the powerful spirits of the woodland as well as the many creatures that live amid the trees. The Blood Wood was strangely quiet; only the rare song of a lone bird or distant rustling of leaves broke the silence.

I tried to push the strange feeling away and concentrate on my work. I had gotten a good distance inside the woodland by the time the green twilight darkened to gray. As the darkness grew, so did my desire to be out of the woods before night fell. All my scout's magic screamed at me to leave at once, so I gathered up my samples and hastily struck out for open land.

Still the dark grew darker all around me. Before long, I was running through the trees and bushes in childish, blind panic. I consider myself a courageous ork—I have seen a great dragon fly over me on its hunt and confronted a wild crojen with only a bone knife. But the foreboding I felt from this darkening woodland frightened me more than anything I have ever felt, before or since.

Even before I reached the outskirts of the woodland, I could hear the forest coming alive all around me. The quiet of the day gave way to unfamiliar and terrifying noises as unknown things moved, slithered and jumped through the trees and undergrowth. Strange chitterings and cries echoed from every side. Twice, I saw something move out of the corner of my eye—figures shaped like men, but covered with spiky thorns protruding at all angles. Blood elves or thorn men, I could not say which.

For all my fears, I departed the forest without trouble. No creature attacked or even showed itself clearly. I did not slow my pace, however, until I was some distance from the Wood. When I returned to the sage and told him of the things I had seen, I also informed him that he could find someone else to complete his survey of the place.

I can offer little advice on survival in the depths of Blood Wood, apart from my belief that it takes far more than the skills of a woodsman. If you must enter the Wood, do so in the light of day, carry out your business promptly, harm nothing and be gone before nightfall.

THE POISON FOREST

The Poison Forest stretches along the northernmost foothills of the Delaris Mountains, forming a barrier between the mountains and the Wastes beyond. A few lost kaers are said to exist within the fringes of the Poison Forest, most likely destroyed long ago by Horrors. I had occasion to pass through the Poison Forest once—and I'll never willingly do so again, not for all the lost treasure in Barsaive. Once lush and green, the Poison Forest is a casualty of the Scourge—a terrible reminder of the harm done to our land by the Horrors and their minions.

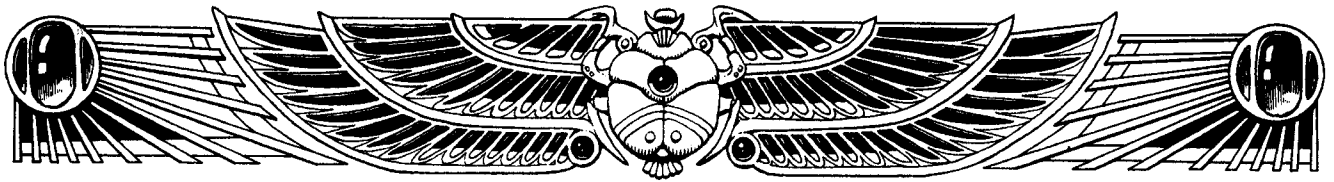
The first thing that struck me about the Poison Forest was the smell. The entire wood reeks of decay worse than a corpse-dotted battlefield. The stench carries all the way to Jerris on days when the wind is strong enough. The smell makes beasts shy away from the place—horses and other mounts turn skittish when the scent reaches them, and only a skilled rider can convince his or her mount to move toward it.

At first sight, the forest appears as dead as its odor implies. The trees are twisted and blackened, their leaves brown and brittle. The grasses and vines and other plants look like dead things left to wither in the pitiless sun. Fine soot falls from the dark clouds that wander over the Wastes to the Poison Forest, coating everything in black as if a fire had just swept through it. No birdcalls sound, no wind stirs the dead leaves, no small scurrying life rustles through the undergrowth. You can hear only silence, broken on occasion by the mournful howl of the winds from the Wastes. The sound of your own breathing and the dry crunch of dead plants underfoot becomes impossibly loud; the silence becomes deafening in its intensity.

Sad as it is to contemplate a dead woodland, the truth of the Poison Forest is sadder still. The Poison Forest is not dead, but eternally caught in the terrible process of dying. It has been dying since the Scourge, as far as we know, and it may continue dying for the rest of time. The plants, trees and forest beasts draw a tiny bit closer to Death each day, but they never seem to be released from their agony.

Because the forest is not truly dead, the dying plants do not give way to new life. A forest fire will devastate a woodland, but it also clears space and provides fertile ground for new growth. The Poison Forest is burning slowly from within, but the dead and dying hold on to life just tenaciously enough to keep new life from taking their place. The taint of the place has made the spirits of the forest as twisted and hideous as the greenery in which they dwell. I would advise any elementalist seeking to call upon nature for aid to think better of it in the Poison Forest, where the plant spirits are as apt to attack their summoner as his enemies.



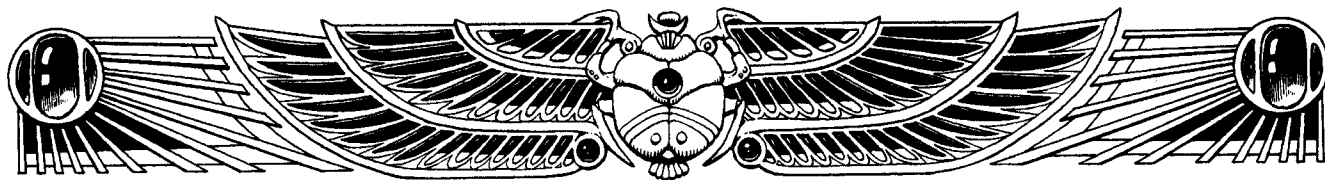


The beasts and birds are similarly warped and blasted. Even as they walk, crawl or fly, their bodies continually, perpetually decay. I saw snakes whose flesh was so worn away that they looked skeletal, and a bear with mangy fur and half of its skull exposed. These creatures have just enough of Life's spark left in them to feel the full torment of their condition.

This constant agony makes the forest's creatures hate all living things. Unlike any other creatures in Barsaive, the crazed beasts of the Poison Forest will attack without provocation. Even normally timid creatures such as rabbits attack Name-givers. I was attacked by a band of mad monkeys, as gaunt as skeletons, that fought as fiercely as crystal raiders in the grip of battle madness. Truly, I was fortunate to escape with my life. As it was, the merest scratch down my arm from one monkey's claws became so severely infected that only the prompt application of a powerful healing salve saved me from lingering death; and even then, only the good luck of finding a questor of Garlen just outside Jerris saved my arm.

Survival in such a lifeless place depends on plenty of supplies. Nothing in the forest is edible—even if you can stomach the notion of dining on a half-rotten beast's flesh, the meat is riddled with disease. What water exists is brackish and filthy, tainted with the constant ashfall and the smell of rot. Wood from the decaying trees is pulpy and rotten, easy to fell but difficult to burn. At best, it produces a small pile of glowing embers and plenty of thick, black, stinking smoke.





Even elemental magic can't provide food here. One elementalist I know tried to bring forth a feast from a few withered plants and got a foul-smelling mass of garbage for his trouble. (He insisted later that his spell would have worked if he had brought his own plants from outside the forest, but I didn't see him test the truth of this assertion. It might have worked, or it might not.)

When I finally reached Jerris, I heard many tales that made me bless my good fortune at getting out of the Poison Forest alive and reasonably well. Countless stories make the rounds of Name-givers who traveled into the Poison Forest and found themselves wasting away like the other creatures there, eventually becoming withered husks forced to shamble eternally among the dying trees. I spoke with several travelers who had encountered these poor creatures, but I still know of no one who saw this corruption happen, or personally knew anyone it had happened to. It is possible that the unfortunate victims they encountered were cadaver men from some lost kaer; I certainly hope so.

WANDERING AMONG RUINS

Throughout my travels, I have wandered down many an ancient road and explored the crumbling ruins of many an ancient city or citadel. Time and the Scourge together have destroyed cities and towns and kingdoms all across our fair province, and most have not been rebuilt. In some places, fragments of the old Theran roads whisper a reminder of the vanished days of Imperial glory in Barsaive. In other places, road-stones and markers and a few crumbling foundations bear mute witness to the presence of civilizations so old and strange that we no longer remember their builders.

Such ruins are dangerous places indeed, even without the fabled monsters that are always said to lie in wait for the unwary. (About Horrors I will say nothing—any explorer who doesn't know enough to be wary of *them* in such places has no business traipsing around Barsaive without a wet nurse in attendance.) Half-collapsed piles of ancient stones sometimes stand like collections of child's blocks, waiting for just the right touch to send them toppling over. Time riddles ruins with rot and decay; a floor, wall or ceiling can collapse at a breath sometimes, and incautious explorers may find themselves crushed, buried or dropped down a deep hole without warning.

Sturdier ruins tend to attract inhabitants, which may pose dangers as well. Wild creatures sometimes lair in empty houses, stables or towers, setting up nests that they will defend fiercely against any unfortunate explorer who stumbles upon them. Ogres or bandits may also live in ruins and must be outwitted as well as out-fought. Indeed, the city of Kratas was founded by bandits, who used its oldest ruins as a base for their raids and a place to store their booty. Apart from the Forgotten City of Parlainth, old Kratas contains the most extensive collection of ruined buildings anywhere in Barsaive.

ON CITADELS

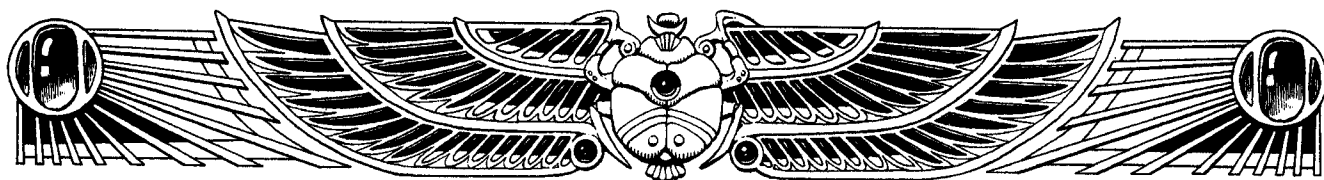
The ruins of citadels are a magnet for almost every explorer I know. Great cities such as Travar, whose thousands of residents had neither the time nor the inclination to construct a kaer large enough to hold them all, chose to ride out the centuries of the Scourge in above-ground redoubts that we know as citadels. Taking their cue from Thera, whose gifted magicians devised a unique magical protection for their island, the leaders of the great cities created magical domes of True air and fire to cover their domains from above and barriers of True water and earth to keep the Horrors out from below. These plans were bold and ingenious, but unfortunately didn't work as well in practice as in theory.

Far fewer citadels than kaers survived the Scourge. The powerful magic embedded in the domes seemed to attract the Horrors, and Horrors breached almost every citadel in Barsaive at least once during the Scourge. Even the Theran citadel at Vivane was breached; although Theran foresight enabled inhabitants of the inner city to survive, many citizens in the outer districts were slaughtered.

The Horrors devastated the citadels of the ancient kingdoms of Landis and Cara Fahd, cracking them like so many nuts to extract the tender meat within. Only kaers in those regions survived the ravages of the Scourge. For this reason, most of the ruins in western and southern Barsaive are the remains of broken citadels and cities abandoned even before the Scourge.

One unusual ruined citadel in ancient Landis sat atop a kaer. When the citadel began to fail against the Horrors' onslaught, the citadel's residents apparently fled into the kaer below and sealed it behind them. Unfortunately, a Horror had infiltrated their citadel, and the people carried its evil influence with them under the earth. When my companions and I found this kaer, all its inhabitants were long dead—over many years, the Horror had slain them all. In turn, we slew the Horror, losing two of our number in the effort.





UNDERGROUND EXPLORATION

Master Brun Rockstriker is well known in Throal as an outspoken member and teacher of the Miner and Smith Guilds. He spent much of his youth with the adventuring party known as the Warriors of the Rock. During that time, he first became acquainted with Master Merrox and gained, in his words, "an appreciation for scholarship." We are pleased to include his wisdom on delving and underground exploration in this volume.

—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records



Anyone who doesn't understand the basic elements of surviving deep under the earth has no business calling himself an explorer of kaers. In fact, ignorant folk should never venture anywhere under the earth, whether down a kaer entrance or a mine shaft or the subterranean passages of the Serpent River. Ignorant folk get themselves killed down in the depths. So if you don't know what it means to live underground and don't want to know, stay on the surface. Go tramping through jungles and over the tops of mountains. Anyone who wants to learn the ways of the underearth, though, can take a few tips from me.

From the tales I hear, far too many adepts know next to nothing about survival under the earth—a curious lapse for people who spend so much of their time delving into dark caves and ruined kaers. I've lost count of the number of adepts who've been crushed by rockfalls, suffocated in gas-filled chambers or become breakfast for the noxious denizens of a cave. Most of these poor fools never bothered to learn the first thing about the places they were exploring before they rushed in, hands held open to grab the piles of treasure they *knew* were waiting for them. Strange way to become a legend—making yourself an object lesson of what *not* to do for those who come after you!

In this treatise, I'll speak of things to watch out for when venturing into the underearth. If you've bothered to read this far, there may be hope for you yet. Pay attention and you'll likely come back from your next expedition with some pretty trinkets and a good yarn about how you got them. Then come to the Great Library, spin them your story, and tell Merrox that this text was worth the silver he paid for it.

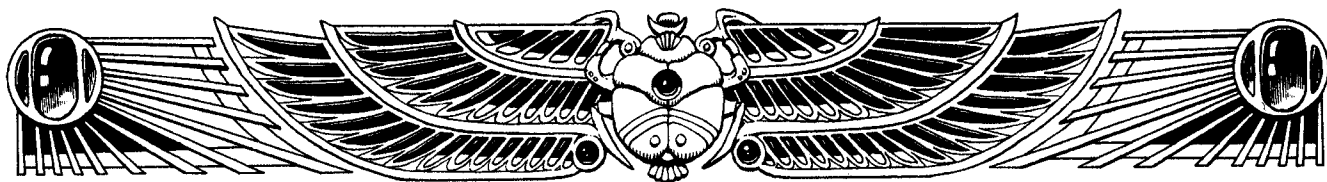
UNDERGROUND HAZARDS

The underearth is a dangerous place, even if you know what you're doing. Fortunately, you can avoid most of the dangers with a little knowledge and some common sense. Unfortunately, common sense isn't all that common—at least, not in my experience. Therefore, I'll describe the principal hazards of the underground: bad air, cave-ins, floods and fire, and dangerous creatures.

ON TROUBLES WITH AIR

As any apprentice elementalist can tell you, the element of earth is hostile to the element of air and seeks to smother it. For this reason, lack of air is one of the first problems that surface-dwellers notice when they venture underground. Often, sweet fresh air doesn't reach places under the earth; the air that does exist in caves and kaers and suchlike can quickly go stale. A miner learns to know the taste and smell of stale air and also knows when to get back to the surface if it looks like the air is running out. Ventilation is one of the greatest difficulties in digging mines; it's the reason why digging the deepest ones takes so blessed long. If we had no need to concern ourselves with somehow getting fresh air down so far, we could dig them in half the usual time.





Fire is one of the biggest eaters of air. If you carry torches down with you or build a campfire or some such, the fire will consume as much air as you do—likely more. Flickering or weak fires are signs of air whose vitality is so exhausted that it's no good for breathing any more. If you aren't sure of the quality of the air where you're going, then don't rely on torches—use light crystals or have a magician make light for you. These sources of light don't use up the limited supply of air that you'll need to breathe.

Bad air is even worse than stale air. Pockets of foul gases and mists that will choke the life out of you faster than a hangman's noose abound in the underearth. And you can't see most of this bad air any more than you can see good air. You won't even know the poison is there until suddenly you can't fill your lungs and your vision starts to swim. So the intelligent explorer takes precautions. Miners often use elemental magic to detect bad air or carry with them some small animal more sensitive to foul air than Name-givers. I've often used sunfeathers, small birds that keel over dead at the first whiff of foulness. If you get a hint that the air nearby is bad, get away from it as quickly as you can. Some magic can purify and clear the gas or protect you from its effects, and if there's ventilation nearby, the bad air may clear itself up—but if you can possibly get where you're going by some other route, do so. No sense taking any more risks than you must.

The greatest of all dangers associated with air are pockets of flammable gas. These are as touchy as True air and True fire mixed together, and the slightest spark may set them off. Some of them you can smell, but many you can't. If you're carrying torches and you see the flames change color—especially if they start burning blue—douse them and turn back. And don't dawdle—run like blazes! Some of these gas pockets can turn into a fireball that would do any elemental proud—they'll crisp anyone standing too close and may trigger a cave-in to boot.

ON THE DANGERS OF ROCK AND EARTH

Cave-ins are another danger of the depths. Of course, by the time you hear one coming it will likely be too late to do more than pray that the Passions will protect your sorry hide. Far better to avoid the cave-in in the first place—but if you can't, it's sometimes possible to dig your way out.

To help adventurers avoid cave-ins, I'll briefly explain why they happen. Stone and dirt are heavy, and so pockets dug out of the earth need supports and structures to hold up the walls lest they collapse under their own weight. Caves and such in the underearth are built by the hand of Nature to support the weight of the earth above them and keep from collapsing. Name-givers built kaers along the same lines, with additional layers of True earth to protect their kaers from Horror attacks. When building mine shafts, most miners support the shaft with stone or wood beams every ten armlengths as they descend—less than that, and the shaft is likely to crumble inward on the miners' heads.

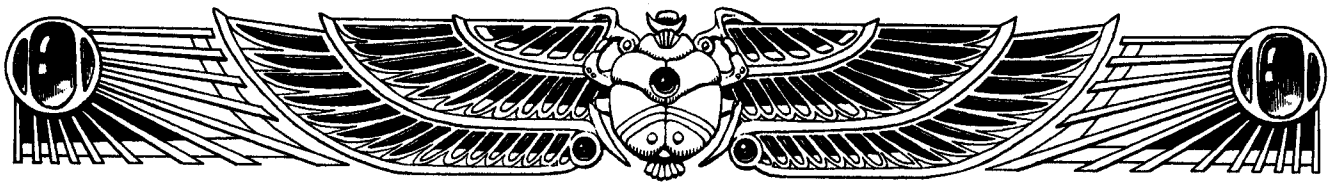
Cave-ins tend to happen when something damages the supports of the cavern or tunnel. In well-supported caverns and kaers, dealing enough damage to set off a cave-in can take a lot of doing. In an abandoned mine shaft supported only by crumbling timbers, a misplaced hand or foot can be enough to bring the whole thing down. Unfortunately, the kind of damage that causes cave-ins is the kind that adepts are best at dealing out. Sword blows powerful enough to kill a brithan or spells hurled with bone-cracking force can smash a vital structural support if the sword-slinger or magician misses his intended target. Big explosions, like those caused by exploding pockets of flammable gas or the odd magical fireball, can cause a collapse even if they don't hit anything—the mere sound of such explosions is so loud that they can physically damage walls and ceilings. So unless you want to be buried in falling rocks, be careful what you throw around when you fight down below. And don't fight at all if you can possibly avoid it.

If you get caught in a cave-in and you're lucky enough to survive, you'll need to find a safe way to get yourself out and back up to the surface. This sounds easy—it isn't. Cave-ins are like debates in Throal—each one tends to set off more. If you're truly lucky, the cave-in won't block your way out. You can walk away quietly, thanking the Passions for your miserable life all the way. More likely, however, the cave-in will block your exit and leave you with very little room to get around.

The simplest thing to do is to dig your way out, but this is not as easy as it sounds. Digging heedlessly through rubble is the surest way I know of to trigger another collapse. Piles of loose rock and earth may lie above the cave-in, just waiting for a space to fall into. If you move the already-fallen rubble, you may be making room for all the rest of that sagging earth to come join it. So dig with care and beware of shifts in the earth around you, or you could end up burying yourself even more deeply.

Because the elements of earth and air don't get along, a cave-in means you're likely to be surrounded by earth with no way for fresh air to get to you. So you'll soon use up the air you have. The effort of digging out will make you use up air faster. If you should be trapped by a cave-in, take care not to overwork yourself. If you're not digging or doing something else





useful, sit or lie down quietly; this will help you use as little air as possible. If you need light, use a light crystal or some other light source that doesn't eat air. The longer you can stay alive, the better your chances of rescue (assuming anyone knows where you are).

Unlike common miners, adepts have other ways to get out of a cave-in. Some magicians can whistle up spells and even spirits that make getting out from under as easy as a stroll through the Grand Bazaar. Of course, having the spirits of the earth at your beck and call is a mixed blessing. They're likely to want something in exchange for their aid, and I've heard some spirits drive a sharp bargain. If you're going to use a spell to get out, choose it wisely. Simply lifting up piles of fallen stone by magic instead of with your own two arms may produce the same results as incautious digging—down comes the rest of the cavern roof, with you under it. Keep the structure of caves and tunnels in mind, and use magic that won't affect it. Otherwise you may only buy more trouble.

ON HAZARDS OF THE OTHER ELEMENTS

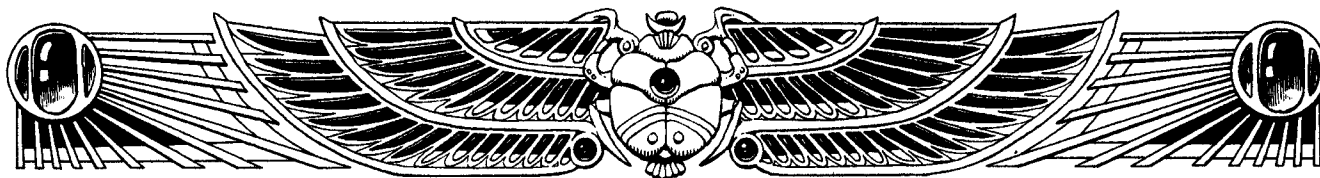
Air and earth are not the only elements that can give you trouble when delving. Water and fire cause their share of it as well.

Water lies hidden under the earth all across Barsaive. Underground rivers and streams cut their way through most of Barsaive's mountain ranges, most notably the Throal Mountains. Some waterways under the Throal Mountains stretch far enough to sail a ship from the Coil River all the way to the Kingdom of Throal. In some places, the rivers spill into underground lakes large enough to float a whole fleet of ships in. So hazardous are these routes, however, that only the most skilled sailors should consider navigating them.

The greatest difficulty of underground water for most explorers and delvers is finding a way around it. Underearth lakes and rivers can be difficult to cross unless you plan to swim or carry a boat into the depths with you, neither of which is particularly sensible. Carrying a boat is obviously foolish; imagine the effort of hauling around anything large enough to do you the slightest good, to say nothing of getting it through narrow cracks and around sharp bends! As for swimming, underground waterways are often inhabited by creatures best left undisturbed.

Many underearth rivers are narrow enough to cross if you can improvise a "bridge" of sorts—with ropes, for example. Some are spanned by natural bridges, cut from the stone above the bed in which they run. Not all of these natural bridges are sturdy enough for a Name-giver to cross safely, but most are. So test such a bridge carefully before you stride across it, or you may end up in the drink.





Short of magic or a solid bridge, the only other way to cross an underground river or lake is by boat or raft. Most explorers don't lug rafts or boats around with them on the off-chance that they'll run into a lake or river underground, and the hardships of carrying one are considerable even if you know beforehand that you'll need it. You can build a raft in the depths, but it's difficult because there's so little material to work with. The Pale Ones use the skins of creatures they call *iyoshkira* to build their rafts, but these beasts are few and far between. They live in the deepest and widest caves, guarded by the pale t'skrang (who aren't about to let just any band of bold adventurers walk up and take one). Your best bet is a lucky find—a caved-in mine shaft where you can extract the fallen timbers from the rest of the rubble without triggering a second rockfall. As with digging out, take care when you move the wood.

Flooding is another danger. Often, a stream flows through a natural tunnel near other tunnels and passages (natural or otherwise). A break in the wall between the two tunnels—say, from a cave-in, or from digging a mine shaft—will allow the water to surge into the dry tunnel. Striking water in this way can swiftly turn a mine shaft or other passageway into a fountain. I've known many good miners who drowned when the shaft they were working in flooded; they couldn't move fast enough, and the water claimed them.

If you get caught in a flood, run for higher ground as quickly as possible. If there's nowhere to run, find something stout to hold onto and try not to let the flood tide sweep you away (or cover you). Once the first surge of water has passed, you may be able to swim to safety.

Fire Beneath the Earth

Fire can also flood a passage or a cave. Scattered throughout the underground are deposits of stone heated to melting, like the surface of Death's Sea. These veins of liquid fire run deep in the rock, and fuel the many hot springs that send boiling water to the surface. The heat of these pockets gives away their location, and most often the hot stone warns miners to back off. Sometimes, however, no one pays attention to these signs. The miners keep digging and chiseling until they've weakened the walls too much to withstand the pressure of the molten rock. The liquid fire bursts through the weakest point into the mine shaft, and there's an end to the hapless miners. Anyone caught in such a magma burst has as much chance of surviving as an ice sculpture left on a forge.

Though extremely hazardous, caves formed by volcanoes and hot springs often contain deposits of valuable minerals, including True earth and True fire. The staggering risks of collecting them is one of the things that keeps those minerals expensive. In such element-rich caves, scalding water, boiling mud and molten rock often combine with hot air, foul gases and even fierce creatures from the Plane of Fire to make them amazingly dangerous. In my view, anyone foolhardy enough to try mining such a cave is welcome to it.

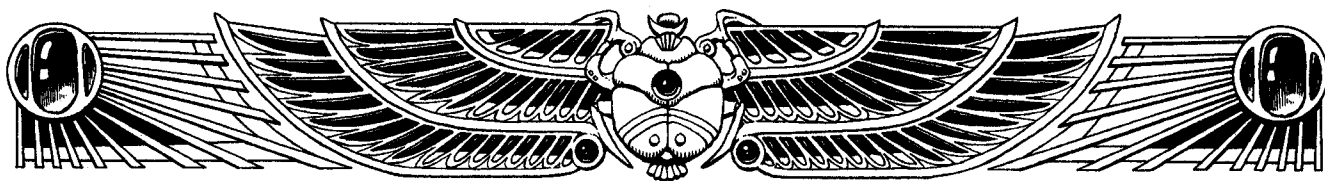
CREATURES OF THE DEPTHS

Assuming you survive bad air, cave-ins, flammable gas and underground floods of water or magma, you may still succumb to the fearsome creatures that dwell in the dark depths. Shadowmants, krillworms, gargoyles, cave trolls, Horrors and Horror constructs are just a few of the savage creatures that favor dank caves and ruined kaers. Horrors and their constructs seem to particularly enjoy taking up residence in ruined kaers or abandoned mine shafts. Other creatures, especially large beasts such as the brithan, might live temporarily in a kaer, as they have trouble finding lairs large enough to suit them. Often, the kinds of creatures that dwell in kaers are especially foul—some, in fact, are attracted to kaers by foulness and decay. The loathsome krillworm is a perfect example of such a creature; it deliberately chooses kaers full of rotting food, corpses and such as its breeding grounds.

Like most other living things, the creatures of the underground do not welcome bands of noisy folk intruding in their homes. Most want to be left alone to go about their business. Invade their territory and they'll defend it fiercely, but if you leave them alone, they'll leave you alone. Unfortunately, many underground creatures inhabit just the kind of places that Name-givers want to mine, explore or loot—so sooner or later, it's you or them. Wise travelers keep constant, careful watch for signs of creatures nearby as they make their way down below. Droppings or leavings from prey are sure signs of creatures, as are tracks, sounds of movement or calls that echo through the caves.

Many creatures live near the kaer's water or food sources, especially if something they can eat is still growing in the lattice-farms and whatnot. I know many creatures are fond of the mushrooms that most kaers grew during the Scourge (and which now grow wild in many kaers). So step carefully as you walk through the kaer; you don't want to walk right through the feeding grounds of a flock of shadowmants if you can avoid it.

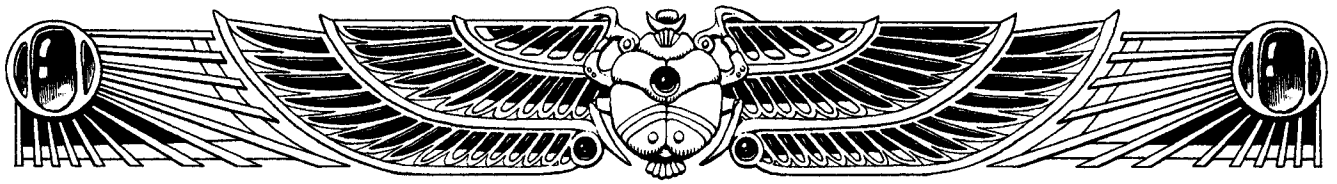




When dealing with creatures of the underworld, know their abilities and limits. Keep in mind that they know every nook and cranny of their territory far better than you do and will use that knowledge to their advantage. The underground realm is not like the surface world, and its creatures are very different from what we've come to think of as ordinary beasts. For one thing, many deep-dwellers are nearly or wholly blind. Some creatures have heat sight, but most cannot see at all. They live in a place that is nearly always darker than the blackest night, so what use are eyes to them? Don't make the mistake of thinking this a weakness, however. These blind creatures have other highly developed senses—hearing and touch, for example—that enable them to hunt down prey swiftly and efficiently.

Noise carries a long way under the earth, vibrating through and echoing off of tunnel and cavern walls for hundreds of yards in all directions. Many dwellers in the depths hunt by sound; so acute is their hearing and their sense of touch that they can track even distant prey solely by the noise it makes. Whether heard through the ears or felt through the skin, sounds attract these beasts. Try to walk with slow, steady strides. The sounds and vibrations created by erratic movements are most noticeable to these creatures, and resemble the noise created by wounded animals—a favorite prey for many underground scavengers. And be especially careful when fighting with any opponent underground; the noise of a struggle can attract numerous nearby creatures, ready to feed on the loser.





Other underground creatures rely on scent to hunt. They can track by scent like a hound does and will follow their quarry though hundreds of yards of caves. Once these hunters catch a scent of blood, they will follow a trail to its end in hopes of finding injured or dying prey. Dead creatures left behind will eventually attract scavengers, so clear away the carcasses of anything you kill. Better yet, clear yourself away before the scavengers arrive. Otherwise you may find your exit blocked by a swarm of fearsome beasts feeding on the kill you so thoughtfully left for them. And good luck trying to drive them off—any beast will fight fiercely when a meal is at stake.

On Horrors Underground

Horrors, of course, are much worse than even the most fearsome creature. For a Horror, “going about its business” means luring unsuspecting Name-givers down into its lair where it can more easily kill them. You might run across a Horror just about anywhere, but be especially wary of old kaers. Horrors that managed to enter sealed kaers (usually through the minds and spirits of kaer residents) may still reside within such sealed places even after killing all the inhabitants. Many such Horrors amuse themselves by animating the bodies of the dead, forcing them to enact dreadful parodies of their everyday lives or fight each other in endless wars. Still other Horrors have corrupted sealed kaers, turning the kaerfolk into mindless slave-worshippers over the generations. I encountered one such kaer in my time in the south reaches of Barsaive—these unfortunates, whom I shall not Name lest I draw unwelcome attention, made sacrifices to the dreadful thing in the mistaken belief that the Horror was protecting them from others of its kind. The people of that kaer were thoroughly corrupt; they came near to offering us on the Horror’s terrible altar. Luckily for Barsaive, we collapsed the entrance to that foul place when we escaped.

Still other Horrors choose to dwell in ruined, abandoned kaers—no one knows why. Some scholars believe that such Horrors hope to lure new victims; others say Horrors choose kaers because they need protection now that the magic in the world has fallen from the heights it reached during the Scourge. I’m told that many Horrors can no longer keep their grip on our world, so they lair in magic-rich places where they need not struggle to stay here—rather like sitting on a raft rather than swimming to stay afloat. Strange, isn’t it, to think that the monsters who hunted us now hide in our former shelters as we hunt them?

Unlike creatures, Horrors leave few signs of their presence. However, many intelligent Horrors construct traps around their kaers to ensnare uninvited guests. (Such Horrors assume astral form to slip safely past all such traps.) Horrors may also corrupt a kaer’s magical defenses or make their own—say, creating cadaver men from dead kaerfolk. (To prevent such abominations, many kaer-dwellers destroyed the bodies of their dead.)

OF KAERS, THEIR DANGERS AND REWARDS

Kaers are the most common underground destination for explorers and adventurers. They’re also the most dangerous. Apart from the hazards posed by the ruins themselves—crumbling structure, possible rockfalls, fallen bits of stone for the unwary to stumble over and break a bone—kaers may also conceal traps, loathsome creatures, and terrible diseases. Most perilous of all, whatever destroyed the kaer may still lurk in its depths, just waiting for explorers to come looking.

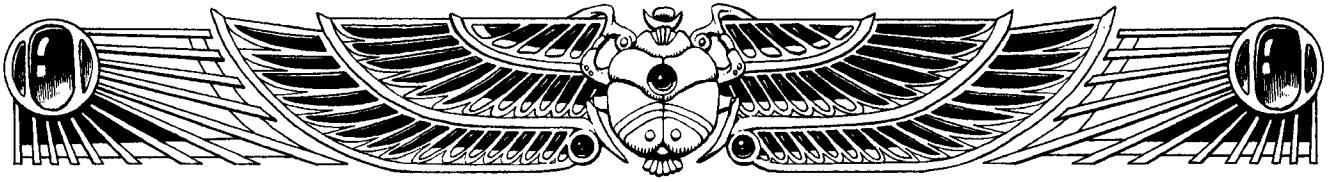
On the brighter side, kaers are also filled with priceless pieces of our province’s history. Even a kaer long ago ruined and abandoned may contain some artifact that would make scholars of Barsaive’s past dance with joy, or some book of lore left behind by a long-dead magician. Some kaers may even hold treasure—magical and otherwise. But before you strap on your sword and shield and rush in to scoop up the vast, unclaimed wealth lying about in a ruined kaer, take time to learn a bit about kaers. A bit of knowledge could save your life.

With that in mind, I provide the following passages, which represent everything I know of kaers. Some of you younger adventurers may decide that much of it is useless information, but you never know for certain what you might encounter in an underground kaer—or which little scrap of information will save your hide.

ON KAER CONSTRUCTION

Our ancestors built the kaers to last through the centuries of the Scourge and resist attacks by powerful Horrors. Many didn’t survive, but all were as solidly built as our forebears could make them. They were meant to hold hundreds, even thousands, of Name-givers for generations until the Long Night finally ended.





The ideal kaer started with a natural cave, but many of Barsaive's villages and towns lay nowhere near any suitable caves. And even those who could start with a cave and build around it had to do considerable digging to make a hole in the ground large enough to encompass an entire town. Finishing a kaer often took years, often as many as three generations—and all the while, more and more Horrors were showing up.

From the stories I've heard, the people of Barsaive learned a lot about building underground during those terrible years. Fortunately, Throal was administering Barsaive for the Theran overlords, and so we dwarfs were able to send skilled miners to many places. They showed people what to do and explained many of the more obscure Theran instructions. Many smaller towns and villages built communal kaers together, which worked well for the most part. Some foolish folk squabbled a bit over rights to the kaer when it came time to take shelter, but for most Name-givers, the first days of the Scourge were no time to quarrel like children over the last piece of cake. All that mattered was getting safely inside and shutting the door.

Folk made mistakes during the building, of course. Some of the earliest-built kaers collapsed or weren't designed properly and had to be rebuilt. I'll never forget one tale I heard of a disillusioned band of young adepts who entered what they thought was a ruined kaer and found out otherwise. They fought and defeated the Horror that had laired there, at great cost in their own blood, only to discover afterward that the kaer had been abandoned before the Scourge began. No one had ever occupied it, because it was unsafe. Not a scrap of treasure or a single artifact was anywhere to be found. (They left out that part of the story when they related their battle with the Horror to the Great Library.)

According to the basic Theran design, most kaers were built around as large a central chamber as could be constructed and safely supported. This central chamber served as the town square, where the people would gather for public events, stories, entertainments and so forth. The magistrate's offices and other such buildings were placed here, if the town that built the kaer was sizable enough. In some kaers there was even a small bazaar where the townfolk could trade the various goods they made.

Our forebears made their underground town squares as attractive as possible, covering them with carvings and other artworks. Most were fitted with clusters of light quartzes or sometimes a single massive crystal to banish the underground gloom. The kaerfolk used light crystals as much as they could because the crystals consumed neither air nor fuel as torches do—the occasional attention of an elemental was enough to keep them shining. Where light quartz was not to be had, kaer-dwellers used specially grown moss that gave off a dim glow and thus provided adequate light for the kaer.

From the central chamber, a series of tunnels branched off into smaller caves and chambers. These smaller rooms served as living quarters for each family, and one of them usually housed a communal bath for each group of living chambers. As no wind (or anything else from the outside world) could get inside the kaers, and everyone lived in close quarters with everyone else, keeping clean was a necessity.

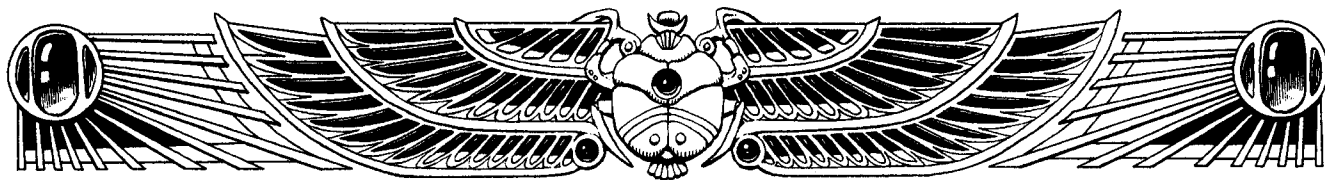
Getting fresh, sweet air was a tricky problem for the kaer-dwellers. They couldn't dig air shafts from the surface, as we do in the mines of Throal nowadays; such connections to the world outside would have been open doors for Horrors to come through. The air already inside would soon lose its vitality and become unfit to breathe, unless some way of cleansing it could be found. Once again, Theran magic provided the answer. Among the Rites of Protection and Passage were instructions for making "air-cleaners"—magically treated crystals infused with True air. Such cleaners could keep a kaer's air breathable and free of dangerous gases for centuries. Over the years the air in the kaers remained vital enough to support life, though it smelled increasingly stale. Surface-dwellers think air has no flavor to it, but my grandfather used to love telling me how sweet and rich the outside air tasted and smelled to those who first left the kaers and walked on the surface again. After a full day breathing down in the mines, I feel the same way when I get back to the upper levels. Much better air up there.

The kaerfolk were similarly ingenious when providing themselves with food and water. Often they dug deep wells or channeled water from an underground stream or spring. Other kaers built wells containing bound water sprites or small portals to the Plane of Water; each of these allowed water to collect in vast basins. One especially inventive group built magical wells that could draw water from the very air (or so I read in the Great Library somewhere).

A kaer's water was its lifeblood, and kaerfolk guarded their water sources constantly against tampering or poisoning. Countless kaer communities died during the Scourge after Horrors or their minions tainted the communities' water supplies. Such unfortunate kaer-dwellers had to decide between drinking poison, dying of thirst in their shelter, or opening the doors and being cut down the minute they reached the surface.

Providing food for a kaer also presented special problems. The typical kaer had enough room to support a few animals like hardy sheep, goats, pigs and cave lizards, but very few kaers could raise enough to provide the entire kaer with abundant milk, meat and hides. Cattle were far too large, costly and smelly to take into most kaers, though some wealthier cities were able to do so (along with plenty of noseplugs, I daresay!).





The lack of sun and space also made farming difficult. In place of fields, kaers maintained growing caves, where closely packed rows of tall lattices of wood or stone stretched from floor to ceiling. Each lattice contained narrow troughs of soil for growing crops. The ceiling of the growing cave contained special light crystals, treated with elemental magic, that provided nourishing light for the crops. Of course, kaers fortunate enough to include questors of Jaspree among their number used the expertise of such questors to make their crops grow quickly and abundantly.

Because the growing caves provided little space for crops, our ancestors grew mostly beans, rice and other staple crops that yielded the greatest harvests. The kaerfolk learned to make an amazing variety of food from their few staples, including baked goods and even strong drink. I know of many oldsters in Barsaive who can't stomach eating beans and rice as anything other than a last resort—they think of it as "kaer fare," a reminder of the time they'd rather forget.

The final, vital part of kaer-building was the performance of the magical rituals designed to keep the Horrors at bay. Our forebears lined the outermost walls of most kaers with kernels of True earth to provide astral barriers and inlaid kaer doors with orichalcum runes and symbols designed by Theran magicians to drive Horrors away. They also built complex entryways—with twisting tunnels, blind curves, steep drop-offs and such—and filled them with all sorts of traps intended to kill even the largest Horror before it could get far inside.

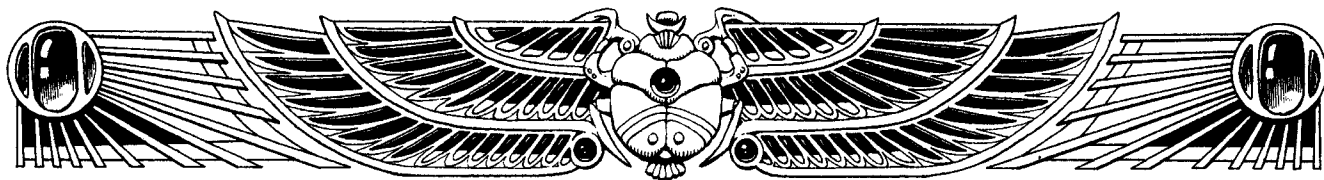
ON LIFE IN THE KAERS

Those who live under the earth nowadays have it easy compared with past generations. Unlike them, we can go above ground to get a glimpse of sunlight and a whiff of fresh air whenever we feel the need. For folk who've spent most of their days on the surface, spending any amount of time underground is likely to feel to them much like life in the kaers did to the first generation who lived in them—in a word, difficult. Even with the *Book of Tomorrow*, whose tales and lore of life in the light of day kept our forebears connected with the outside world they'd left behind, some people couldn't handle kaer life. The first generation went into the kaers knowing that they were never going to see the world they'd known again—all they could do was hope that some day their descendants might get to come out into the sun. More than a few Name-givers went mad under the earth. Despair made them vulnerable, and often they fell victim to Horrors that exploited the cracks in their minds.

After a generation or two, people became accustomed to life underground. Children born in the kaer knew of the outside world only from stories in the *Book of Tomorrow* or stories told by their parents and grandparents. The need to get out lessened a bit, and life went on.

From the tales my grandfather told me, kaer life was a dull business. You worked in the lattice farms or maintaining the kaer, or at some craft to make something useful and pass the time. Every so often each day, the kaer's precious food was doled out to everyone in little portions, with an occasional extra bit to lift everyone's spirits—sometimes meat, if





the kaer had animals and they'd done well that year. In the evenings, folk would gather in the central chamber to watch as the kaer's storytellers, questors and illusionists spun tales or visions of the outside world, legends of the people and the land and the Passions, anything that might fill the residents' hearts with light and hope. The stories and legends were food for the soul, and so the people who learned and kept them alive were important folk.

Living in such a small place for so many generations, the kaer-dwellers created customs and practices that helped them cope with the close confinement that the first generation found so troublesome. Most kaers developed elaborate rules of etiquette that let people hide behind walls of words and actions when other walls weren't to be had. Kaer folk had to live and work together all the time—they even bathed together in the communal baths. Out of harsh necessity, they learned how to be alone in a room full of people. Everyone tried hard to respect everyone else's privacy.

In my grandfather's kaer, there were no doors between any of the chambers because doors fouled up the kaer's ventilation system. The people still needed privacy, of course, so they used curtains of cloth, hides or colored beads. If a curtain was open, that was an invitation to enter if you wanted; if it was closed, people treated it just like a stout wooden door that was closed and locked. Whoever was behind the curtain didn't want to be disturbed, so no one bothered them. Folk pretended they didn't hear sounds that came from behind a curtain. Some people even used special colors and shapes of beads in their curtains as signs to passersby, to tell close family and friends that it was all right to enter. According to some of the tales, people even sent signals for secret meetings that way.

For the most part, kaer life didn't change from generation after generation. Everyone went about their business as best they could, holding on to the hope that their children or their children's children might be able to see the half-mythic world of sunlight again someday.

OF LOST KAERS

Those of us who go delving in kaers are likeliest to find lost kaers. (Those kaers that survived intact until the end of the Long Night aren't likely to hold much treasure or lore, because their inhabitants would have brought everything out into the world with them when they left the kaer.) So I'll tell you a bit about the different fates that befell the lost and ruined kaers of Barsaive, to give fellow delvers an inkling of what they might be in for.

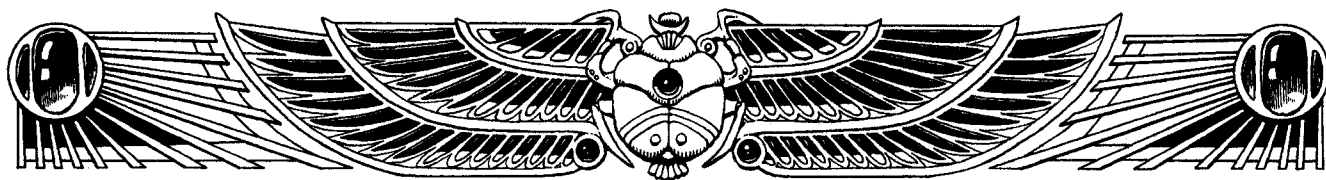
Many kaers didn't work as well as the Therans and their builders had hoped. Often, a Horror would mark an individual before the kaer was completed, then enter the victim's mind after he had settled within the completed kaer and proceed to slaughter the kaer's inhabitants. Some Horrors waited years, even generations, before acting, passing on their marks from parent to child. Some kaers discovered the evil dwelling among them; others knew nothing of it or refused to suspect someone they cared for. Sometimes, the family of the Horror-tainted person hid the terrible truth from the rest of the kaer even though it meant the death of them all.

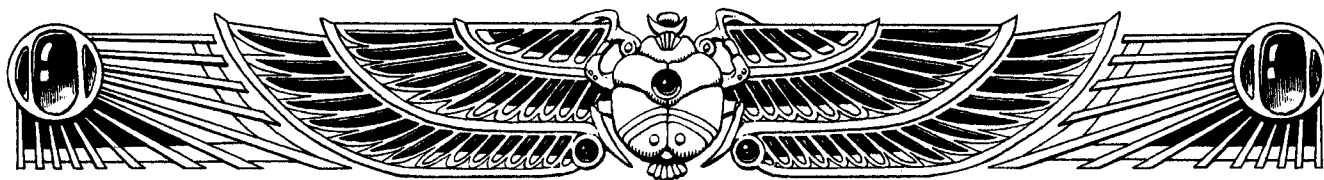
Other Horrors were powerful enough to break through the Theran wards and all the traps. It's a tribute to solid Barsaivian workmanship that only the strongest of the Horrors could do so—but for kaer-delvers, that means any Horror still lurking in a ruined kaer will be a truly terrifying opponent. Such Horrors are more patient than any hunter. For generations, they worked with single-minded determination to break through the wards and get at the people living inside the kaer, much like a tree-runner patiently cracking a hard nut. We don't know why some Horrors spent so long breaking into the kaers rather than looking for easier prey, but some scholars have a possible answer. They say the Horrors wanted the people inside to know they were out there, working away with deadly patience, so the folk would despair and provide the Horror with a more toothsome feast.

Few kaers survived once a Horror broke in. Adept and heroes in some kaers managed to repel Horror attacks, but most kaers died once their protections were breached. Because breaking into a kaer was so difficult, the Horrors seemed to take special pleasure in destroying one. To make their meal of suffering all the more savory, they inflicted terrible tortures on the luckless inhabitants and prolonged their pain as long as possible. Tales abound of Horrors that killed all the folk of a kaer and then used unnatural magic to return them to a semblance of life—undead puppets, forced to serve and entertain the monster even in death.

Of the lost kaers that escaped the Horrors, some died of diseases carried in by one of the first dwellers or brought on by poor food, accumulated filth or other things. In the closed space of a kaer, a plague rushed through the people like fire through dry grass. Sometimes the kaer-dwellers managed to contain a disease before it killed everyone, but only through harsh measures such as isolating the sick from the rest of the kaer—sometimes by sealing them up in abandoned tunnels or caves so they couldn't spread the pestilence to others. Few kaers had healers skilled enough to cure any but minor ailments,







and all healers were forced to work without many of the herbs and plants they'd found in abundance on the surface. Some plague-ridden kaers remain sealed to this day, and more than a few explorers have died terrible deaths after entering them.

Other kaers fell from war or madness that turned the inhabitants against one another. Conflict tore some kaers apart, leaving no one alive save occasional small groups of survivors who could not carry on alone and died of despair. These war-torn kaers are some of the saddest places I've ever seen. The memories are not pleasant, and I'll not speak of them.

Other kaers failed because of structural weaknesses, or when some disaster destroyed the delicate balance they relied on: failure of the farms, loss of food stocks, tainted water or trouble with the crystals that cleaned the air. Such events meant a slow death for the kaer through starvation, thirst or suffocation.

ON KAER EXPLORATION

A brief word to the wise, before you rush out to find a lost kaer to explore. Finding one is easier said than done. Most of the kaers whose entrances were out in the open for all to see have already been visited by adepts and travelers in the past hundred years. If ever there was anything in them worth bringing out, it's gone now. So if you want any profit from your expedition—whether in coin, magic or knowledge of our past—you'll need to find a kaer whose entrance is hidden.

Many kaers hid their entrances behind spells of illusion or cleverly designed facades that made them look like part of the land around them. Such camouflage was part of the kaer's defenses—it kept less intelligent Horrors away. That kind of thing didn't fool the really clever Horrors, of course, but every little bit counted in those days. So don't expect to suddenly see a pair of bright, shiny orichalcum doors as you're traipsing through the hills on a fine summer's day. Instead, try a little careful research first.

You might find mention of a lost kaer in the records of some place or another; many adventurers I know have done so. The Great Library contains records of kaers that haven't been heard from since before the Scourge, and no one knows what became of them since its end. Intelligent adepts spend a lot of time learning all they can about one of these legendary kaers before setting off to find it. (Unintelligent adepts go off and get killed.)

If research fails, you can always hope to stumble across a ruined or lost kaer. Places of legendary peril, such as the Wastes, hold more broken kaers than you can count. My companions and I once discovered a kaer in the Wastes when my friend Grollik slid down a ravine and set off a rockslide that uncovered the entrance in a ravine wall. Of course, the disadvantage of finding a lost kaer this way is that you know nothing at all about it save what you can observe. If you came prepared for the dangers and difficulties common to most kaers, though, you can go exploring with some confidence that you'll get out alive and in one piece.

On Getting Inside

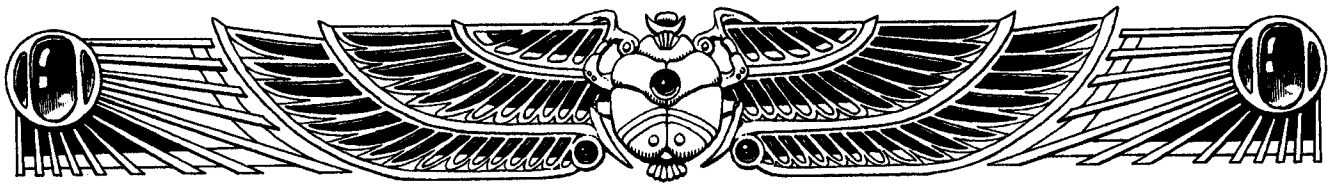
If the kaer has been breached, you can get inside it easily (relatively speaking). Whatever broke into the kaer before you has either shattered the doors or created its own hole in the kaer walls—thus sparing you the necessity. That doesn't mean, however, that getting in will be simple. Traps may still await you, or the kaer entrance may be blocked by rubble from a cave-in. (And I'm not even going to talk about the horrible creatures that might have nested just inside the door—the possibilities are too numerous to describe.)

Sealed kaers pose even more difficulties. Most such unopened kaers are dead, their folk slain by plague, war, or the subtle workings of a Horror that slowly corrupted it from within. I've heard tell of Horrors that managed to restore the entrances to kaers they destroyed, to lure explorers in search of treasure inside. Others are still inhabited by frightened people who don't know the Scourge is over. Should you breach one, its people are quite likely to assume you're a Horror or some other fearsome enemy, and they'll put a crossbow bolt through your throat as soon as look at you unless you can find a way to disarm their suspicions in a hurry.

Whether alive or dead, a sealed kaer is a dangerous place. For one thing, they're more likely than breached kaers to hold intact traps and other terrible dangers. They're also no joke to break into. Our forebears designed them to hold off Horrors the size of elephants, and so it's no simple task for a band of adepts to break down the doors or otherwise breach a sealed kaer's defenses. However, some explorers discover magical rituals or ancient keys designed to open the doors of certain kaers. (Be wary, though, for most such keys are counterfeits sold by traders who carry them around by the cartload.)

Other groups of adepts, many of them working for the Kingdom of Throal, go looking for sealed kaers to tell the people in them (assuming there are any) that the Long Night is over. These adepts do the work of diplomats, using every means they can to convince the folk of the kaer to come out and see the sky. Not the sort of adventure that many adepts look for, but this kind of thing has its own rewards. It also has its own hazards, of course. Apart from the appalling danger of being slain out of





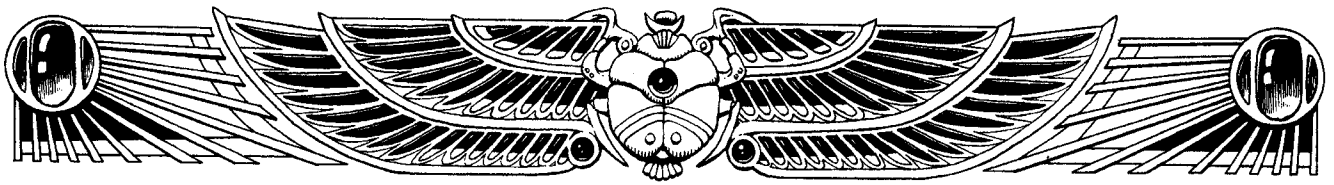
hand by suspicious kaerfolk, it's dreadfully difficult to communicate clearly (and safely) with them. Using magic to bespeak the people inside a sealed kaer is often well-nigh impossible because of the kaer's magical wards and protections. It can, however, be done by adepts willing to think hard and work patiently. And once you succeed at such an endeavor, the grateful kaerfolk are likely to lavish you with gifts—such as they have left to give, that is.

Once Inside the Kaer

You'll find most of a kaer's traps in its entrance tunnels and portals, before you get to the kaer proper. Few kaers trapped their main living areas, as there was too much danger of some poor fool setting off a trap by accident. You're also likely to find traps intended to dispatch Name-giver intruders in certain areas of the kaer—where food and water were stored, for example, or near important chambers or buildings.

Our forebears built more different kinds of traps than you can possibly imagine. I've seen a hundred different kinds of deadfalls, pits, arrow-traps, dart-traps, spear-traps, swinging blades, poison clouds and magical wards of every sort—and I'm only one dwarf, out of who knows how many adventurers in Barsaive! The kaerfolk designed their traps to catch and kill any Horror that could fit through the entryway or tunnel where the trap lay. Such traps are more than powerful enough to kill a Name-giver or a group of Name-givers who unluckily trigger them. Because kaer traps were intended to protect the kaer at all costs, they are all lethal (except, just possibly, for any traps laid in the kaer's living spaces). The traps between the entrance and the central chamber are invariably the deadliest and most difficult to spring safely.





Aside from the traps, keep an eye out for hazards created by time and decay. Kaer walls and tunnels can collapse and bury you. Water and food stores may be tainted. The air may be stale and weak, possibly even carrying some rot-induced disease.

Once you reach the kaer's central chamber, look around carefully; whatever finished off the kaerfolk might have left signs behind. (Or it might not, but that's no excuse for carelessness.) I've seen kaers that looked as if they'd been scoured by forge-hot fires, and others that were empty of life but perfectly preserved—as if all the Name-givers who lived there had vanished into thin air without warning. The only certainty about kaers is that there is no certainty—so watch for everything and be prepared for anything. Creatures almost always mark their territory, so look for droppings or scratchings on the walls; these may be signs that the kaer is not empty.

Kaer Treasures

Many a kaer abounds in treasures, though often they're not the kind of treasures you may be seeking. Most kaers didn't keep great piles of silver and gold coin lying about, for example. Silver and gold were of little use to the kaerfolk; what could they buy with it, sealed underground as they were? Each kaer already had food, water and shelter aplenty, and the people made the rest of what they needed. If one kaer-dweller had something that another one wanted, they traded goods they'd made or services. So money was no more useful—less, in fact—than rocks.

Kaer treasure, then, is far more likely to be some magical item or other. The first kaerfolk took their magical treasures with them under the earth and valued them greatly; what with the tainting of magic during the Scourge, making new magical treasures was difficult and terribly risky. Many kaers also made legendary treasures, forged in the blood of fallen heroes who fought to keep the kaer free of Horrors.

Most kaers set aside a given chamber or chambers as a sort of storehouse for the town's or village's wealth. What such chambers contain—assuming they've not been looted by other adventurers who got there first—depends on what the locals considered valuable. Villages of the plains and jungles, which lay far away from natural stores of ore, tended to keep quantities of metal artifacts they'd obtained from the last caravans to cross Barsaive before the Scourge hit. So a sealed kaer deep in the Servos, for example, might have all kinds of metal goods in its treasure-house: knives and daggers, mirror-frames, combs, bowls and flagons, farming tools like plow blades that couldn't be used in the lattice-farms, that kind of thing. (Not exactly the kind of treasure a bold adventurer dreams of, is it?) Some towns kept works of art in their treasure-houses: fantastic sculptures of wood or stone or even bone, that they would take out and place in different public areas in the kaer to give folk a little something new to look at. Others, especially mining settlements in mountain ranges where such things abounded, kept gemstones. (Unlike metal, gemstones are valued even when abundant simply because of their beauty.) Kaers built by the people of larger towns often kept works of literature as treasures, where all the kaer's residents might find and read them if they wished. Some of these are immensely valuable for what they tell us about life in Barsaive before the Scourge; others are the only known surviving works of legendary poets, playwrights and other tellers of tales. And yes, some kaers (though not many) did keep coin; that kind of wealth was no use to the kaer-dwellers, but the people hoped their descendants might live in the sun again. And for surface-dwellers, a little money often comes in handy.

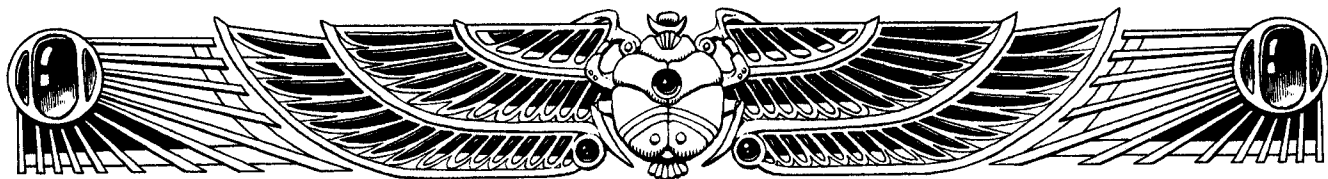
Such treasure-rooms are well hidden, of course, and protected with powerful, generally lethal traps. So don't get the idea that you'll be able to disarm the traps at the kaer entrance and then stroll to the treasure-chamber as quick and easy as a walk through the Grand Bazaar. Pick your way carefully and keep a sharp watch for the unexpected.

One final, cautionary note for treasure-seekers: many treasures in the ruins of a kaer have been touched or shaped by the Long Night, just as every Name-giver is shaped by the events of his life. The Scourge left its mark on us and all our works as surely as a vein of clay colors the metals drawn from it. Anything you find in the depths may have its origin in the very evils you fight against. Some dying Name-giver may have cursed some precious artifact to protect it from outsiders—another, driven mad by some Horror, may have laid such a curse on all who managed to outlive him. That would include adventurers who stumble on the object he cursed decades or centuries later, of course. Still other objects may be cursed by Horrors directly or linked to them in some other way.

The Tale of the Bone Bell

The Bone Bell of Kaer Talloria was one such object. Talloria, a gifted elf elemental, worked unceasingly to excavate a kaer for her town and create the orichalcum runes and wards that would hold the Horrors at bay for the centuries of the Scourge. Driven to protect her folk from the terrible fate that was coming, she toiled long into every night, then rose the next morning before anyone else to begin work again.





As part of her work, Talloria researched the Horrors, examining the carcasses of those few her fellow townsfolk managed to kill so that she might devise the best possible means of defense against them. She also studied the ways of the netherworlds to learn more about the Horrors and how they could be kept at bay. With each day that passed, Talloria worked harder than ever, locked away in her laboratory, consumed with a fierce passion to discover a foolproof means of protection. Many of her neighbors grew concerned for her welfare, but they respected their magician and feared the Horrors, so they said nothing and waited.

In time, Talloria left her laboratory and began working on something in the central chamber of the newly constructed kaer. She concealed herself behind a misty curtain of elemental air, so none of the people knew what she was building. But they all trusted her, and so they waited and watched.

Soon, the Horrors had grown too numerous for the people to remain on the surface any longer. The town suffered almost daily attacks from the ravaging monsters. When word came that even mighty Thera had sealed itself behind its dome of True air and fire, the townspeople retreated into their kaer and Talloria enacted the rituals to seal the shelter and activate the magical wards.

Not long after the sealing, Talloria revealed the artifact she had so carefully constructed to keep the Horrors at bay should the kaer's other protections fail. It was a huge bell, woven with True earth and air. The bell and its clapper were carved from the bones of the victims of the first Horrors, and they resonated with the terror of the coming Scourge. At first the people of the kaer were wary of the bell, soaked as it was in blood magic and nethermancy. Some feared the bell might be tainted with the power of the Horrors, but Talloria insisted that the bell's enchantments would keep the Horrors away.

Shortly after the sealing of the kaer, the bell was put to the test. A powerful Horror attacked Kaer Talloria—a Horror so mighty that it shook the whole mountain in whose heart the kaer lay. While the people huddled in fear, Talloria rang the great bell. It sent forth a peal that sounded like the crying of tortured souls, the screams of the Horrors' early victims. The terrible ringing echoed throughout the kaer. Moments later, the dreadful sounds of the monster outside stopped, and all was still. The people hailed Talloria as a heroine and gave thanks to her for saving them with her creation.

Many years passed, and Talloria passed the guardianship of the Bone Bell down to her successors. They maintained the magic of the bell, for the people considered it their last line of defense against the Horrors. Several times over the centuries, the bell drove off Horrors that threatened to breach the kaer. The kaerfolk used the bones of their dead to repair and strengthen the bell's enchantments, to make it a lasting weapon. The magicians who maintained the bell grew into an order that the people knew and respected for their great power. Over time, however, they also came to fear the Bellkeepers' dabblings in nethermancy and blood magic.

Generations passed, and the Scourge ended—but not in the way that the scholars of Thera had predicted. Inside Kaer Talloria, as everywhere else in the world, the sphere of True earth stopped its descent toward the bowl of True water. The kaerfolk were fearful and mightily confused. Was the Scourge over? Was it safe for them to emerge into the sunlight? Or was this just the latest trick of the Horrors that had bedeviled them for so long?

The Bellkeepers believed that the abrupt end of the descent was a trick, a foul deception intended to make people believe themselves safe and leave the kaer. Once they opened the kaer doors, the Horrors that secretly lay in wait would spring upon them and devour them. The magicians ordered the people to be patient while they deciphered the meaning of this strange omen.

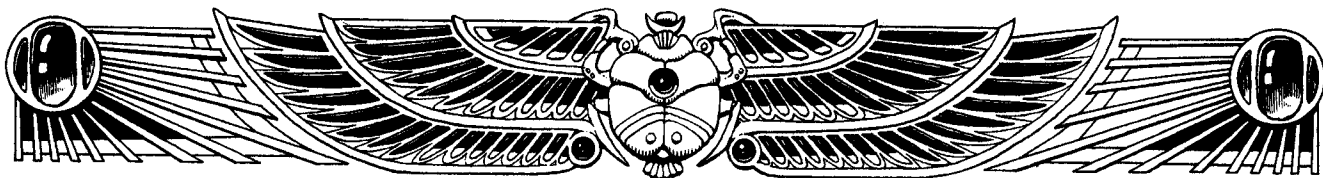
With each passing day, the people grew more and more restless. Dark rumors circulated, and resentment against the magicians grew. Folk began saying that the magicians only wanted to maintain their power over the people—they knew that the Scourge was over but had stopped the sphere of True earth themselves so that they could rule over the closed kaer forever. Soon the people talked openly of rebellion. The magicians took harsh measures against those who spoke treason, but this only stoked the fires of rebellion higher, like a bellows firing a forge.

Eventually, the people of Kaer Talloria rose up against the Bellkeepers and killed them all in the central chamber where the bell stood. The blood of the dying stained the great bell's bone lattice. Then they threw open the gates of the kaer.

As they emerged into the light, they discovered a terrible truth—Talloria's bell had worked somewhat differently than the famed elementalists had planned. The Horrors supposedly driven away by the bell over the years were actually a single Horror, and the bell's power had trapped it in astral space near the kaer. With the kaer doors open and the magicians slain, the Horror took its vengeance on the people of Talloria and left the kaer a haunted monument to their folly.

I heard this tale from one of the few survivors of Kaer Talloria. She told me that the Bone Bell remains in the ruins of the kaer. I'm sure the Horrors would not want such an item to fall into the hands of Name-givers, but who knows if they were able to destroy it?





PLACES OF LEGEND AND PERIL

Most of this chapter comes to us from Nevear of Travar, an expert on the history of Barsaive and the changes wrought by the Scourge. Nevear's work has drawn praise from many of his fellow scholars, as well as from our late King Varulus, who corresponded with him on occasion. Though Nevear has written reams on such legendary sites as the Liaj and Servos Jungles, Blood Wood, and the Poison Forest, those places have been thoroughly covered elsewhere in this book, and so we have omitted such passages from this essay.

—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records



Barsaive is home to great wonders—sites of surpassing beauty, cities that are monuments to the artistry of the Name-givers who built them—as well as places of terror and suffering. Our land still bears the scars of the Scourge, and they will heal slowly, if at all. These perilous places have but one virtue, in the minds of our province's heroes—they promise adventure to both the brave and the foolhardy who go there to make their fortunes.

THE BADLANDS

Stretching from the shores of the Scarlet Sea and west toward the Byrose River and the city of Travar, the Badlands are one of the most desolate and forbidding places in Barsaive. Home to Horrors and all manner of wild creatures, the Badlands also house lost kaers and ruins. Ancient records tell us that these kaers were among the richest in Barsaive, and they draw all manner of adventurers in search of treasures and secrets.

The recent illegal Theran settlement near Lake Ban has only increased the Badlands' attraction for treasure-hunters. Bands of Therans and Barsaivians alike now scour the region for hidden entrances to ruined kaers, hoping to find magical treasures left behind by the Theran settlers and envoys said to have sheltered here during the Scourge. Merchants from Travar have also sent adepts into the Badlands, to scout out suitable new airship routes to the west.

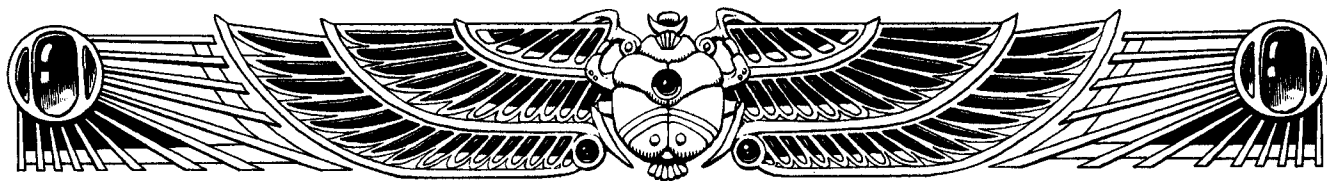
THE ORIGINS OF THE BADLANDS

In the time before the Scourge, this region was among the loveliest in Barsaive. Warmed by the fiery glow of Death's Sea and watered by the life-giving Serpent River, the rich soil of the area was once the finest farmland in our province. Almost anything would grow here, and the abundant arable land gave rise to many cities and towns. The ancient kingdom of the Scavians, to the west, traded heavily with the people of the Badlands for their crops, offering True earth from mines in the Twilight Peaks and True fire from Death's Sea to fuel forges and smithworks. In time, the local smiths and metalworkers earned fame throughout ancient Barsaive for their fine creations of gold, iron, steel and orichalcum. (Reportedly, the finest of these treasures remain in the lost kaers of the Badlands.)

When the Theran Empire claimed Barsaive, Therans began arriving in the region and built their own settlements, including seven sizable river villages along the Serpent for trading with their t'skrang allies of House K'tenshin. The Therans also brought knowledge of kaer-building, which they shared with the region's inhabitants as the Scourge approached. Unfortunately, the people's faith in Theran magical protections proved sadly misplaced.

Perhaps attracted by the land's beauty and its people's obvious prosperity, the Horrors descended on the region in hordes. They took special delight in devastating the once-lovely countryside and elegant cities, turning the hopes of the people to ashes and the land into a barren waste. When the famed airship *Earthdawn* traveled to this region in the first days after the Scourge's end, Captain Vaare Longfang saw the devastation the Horrors had wrought and Named the region the





Badlands. That Name has gained strength over the years as more and more Name-givers came to this place and witnessed its devastation. Some say the Name has altered the very nature of the place, perhaps forever. Names have great power, and it may be that by constantly using the Name Badlands for this region, we are only strengthening the corruption that has befallen it. One thing is certain—the Horrors could not have created a region more reflective of their own abominable natures if they had done so by design.

Certain questors of Jasprey in the town of Trosk, which lies along the Serpent River on the edges of the Badlands, are rumored to be seeking the Badlands' pattern items, to better understand what happened to the area and perhaps heal its wounds. The questors believe that the devastation of the Badlands reaches deep into the land itself. This, they say, is why the Badlands have not recovered from the Scourge as Barsaive's great jungles and forests have. No one is certain of the precise truth, but adventurers' journals and the writings of Throalic traveled scholars tell us that the Badlands seem to be growing. The barrenness is creeping outward by a few feet each year; our records suggest that this has been happening since the end of the Scourge, and that the rate of growth is increasing. If our best current estimates are correct, the Badlands could reach the borders of Travar within two generations. To reverse this worrisome trend will take a deed of great courage and powerful life magic.

SOME DANGERS OF TRAVEL

The Badlands is a harsh place. The land itself does not welcome intruders. Rocky ground, narrow gullies and gorges, and high cliffs wear down the feet of travelers. The sun bakes the traveler by day, and the hard, unyielding ground makes a poor bed on which to pass the cold night. Not even the fires of Death's Sea to the west and south can penetrate the night-time chill.

Travel through the Badlands is difficult, even on foot. Wagons and carts cannot cross the rocky ground—their wheels split on the stones, or else their weight sends them crashing down a ravine or cliffside when the brittle stone gives way underneath. Mounts fare little better. Only the thick-skinned stajian favored by the southern ork tribes can walk for long on the rough ground. Other mounts suffer from torn feet and broken hooves and go lame within a scant few miles. Lame mounts in this desolate area must be put down to become meat for scavengers. Travel at night is even more hazardous than by day. The day's heat keeps most of the Badlands' predators deep in their lairs, asleep; but when the temperature drops with the setting of the sun, the night hunters emerge to stalk their prey. The gullies and ravines distort and magnify the hunters' roars and cries, making them seem closer or more distant than they are.

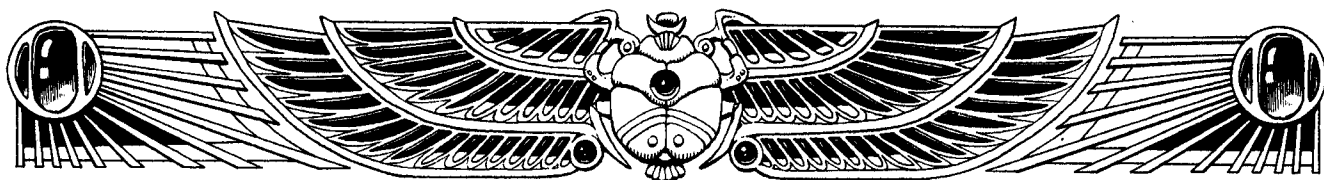
Little water exists in the Badlands, save for the banks of the Serpent and the River of Bones, a small tributary of the Iontos River that cuts through the region. This river is small and shallow, and its waters are said to taste of metal. Its Name comes from the treacherous whitewater that makes up most of its length; the rapids have slain so many that the river is virtually useless for travel. Occasional pools of still water appear elsewhere in the Badlands, but travelers should avoid them at all costs. The water is most likely diseased, or afflicted with dread *iota*—Horrors too small to see, which corrupt water sources and mark those who ingest them.

The heat in the Badlands leeches water from every source, including the bodies of Name-givers who travel there. The dry air and baked soil seem to suck moisture from everything they touch, and even a traveler who has taken precautions feels weak from water loss after a short time. Water is more precious than silver in the Badlands, where it can mean the difference between life and death. To die of thirst is a terrible fate. The body burns slowly from within as the vital element withdraws, leaving behind a desiccated shell. Travelers should take care to protect their water supplies and drink regularly to keep their body's internal elements in proper balance.

Few Name-givers can go for more than a week without water. T'skrang especially need their native element; prolonged periods without bathing in water make the river folk irritable and ill. Certain magical items and spells can provide water, but these do not always work reliably in the Badlands. A few plants store water in their bodies, and a traveler in dire need can harvest water from such plants. Be warned, however, that getting to the stored water is not easy. Some succulents native to the Badlands are poisonous—the bell-shaped cactus that we dwarfs call *resh'ko* is one such. Even wholesome plants such as the *tre'kora*, or "three-limbed" cactus, must be harvested carefully. All such plants protect their water stores with thick-growing spines that bite deep into the skin and inflame it. Many also have a thick outer rind that even a sharp knife cannot easily cut through. The plant's water lies in its soft, inner flesh, which can be scooped out and eaten or sucked dry.

Sunlight, so beneficial to us in more temperate climes, is an enemy in the Badlands. The landscape provides little shelter from its merciless rays, and those who travel by day through the Badlands often suffer painful burns from the sunlight and





hot stone. The simplest and best protection from the sun's fire is clothing—specifically, a light, loose covering that hides the skin from the sun's touch but allows heat to escape as the body grows warmer. Paler colors repel sunlight, so it is best to wear white or some other light shade. At night, additional layers of clothing will protect the traveler from the bone-chilling cold and retain some of the day's heat in their folds.

Food, like water, is scarce in the Badlands. Most of the creatures native to it spend their days well-hidden from even the sharpest-eyed scout and emerge only in the relative safety of darkness. Hunting is poor, and any creature a hunter might bring down is likely to be unpalatable at best, poisonous at worst. Few edible plants grow in the region; native flora tend toward stunted trees with spiky leaves, dry razor grass, and other hardy breeds that can survive with little water.

NATIVE CREATURES AND OTHER DENIZENS

As one might expect, dwellers in the Badlands are well suited to their desolate surroundings. The creatures of the area can survive with little water, feeding off other native species or the few scrub plants worth eating. Common beasts in the Badlands include lightning lizards, brochas (near the edges of Death's Sea), basilisks, chimeras, hell hounds, hydras and molgrims. Horrors and their constructs infest the many broken and ruined kaers; those most often encountered by unlucky adventurers include shadows, jehuthras and plagues. Ruined kaers and citadels are also often infested with cadaver men and ghouls. The few large exploring parties that have ventured into the Badlands report night raids on their camps by large numbers of these creatures, which suggests that some of the more powerful Horrors may have considerable forces of undead at their command.

Some tales tell of strange Horror constructs seen nowhere else in Barsaive. The *vektha* is one such—a shambling monstrosity made of the animated bones of creatures and Name-givers who have died of thirst in this terrible region. No two vektha look alike, and the bones are arranged in no sensible order; there may be a shinbone where the head should be, jawbones for feet, breast bones in place of arm-bones, and the like. The vektha seems to shimmer as it moves, as if seen through a heat haze. All who look upon it feel a terrible thirst, even if they have just drained a full waterskin. The thirst vanishes if you turn your eyes away; but the vektha compels its victims to gaze at it, and breaking that compulsion is far easier said than done. It is said that all who stand within twenty or so feet of the thing continue to feel raging thirst until they move out of its circle of influence. Often, the only warning of a vektha's approach is the rattling of its bones as it walks.

The Horrors of the Badlands rarely venture forth from their lairs, though some weaker Horrors reportedly roam about looking for sustenance or victims to torture. The more powerful Horrors remain hidden, often animating the dead to rebuild or restructure the kaers in which they dwell. No one yet knows why the Horrors remain tied to the Badlands; this remains one of the many mysteries of this dreaded place. The scholar Isam Derr of Throal speculates that the Horrors may have created the Badlands through a terrible act of blood magic, and that they remain to sustain it. He further theorizes that the Horrors are spreading the blood magic's warped influence, giving themselves both a haven and a means to extend the duration of the Scourge over this limited area. If this theory is true, all efforts to restore the Badlands will fail until the Horrors are cleared out—a monumental task, worthy of the greatest heroes.

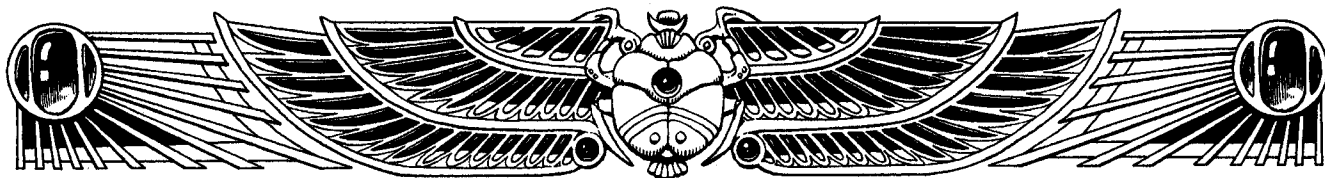
A few settlements exist along the banks of the Serpent River, just outside the Badlands proper. Their inhabitants scratch out a living through farming and trade. According to several accounts, escapees from slave raids along the southern Serpent often find haven in these tiny villages. The questors of Jasprey living in Trosk frequently venture into the Badlands, seeking to heal the blight upon the land; scholarly studies of their findings have told us much of what we now know about the region. Members of the legendary Lightbearers are said to abide with the questors from time to time, using Trosk as a home base from which to hunt down the region's Horrors and learn more about their mysterious purposes.

Other stories of Name-givers inhabiting the Badlands are likely little more than fireside tales. Stories abound of magicians who have built citadels in the depths of the Badlands or taken ancient kaers as their private domains. Such individuals are said to desire the solitude that only a place as desolate as the Badlands can provide and are rumored to experiment with Horrors and Horror-constructs—toward what end, none can say. However, no one has yet proved that such evil-minded magicians exist; and if they do, they are taking fatal risks by working magic in such a Horror-infested place.

Of Mountainshadow's Lair

One tale of particular interest claims that the great dragon Mountainshadow lairs somewhere in the Badlands' desolate reaches. The seed of this tale is the Death Rebellion, which occurred in Throal many years ago. During the rebellion, Theran agents kidnapped Prince Neden and took him to the Badlands, where they inflicted terrible tortures upon him. After J'Role

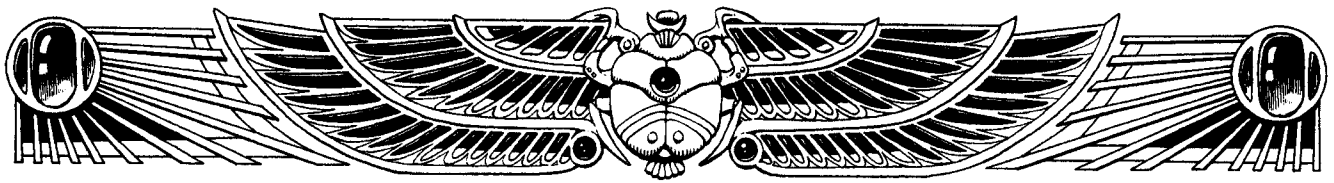




the Honorable Thief rescued the prince, he supposedly took him to Mountainshadow's lair, where the dragon aided J'Role and King Varulus in restoring the prince to health.

It remains a mystery why Mountainshadow would choose to lair in a place like the Badlands. His usual lairing place in the Dragon Mountains is close by, and it is possible that J'Role took Prince Neden there to recover from his ordeal. In support of the story, however, the noted scholar Jerik Gol of Jerris has suggested that the great dragon may be studying the Badlands, perhaps to learn more about the Horrors and their workings. He cites the common knowledge that unknown persons have engaged adepts to explore and map parts of the Badlands, asking them to bring back parts of creatures they have encountered and slain along with plants, rocks and soil. These unknown employers invariably vanish shortly after paying for the adepts' services, and Jerik suggests that they might be in the service of Mountainshadow. Of course, these individuals might just as easily be questors from Trosk or representatives of some other party with an interest in the Badlands. Unless one of them makes himself known, we cannot be sure.





DEATH'S SEA

Death's Sea, an ocean of molten rock in the southern reaches of Barsaive, marks the southern border of the province. The fiery sea is ringed with black stone hills and cliffs that rise fifty to a hundred feet above its surface. It has existed for all of recorded history, and ancient legends claim that the Passions placed Death in its waters to spare Name-givers some part of Death's sting. Many tales describe the origins of Death's Sea; here I relate the most renowned, *The Imprisonment of Death*.

THE IMPRISONMENT OF DEATH

In ancient times, before the Theran Empire came to Barsaive, our ancestors lived in harmony with the land and the Passions. But they did not always live in harmony with each other. Throughout the many kingdoms, Name-giver fought Name-giver for land, wealth and power, killing their fellows to gain their own selfish desires.

Now those who loved the slain mourned them bitterly and cried out to the Passion Garlen for comfort against the senselessness of Death. Garlen loves all Name-givers as a mother loves her children, and the tears of the bereaved found fertile soil in her tender heart. So she gave them what comfort she could. But it was never enough to take away the pain Death inflicted on the living.

Finally, Garlen asked her fellow Passions to meet in her dwelling place by the sea. When they came, Garlen told them of the suffering that Name-givers endured because of Death. "The Universe loves life above all," she said, "because life holds the joy and wonder that give the Universe meaning. We must protect life, or all will sink into despair." The other Passions, moved by Garlen's words, discussed the matter. For a long time, they could not agree on how best to protect life. Then the Passion Jaspree suggested imprisoning Death.

At first, the Passions disputed furiously among themselves. Lochost, unwilling to see anyone imprisoned, argued against the plan, while Garlen spoke eloquently of the Name-givers' plight. Then wise Mynbruje offered a compromise. The Passions would imprison Death, thereby sparing Name-givers its worst sting and satisfying Garlen. But to satisfy Lochost, Death would have a chance to win freedom.

Clever Vestrial devised a way to entrap Death, while Upandal the Builder suggested a way to keep Death prisoner. The other Passions traveled to the distant corners of the world to gather the things they would need. When they returned to Garlen's house, they brought with them the burning forge, a warm hearth and fire. They brought fire from the blazing sun, fire from a scholar's mind, a lover's heart and a warrior's spirit. They brought fires of love, desire and revelry; fires of comfort, growth, change and compassion; fires of strength, courage, creation and wit. They brought all the fires that were the essence of Passion.

All these fires Upandal placed in his forge, until it glowed with the mighty heat of the sun. Upandal plunged his hands into the fire and worked it with skill and cunning, weaving it into an ocean of flame strong enough to hold Death. When Upandal had finished, Chorrolis took a copper coin from his bulging purse. As clever Vestrial had planned, Chorrolis and the gentle Astendar both touched the coin and invested the spirits of desire within it. Then Chorrolis cast the coin into the sea near Garlen's dwelling.

With all in readiness, Vestrial went forth at the direction of Thystonius—who always seemed to know where Death was—and found Death overlooking a battlefield.

"Greetings," the Clever One said with a bow. "I regret interrupting your important work, but I wished to bring a certain matter to your attention."

Death turned from the spectacle of the battle. "Say on," Death said, in a voice like a cold wind.

Vestrial hesitated. "Now that I think of it, I'm not sure I should," he replied. "I don't wish to cast aspersions on your noble work, nor to question your competence. It is best forgotten." So saying, the Passion turned to depart.

"Wait," Death commanded. "How can you question *my* competence? I am Death. I know the measure of every life, and none escapes my touch."

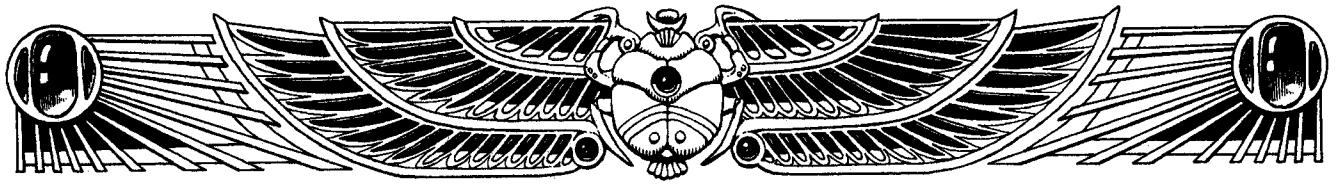
Vestrial bowed profoundly. "Begging your pardon," He said, "but that is not so. My siblings and I have discovered a life past its time that has not been collected. But this means nothing, I'm sure. You have so much to do, keeping track of all the lives in the world—no doubt you simply overlooked this one. It is no great matter, surely, for one life to go uncounted?"

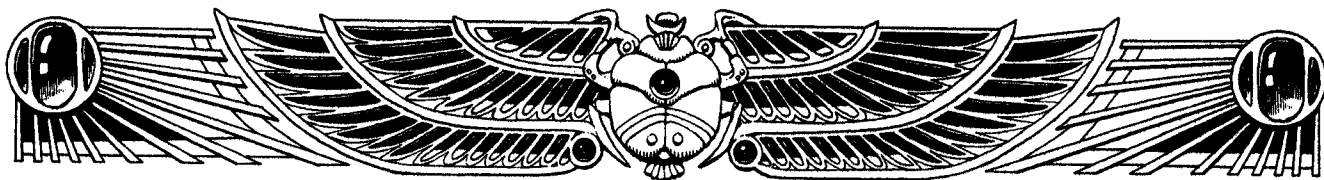
"Where is this life?" Death asked.

"A foolish sailor who drowned in the sea," the Clever One said. "Beneath your notice, truly."

"Show me," Death demanded. Vestrial nodded with great respect; but behind his solemn face, he was laughing. Followed closely by Death, Vestrial sped toward Garlen's home by the edge of the sea.







When they arrived, the other Passions were gathered by the shore. Vestrial pointed to the shimmering blue depths. Far below lay the coin that Chorrolis had dropped, glimmering with the power of desire.

"There is the poor soul," Vestrial said, "awaiting the release that only Death can bring him."

Death gazed through the shimmering waters to where the coin lay. It appeared to Death that the coin was a life uncollected, and so Death plunged beneath the waters.

When Death's hands touched the bottom, Upandal drew forth from his forge the fiery shield he had woven and cast it out over the sea. The flames stretched from shore to shore, engulfing the waters in fire. The gathered Passions each shed a drop of blood upon the flames. At the touch of the blood, the fire became a sea of molten rock, trapping Death below it.

Then Lochost spoke the spell of binding. "By fire and blood you are bound; by blood and fire you may be freed. Each drop of Name-giver blood shed upon the land will wear away at your shackles, as water wears away stone."

Death struggled against the binding, but could not escape from beneath the fiery sea. Thus, the Passions freed Name-givers from Death's grasp, until that time when our own folly might free Death to walk among us again. And from that day on, the fire-ocean has been Named Death's Sea.

Can Death Be Freed?

The ongoing strife between Name-giver and Name-giver—in war, in city streets, on high roads through the wilds—are proof enough that Name-givers have not given up the shedding of blood. Many scholars and sages have wondered how much blood must be spilled before Death breaks free. Has not a great deal of blood been spilled throughout our history? How much more is required to free Death—and how close are we to reaching that terrifying threshold? Some sages, such as Rosethal of Travar, believe Death cannot escape or it would already have happened. If the blood shed by the Scourge was not sufficient, reasons Rosethal, what disaster could possibly be terrible enough to free Death? Other scholars say that only blood spilled by Name-givers in conflict with each other can break Death's bonds. The blood of beasts, or blood shed by the Horrors (which are not from this world), have no effect. Still others, Vestrinka of Vivane among them, suggest that the story of Death's Sea is simply a metaphor—that any time one Name-giver kills another, he has let Death walk among us. The accounts of Name-givers who have purportedly entered Death's kingdom and returned, however, would seem to suggest that Death does, indeed, live under the sea; they all describe a place deep beneath a sea of fire.

Whether historical fact or myth, the tale of Death's imprisonment clearly states that killing our brethren will bring our own destruction upon us. King Varulus I once said to his soldiers, "Know in your heart that the next drop of blood you shed could be the key to Death's prison, and weigh your actions against that knowledge." All Name-givers would do well to heed those words.

The following account, transcribed by Archivist Ela Pono, comes from Armin Erys, retired captain of the fire miner Flamedancer. Erys now lives in Travar, where he produces fine embroidered sailcloth. We found Erys's account so marvelously entertaining and instructive that we chose to use it here in lieu of Nevear's text.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Great Library

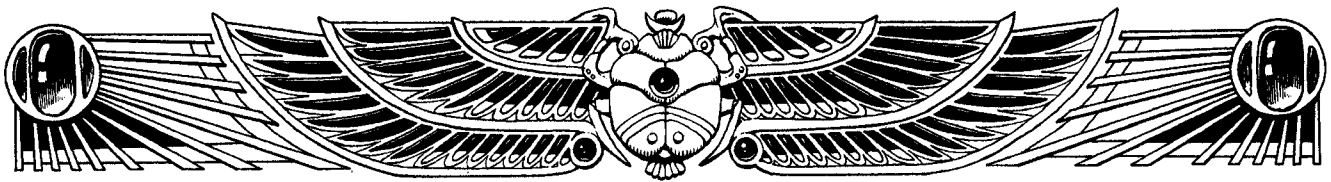
A FIRE MINER'S ADVICE

Surviving Death's Sea? Easier said than done, as anyone with half their wits might expect. It's a terrible, beautiful place, Death's Sea. It'll break your heart with wonder and kill you the second you stop watching out for it. That's the real secret to surviving over the fiery ocean—pay attention to it. Every heartbeat. A few seconds' lapse at the wrong time, and you're done for.

You can see Death's Sea from days away, lighting up the Twilight Peaks with its fire. That's how the Peaks got their Name, you know. The glow from Death's Sea makes it twilight in those mountains, even when it's full black night everywhere else. It never gets dark over the Sea; the light of the churning fires reflects back off the clouds, and you feel like you're flying into the heart of a piece of True fire.

Speaking of True fire, let me lay a bit of so-called common wisdom to rest. Folk who've never been to the Sea think it's a huge, boiling ocean of True fire, or maybe ordinary flames with bits of True fire mixed in. The second notion's closer to the truth, but neither's quite right. Death's Sea is made of molten stone—stone turned into liquid fire, if you will—called magma. Hot enough to melt metal, this stuff, and a quick death to any living thing unlucky enough to fall into it. (Except for those few strange beasts that live in liquid fire—but I'll get to them in a bit. You lot from the Library like your records all orderly and





logical, or so I've heard. So first things first, eh?) Kernels of True fire, like white-hot sparks, glitter and gleam in the red-orange ripples of molten stone. Those white sparkles bring a good price, and so we mine as much True fire from Death's prison as we can.

Now, mining anything from a lake of burning liquid rock, so hot it'll melt flesh at a mere touch, is no simple thing. But miners like me know the Sea and its ways. And we've our own ways of getting round the fearful dangers. We fly over the Sea in airships, of course. But you can't just fly out in your little wooden vedette, drop down toward the Sea and let the miners reach over the side to scoop up the True fire. Any captain fool enough to try that would find his airship going up in smoke. The air gets hotter the closer you get to the magma, so the airship's got to stay at a certain height—usually fifty feet or so. Skilled fire-ship captains learn to tell by instinct how close they can get to the surface without risking the airship.

When the ship's crew finds a suitable spot, the sailors make the ship hover while the miner goes down and does the really dangerous work. A suitable spot is any place with plenty of True fire, all within a net's cast of what we call a fool's island. Where the burning rock touches the air, the magma hardens into chunks of black stone called clenkas—fool's islands are the biggest of these, big enough for a Name-giver to stand on. The miner shinies down a fire-proof rope onto a fool's island that looks stable enough to hold for a bit. He wears thick boots and gloves to protect his hands and feet from the searing heat of the black stone (but not much else save a loincloth, or he'd boil to death inside his clothes). Once down, the miner casts an enchanted net woven with orichalcum into the magma to catch and haul out the kernels of True fire. Full nets—and the miner—are hauled back up to the ship. Last of all, the crew puts the True fire into orichalcum vessels. It'll burn its way through anything else and burn up the airship soon after. The greatest danger at this point is a ruptured net, which can spill True fire all across the deck and set the airship ablaze. (True fire's a rare and dangerous element, nothing to fool about with.)

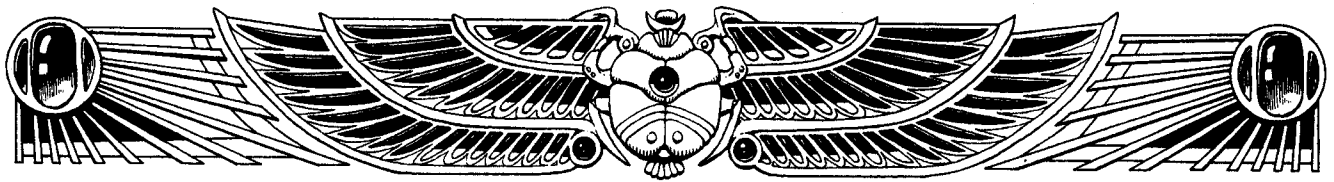


Now, there's a reason that fool's islands have such a Name. They're not like islands in an ocean of water. The swirling fires of Death's Sea are always churning and can break up fool's islands in an eyeblink just like the smaller clenkas. A miner who happens to be standing on one at the time is dead, of course. No rope-hauler can move quickly enough to pull him to safety. So a good miner learns to spot approaching magma currents and feel the subtle tremors that warn of a crack-up. At any of these warning signs, he's up the rope quick as a blood monkey up a vine, and to blazes with the True fire (pardon an old miner's joke). After all, not much use to mine the stuff if you're not alive to share in the profits, is it?

There's other dangers as well, of course—some you'd expect, others you'd not. Flying near and over Death's Sea is like traveling through the Badlands or the Wastes; the heat'll kill you slowly, unless you guard against it. Bring plenty of water and drink often, or you'll dry out and faint—not something you want to do halfway down a rope to a fool's island! The hot air makes food spoil quickly if you stay for too long, so don't linger if you can help it. Otherwise, you may face a choice between starving or eating spoiled rations. An airship crew that comes down sick from bad food can leave you stranded, easy prey for whatever finds you.

The heat is a miner's worst enemy. It's not so bad while you're moving along high above the surface, but when you skim to a stop ten man-lengths above a fool's island, you feel like you're being slow-roasted on a spit. Standing on the fool's islands, it's





even worse. Most folk can't handle that kind of heat for as long as one candlemark before passing out. We fire miners have a saying: "Move quick in Death's domain, or Death will find you." That's the truth of it. Death's Sea is no place for sightseeing. You do what you came to do quick as you can, and then you get out of there. Anything else is just asking for trouble.

You've also got to watch out for eruptions. Sometimes the magma leaps up from the surface like a geyser, and not with much warning, either. One of those can cripple your ship and send you crashing into the sea before you've even got time to yell "Help!" Eruptions happen whenever Death struggles against his chains (may the Passions hold him bound forever). Sometimes they're caused by magma beasts, or other terrible fire-creatures looking to make a meal out of you. And sometimes we create them on purpose, though it's a risky way to mine, if you ask me. A miner throws a bit of True air down onto the magma, which erupts the second the True air touches it. The eruption stirs up the magma all around, bringing kernels of True fire to the surface where we can get at them. Of course, eruptions can also damage airships that are hovering too close. Worse, they weaken the nearby fool's islands, making them more likely to break up when the miners are lowered onto them.

Some Denizens of Death's Sea

All sorts of strange beasties live in Death's Sea, and most have a taste for Name-givers. A mining ship looks as good to them as a pocketful of sweets to a greedy child. They'll attack any airship they see, sure as the sunrise. Even if they don't capsize it, they can cripple it and then come back with friends to finish it off. My ship got snagged once by a flock of fire eagles that scorched our sail before we drove them away, and we had to row hard out of there before they came back. Thank Floranuus we were close to shore where sensible mining crews stay. You can't row for long in that kind of heat without tiring out. If we'd gone as far from the shoreline as some fool folk do, we'd never have made it. Most ships that go far across the Sea looking for the True-fire motherlode are never heard from again.

Creatures of elemental fire often come through the many passages between the Death's Sea and their home plane and choose to remain because the sea provides such a suitable home for them. Other magical creatures with a supreme resistance to heat and flame dwell in the molten rock of the sea and on the floating clenkas and fool's islands.

More creatures live on the Sea's edge than in its fiery depths. Fire eagles nest in the black hills and cliffs, soaring over the magma on the hot winds to hunt for food. I've heard tell of dragons gliding on those same winds, hunting or doing whatever else dragons get up to (though I don't believe for a minute the mad stories of dragons mining elemental fire from Death's Sea to fuel their fiery breaths). Thought I saw a dragon once, but it was so far away, it might just have been light-dazzle.

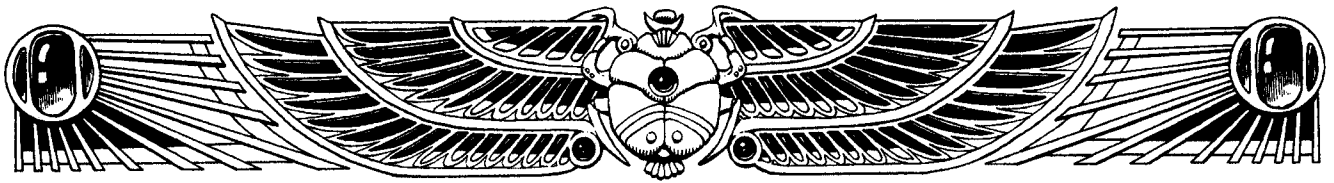
Out in the depths live truly strange creatures, like lava fish and salamanders. These odd beasts are cousins to the fish and reptiles most folk know of, but they can swim through molten stone like ordinary fish through water. Firebirds nest on clenkas and fool's islands, though you'll hardly ever see one. They can change color, you see, to hide from predators. (Though what would prey on a big, fierce flying creature like a firebird, I can't imagine. Dragons, maybe.) Fireworms crawl through the hollow pockets and tunnels of the clenkas, and packs of magma beasts surface every now and again to devour anything within reach. A magma beast—something between a lizard and human, with the nastier characteristics of each—can attack its prey with spurts of magma. Of all the fire-creatures, they're the most dangerous, except for Horrors.

You'd not think Horrors would find a home in a sea of molten rock, would you? But some do. The scholars tell us that some Horrors are drawn to the magical nature of Death's Sea, what with all the True fire in its depths. The terrible heat doesn't trouble them at all. They hide in the depths of the magma and lie in wait for Name-givers to pass their way. They mark and stalk any prey that comes near them, sometimes for years. Tale upon tale tells of fire miners being marked by Horrors. I've seen some strange things in my time, and I'm sure some of the tales are true.

Fire spirits and sprites live in the Sea, where they play in the boiling lava like fish sporting in an ocean. Lots of them love to set fire to wooden airships and watch the crews scramble to put out the flames. Some do it for their own twisted amusement, while others hate Name-givers and attack any airships that enter their territory. I've heard tell of powerful fire spirits as vast as Theran kilas that live in the heart of the Sea, but they supposedly never leave the burning depths of their home. Given how powerful they're said to be, I say thank the Passions they stay put!

I have seen fire wraiths in my time, shadowy spirits of living fire. Legend says the wraiths are the spirits of the Name-givers who died at the moment when the Passions imprisoned Death. The spirits were set ablaze by Upandal's fiery shield; ever since, they've been doomed to dwell on the surface of Death's Sea, trapped between life and death in fire and rage. I've never fought one myself, but countless sailors swear that fire wraiths will attack Name-givers at every opportunity. And many sailors claim that destroying a fire wraith is impossible, because a broken-up wraith can simply reassemble itself with flames from the Sea.





Pirates and Magicians

A mining ship is a rich prize—even a small load of True fire can fetch plenty of gold in the right markets. So it's no surprise that pirates ply the airways near Death's Sea, just as their fellows elsewhere in Barsaive ply the Serpent River and other waterways in search of laden vessels. Most often, these privateers lie in wait on the shore and attack passing mining ships as they head for home. Plenty of these brigands are Therans, but more than a few are a mixed bag of Barsaivians not worthy of the Name. My own ship nearly fell afoul of a Theran privateer—we knew they were Theran because they were flying a huge stone ship. It moved much faster than we expected, and only the chance appearance of another mining ship closer to the Therans' course saved us. The pirates veered off to take the easier prey, and we flew away as fast as we could. Our luck was our fellow miners' loss, of course—may Thystonius rot the Therans' bones!

The crystal raiders from the Twilight Peaks don't often attack mining ships, despite being so close to such a rich source of plunder. They say Death's Sea is cursed, and they want nothing to do with stealing from it. No one runs into them, except inexperienced captains foolish enough to fly across their territory.

There're stories galore of permanent islands in Death's Sea, kept from breaking up by powerful magic. (I'll not judge how true they are.) According to the tales, these islands are the fortresses of powerful magicians. Of course, the one thing the tales don't take into account is the fearful risk of using magic anywhere near Death's Sea. Any magician casting a spell while over the Sea must take great care, or he'll find himself marked for life by a terrible Horror.

Some tales claim these islands are prisons—though for whom, they don't say. Other stories tell of pirate bases, Theran fortresses and even citadels built by the Passions. So far as I know, though, no explorer has yet charted a permanent island in Death's Sea.

On the Scarlet Sea

The Scarlet Sea lies just north of Death's Sea, with a narrow strait called Dead Man's Gullet running between them. The Scarlet Sea is another magma ocean, but its fires are cooler than the raging inferno of Death's Sea. The Scarlet Sea is covered with clenkas and fool's islands, all larger and more stable than those in Death's Sea, and it's also less prone to eruptions and lava bursts. Much safer for mining all around, but the Scarlet Sea's True-fire deposits are nowhere near as rich or numerous as those in Death's Sea. The best pockets of True fire are also much harder to get to, seeing as you first have to break through the hard crust of the clenkas. Nowadays, of course, the richest pockets have been mined out already—and competition for what's left is fierce. But that's just the way of the world, eh?

The reason for the differences is the Serpent River, whose waters pour over the northern edge of the Scarlet Sea. The sea's heat turns the water into thick clouds of warm mist that float over the Mist Swamps and make the heavy rains that blow westward to fall over the Servos Jungle and the South Reach. Fire eagles and their larger firebird cousins are common sights on the Scarlet Sea, as are broccha, reptiles that live on the drifting clenkas.

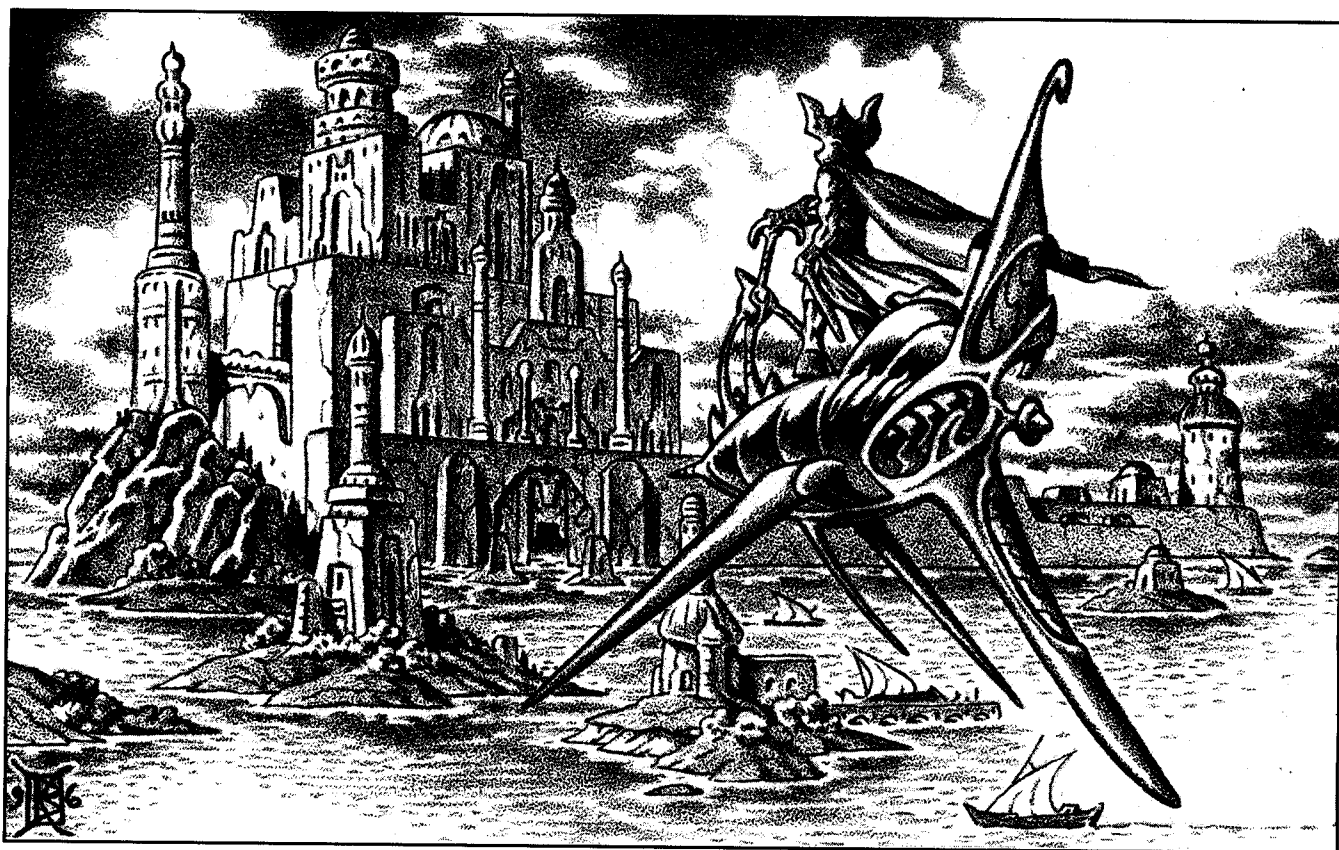
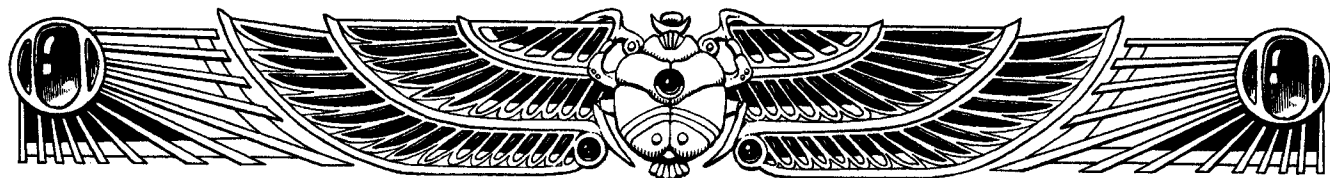
Mount Bloodfire and the Caves of Death

In the middle of Dead Man's Gullet lies a huge volcano, its sides red with lava and its base surrounded by a narrow ring of black stone. Black clouds of smoke and ash obscure the peak of the volcano, which the crystal raiders have Named Mount Bloodfire. Creatures of all sorts from Death's Sea's nest along Bloodfire's craggy shores, and a few pirate bands likely live in the caves that honeycomb the mountain. (They've got to come from somewhere nearby, and some of those caves are large enough to hide a small airship.)

*For the remainder of this document, we return to Nevear's extensive work.
—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Great Library*

According to legend, Mount Bloodfire is a secret entrance into Death's realm. It's certain that the caves and tunnels—the so-called Caves of Death—lead deep into the earth. Whether they reach as deep as the Kingdom of Death, no one knows. (I've never been down them that far, nor has anyone else I know, so you'll pardon me for being a bit skeptical.) Other legends say that Garlen's house, where the Passions hatched their plan to imprison Death, once stood on the island—which was a green and pleasant place in those distant days. As the story goes, Garlen sacrificed her home as the price of her fellow Passions' aid, and her essence is said to linger on the island. Something's there, that's certain. Many a fire miner shipwrecked on the slopes of Bloodfire has talked over a pint of fine ale of being saved by a mysterious woman, dressed in white and wearing a veil over her face. They say Garlen appeared to them and protected them until help could arrive, keeping her children out of Death's grasp on Death's own doorstep. No one knows the truth of that, either—but stranger things do happen in this world, don't they?





THE MIST SWAMPS

The Mist Swamps mark the end of the mighty Serpent River. Near the easternmost finger of the Twilight Peaks, the Serpent splits into numerous smaller branches that fork over and over and over again into hundreds of rivulets that form a gigantic marshland. When this river delta meets the hot shores of the Scarlet Sea, the water turns to steam that blankets the delta and the land surrounding it. The hot mists slow the flow of the river and produce heavy rains over the delta, which pool in low-lying areas and keep the soil constantly drenched.

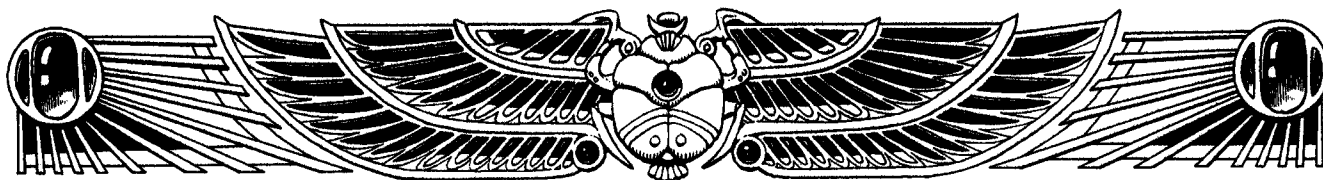
The Mist Swamps have existed in Barsaive since recorded history began, and perhaps for longer. Ancient myths say that the Scarlet Sea and Death's Sea were once bodies of water; if so, the land that is now the forbidding Mist Swamps may once have been home to thriving settlements of Name-givers. One such settlement, the so-called Lost City, is among the most persistent lost-treasure legends in Barsaive.

THE TALE OF THE LOST CITY

In the days when the Scarlet Sea was water instead of liquid fire (assuming the old myths are fact), the delta where the Serpent River empties into it would have made an excellent site for a good-sized city. Some people, scholars among them, believe (or are willing to grant) that such a city actually existed and thrived for centuries before Death's Sea and the Scarlet Sea became the oceans of fire we know today.

The first speculations about the Lost City arose in Throal during the Scourge, when archivists of the Great Library discovered a map that appeared to depict ancient Barsaive. Though the southern portion of our province was not pictured, an arrow drawn near the bottom pointed south toward a place Named *Yrns Morgath*. The direction and placement of the arrow corresponded with the site of the Mist Swamps. Copious research over the years turned up additional cryptic references to *Yrns Morgath* in ancient documents, at least one of which called it "the Great City of the South."





This discovery led the inhabitants of Throal to tell tales about a "lost city" hidden in the Mist Swamps. At first, the stories were mere speculation; but over time, people came to accept them as factual accounts. The stories also grew in the telling; each version of the tale described more and more fabulous treasures allegedly waiting in the lost city for some enterprising explorer to find them. Throalic scholars are still studying the folk tales told during the Scourge, piecing them together with ancient written records to extract truth from fiction regarding Yrns Morgath and its location.

In the years since the Scourge ended, many explorers have traveled to the Mist Swamps seeking the fabled Lost City, but so far as I know, none have found it. Some adepts have made tantalizing discoveries, however—statues and other stone artifacts, apparently of great age, that might confirm stories of an ancient ruin hidden under the marshes. Of course, it is also possible that the artifacts are less ancient than they appear. Immersion in the hot waters of the Mist Swamps may have weathered the stone prematurely; some scholars suggest that the statues and such could have come from ships of our own time run aground in the swamps.

Scholarship continues to provide evidence for both sides of the argument. Scholars who believe in the antiquity of the finds point out, quite accurately, that the southernmost stretch of the Serpent River flows past the Badlands—a route not commonly traveled by merchant vessels full of art objects and other luxurious items. And certainly no ship would sail into the Mist Swamps nowadays, where it is certain to run aground and become stranded. The perils of the swamps are known to most Barsaivians, especially those who make their livings plying the Serpent River's trade routes.

Those who remain skeptical of the Lost City offer pirates as an explanation for the finds. They point out—again, quite accurately—that pirate bands in the South Reach might hide their treasures in the Mist Swamps. If the pirates are later captured or killed in battle, their treasure would eventually rot away in the marshy ground, save for long-lived items like stone statues and vessels. This theory, however, fails to explain why no gold or gemstones—which likewise do not decay—have been found along with the statuary and other fragments. And of course, pirate vessels would have as much difficulty as any other ships navigating safely in the swampland.

Many scholars now accept the notion that some kind of ruins do exist, but they continue to debate whether the ruins are of an ancient city or merely of a small trade outpost along the shores of the Scarlet Sea. A few scholars go so far as to say that the ruins in the Mist Swamps date all the way back to the Age of Dragons—a wild claim, but one that might explain the Mist Swamps' most famous inhabitant.

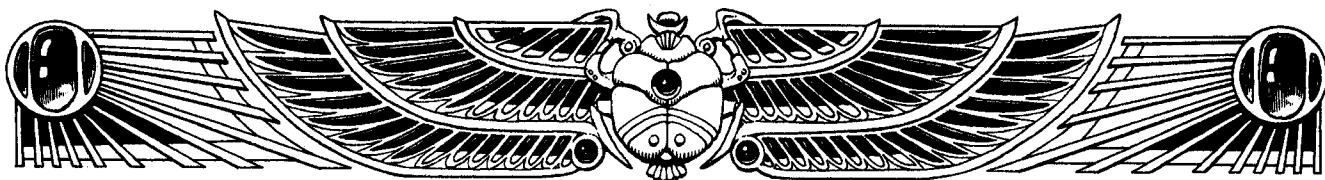
ON THE GREAT DRAGON ABAN

The great dragon Aban lairs somewhere in the depths of the Mist Swamps and claims the swamps as her territory. Most of Barsaive's people have wisely chosen to respect this claim, especially as they find the Mist Swamps of little use or interest. Like most dragons, Aban seems to enjoy the solitude of this isolated place. Occasional travelers near the region, mostly riverboat crews on the southern Serpent, have reported seeing the dragon—usually from a great distance—as a dark shape flying low in the mists. As for how much of a threat Aban poses to those few Name-givers who enter the Mist Swamps in defiance of her territorial claim, no one knows for certain. It is true that many adventurers enter the swamps and never come out—but the Mist Swamps are full of hazards that can claim a careless adventurer's life. Still, tales abound of explorers and adventurers devoured by Aban for the crime of invading her privacy. Adding fuel to the fires of speculation, the Therans who recently arrived at Lake Ban have sent expeditions ever deeper into the Mist Swamps. Though we do not know their purpose, many people believe that the Therans are searching for the Lost City. Rumor also has it that at least one Theran exploratory party failed to return to the fortress at Lake Ban, and that Aban sent a warning to the Theran commander that she will not tolerate Theran intruders in her domain. The Therans appear to be ignoring these threats and so may be courting disaster.

Interestingly, many of the unexplained disappearances—and the few known encounters with Aban—have involved explorers who entered the Mist Swamps in search of the Lost City. Perhaps Aban wishes to guard the ruins from intruders. The ravings of one survivor suggest another, more sinister explanation. Some people have taken the poor victim's fevered tales of giant insect-men as evidence that a colony of invae have settled in the swamps and are seizing those Name-givers foolish enough to venture near their territory. The evidence is thin, however, and it seems unlikely that Aban would tolerate the presence of the insect-men.

One explorer recently told me of his party's encounter with the great dragon, as transcribed below.





Lostfeather's Tale

We went into the Mist Swamps in search of the Lost City we'd heard so much about. The tales and songs all told of fabulous wealth underneath the muck and mist, just waiting for someone to find it. We meant to be the lucky ones. What fools we were ...

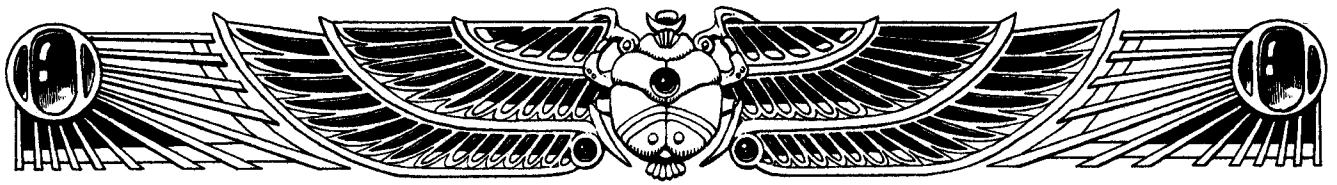
The swamps were terrible. Hot as an oven and shrouded in endless white mists so thick in spots that you could barely see your hand at the end of your own arm. The water was as hot as the air—scalding in places, in others actually boiling like a pot of water over a cookfire. We'd all known better than to wear heavy metal armor into all that heat and wet, but even our padded leather jerkins were unbearably warm. Only the fear of being bitten by some giant snake or other creature kept us from throwing off the armor altogether—that, and the bother of carrying it.

All around us, we could hear strange cries and splashes. Things were moving in the water, and we couldn't see them. Sometimes something would brush up against my legs while I walked. Made me jump half my own height off the ground the first time. As luck would have it, I slipped and fell coming down. Sat down hard in the water, and just missed swallowing a mouthful of it. Poor Abos—a dwarf weaponsmith from Travar, and a good man to have at your back in a fight—wasn't so lucky. He fell down once and went all the way under. We pulled him up in time to keep him from drowning, but he'd swallowed more water than was good for him. We found out the consequences of Abos's unintended drink a day later, when he came down sick and shivering with swamp fever. Couldn't eat for two solid days, poor fellow. Everything came straight up, and he turned a nasty shade of yellow-green. We'd no way of magicking him well save for a healing potion, and he wasn't having any of that. "Save it for whoever gets wounded," he kept saying. "These are the Mist Swamps—we'll have a fight on our hands any time now." And he was

right, bless him. He recovered on his own after a bit, but it was a near thing.

We ended up using our first healing potion on T'rokna, a troll swordmaster who always was a bit too hasty. He was walking along with his sword out, when a giant swamp snake slithered past him and flicked the end of its tail against the back of his knee. He yelled, swung wildly at the thing he couldn't see, and ended up stabbing himself in the thigh. After a day or two of that kind of traveling, we were balanced on a sword's edge, expecting attack from a hundred different directions.





We'd brought much more water than we thought we'd need, and it turned out to be just enough. You wouldn't think wet heat would drain water out of you like the dry heat of the Badlands, but it does. Your body's water comes pouring out of your skin, like your own personal river. Makes you feel filthy all the time, and everyone stinks like fury after a mere hour or two of walking. I'd felt a bit silly carrying all those waterskins, but I'll tell you this—it was easier than the measures we'd likely have had to take to make the swamp water fit to drink. I'm not sure you can truly purify the stuff, to be honest.

As for food—it's enough to make you laugh, if you've a taste for grim humor. Even dwarf mine rations won't hold up for long in that water-laden hot air. Like everything else, it gets wet and starts rotting. Not much you can eat among the native animals and plants, either. Half of them at least are poisonous—and do you have any idea how hard it is to bring down a fat bird or catch a fish in the thick mists and scalding water? The most skilled hunter in all Barsaive might be able to catch a meal in the Mist Swamps without resort to blind luck. Not us. Oh, we managed to catch something once or twice: but every one of us lost pounds on that journey.

Have I mentioned the giant snakes? And the carnivorous fish, and the insects the size of vettas? You'd not believe the number of times we had to fight off creatures like that. Once it was a bright blue snake as long as a riverboat. Then we stumbled across a nest of green-and-black snakes the size of earthworms, which blended so well into what little swamp growth we could see that T'rokna put his hand down on them without knowing they were there. He found out when one of them bit him. Yelled like someone having a tooth pulled. We found out the little snakes were poisonous when T'rokna's arm swelled up to twice its normal size. Out came another healing potion; it was either that or let him die. All the snakes we saw swam quick and easy through the water, though we did see a few coiled on trees like some bizarre kind of fruit.

Another time, we battled a pair of leatherback crocodiles. They live deep in the swamps—huge, flat-bodied lizards with armor-like hides, long snouts full of sharp teeth and jaws strong enough to crush a Name-giver. These two floated just under the water's surface, and at first we took them to be harmless rotting logs. Then one of them opened its maw and clamped it shut around T'rokna's leg. Poor T'rokna—it wasn't his trip at all. He survived the crocs, though, too. Nature makes them tough, those trolls. He's not speaking to me any more, of course. Said I'd gotten him into trouble for the last time and hasn't tossed a word my way since.

By the end of the third day, we'd run into an acid-dripping saural, giant ticks, spiders, water beetles, a death moth, a couple of moon moths (harmless, lucky for us!) and more giant mosquitoes than I care to think about. You haven't known misery until you've tried to sleep with a bevy of mosquitos the size of wrens buzzing around your head and whining in your ears. They make a revolting noise when you squash them, too. We were half-expecting to see some of the more fantastic reptiles we'd heard tales of, like the fierce lizard-men that walk on two legs. Some stories claim these creatures are drakes, while other say they're wild t'skrang. We never saw any, though, so I can't judge.

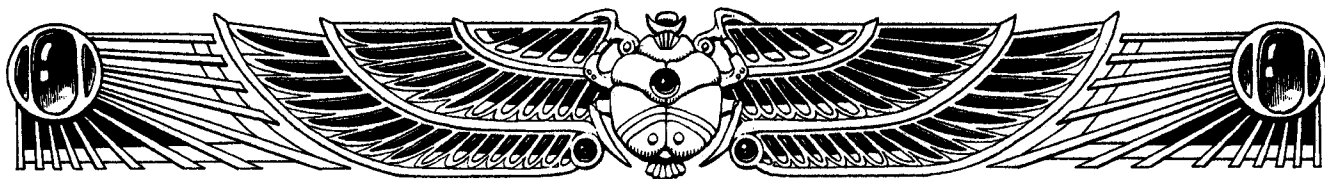
We did see water spirits now and again, manifesting as clouds of mist and geysers of boiling water. According to an elemental friend of mine, we're lucky they decided to have no truck with us. Water spirits of the Mist Swamps are more hot-tempered than most of their kind, maybe because of the touch of fire they've absorbed from the heat of the Scarlet Sea. They're supposed to be easily offended, and no one wants to offend a spirit. The trick, of course, is figuring out what the spirits might take offense at. (Just about anything, according to my friend.) We also saw will o' the wisps, dancing like tiny suns in the thick fog. We followed one for a little way, hoping it might lead us to the Lost City. We'd read *Creatures of Barsaive* in the Great Library before setting out, and we knew will o' the wisps were originally meant to guide people. We figured maybe the wisps were once created to guard the Lost City. We should've known it wouldn't be so easy. Adventuring never is. The wisp led us to a pool of boiling water, which we only just managed not to plow into because we could hear it bubbling. When we stopped short, the wisp started laughing. Nasty, maniacal laughter. I still hear it sometimes in my dreams.

Plenty of tales say the great dragon Aban uses swamp creatures as her cat's-paws, and that she can see through the eyes of every serpent and lizard. After what happened to us out there, I believe it. How she found us in those vast stretches of blank white mist I'll never know, nor how a creature the size of a great dragon could have gotten so close to us without our hearing it.

We'd worked our way into the depths of the swamps, nearly four days' travel on foot, when we came upon what looked like a low stone wall thrusting up out of the steaming waters. It was cracked and broken along the top, and covered with mosses and vines (like everything else in the Mist Swamps). We thought it might be a foundation, or the broken top of a taller wall sunk into the water and muck. At first we didn't even recognize it as anything but another obstacle to climb over.

We'd barely had a chance to give the wall a good look when a dark shadow rose up out of the water and shot toward us. With a mighty sweep of wings, the shape blew the mists aside and we saw the dragon Aban in all her majesty. I've fought





Horrors and all kinds of vile creatures, but nothing matched the fear that clawed at my heart when I saw those shimmering green-black scales and glowing yellow eyes. She stared at us the way a cat stares at a mouse it's planning to eat.

Then she spoke. The dragon's voice seemed to shake the world to its foundation, though no sound met our ears. She spoke like an echo in our minds.

"Begone," was all she said.

Exhausted as we were from our long hours of marching through the muck and vines and heat, we fled as fast as our legs would carry us. I fell more than once along the way, but picked myself up and kept moving without looking back. The dragon chose not to pursue us. I'm dead certain we'd have been her next meal if we'd been fool enough to disobey her.

I'm also dead certain the wall was part of the Lost City—a building, a bit of an outer wall, something like that. I also think Aban's lair lies in the ruins, and that's why she doesn't want anyone to disturb them. I hope never again to get that close to an angry dragon—and I've no plans to revisit the Mist Swamps any time soon.

THE CASTLE OF ASSASSINS

Another curious tale of the Mist Swamps comes from adventurers who have traveled through the swamps' northern reaches, near the foothills of the Twilight Peaks. Here, floating ash from the peaks blends with the mists to produce a sooty gray smoke that envelops the area in perpetual gloom.

In the depths of this endless night lies the legendary Castle of Assassins. According to the tales, its dark towers and walls are cut from the black stone of the mountains and adorned with leering gargoyles that also act as guardians. Though some travelers claim to have seen the castle, none have apparently drawn close enough to get a good look at it—or if they have, none have returned to share the tale.

As its Name implies, the Castle of Assassins is reputed to be the secret training ground of various bands of killers, from Horror-worshipping cults to the vile criminals known as the Hand of Corruption. Indeed, the Hand of Corruption is the favorite villain of these stories. In the isolated halls of their alleged stronghold, the Hand is rumored to train assassins in the arts of stealth, subterfuge and murder. They intend thereby to complete the work of the Scourge by scouring all life from the world. The riverfolk tell tales of Hand agents abducting young children, to be taken to the castle and raised as perfect killers without conscience or remorse. Most likely these tales are devices used by parents to frighten recalcitrant children—but no atrocity is beyond the Hand. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that Aban would tolerate such killers so near her domain.

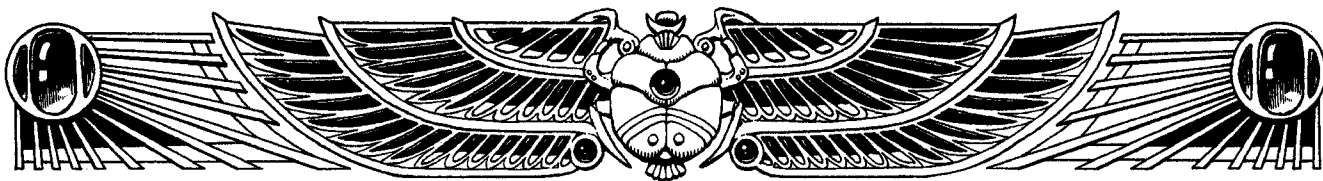
THE WASTES

The Wastes, those blighted lands that form Barsaive's western boundary, represent one of the greatest tragedies wrought during the Scourge. Like the Badlands, the Wastes were once green and fertile, with rich soil suitable for farming. Then the Horrors descended on the land and left the Wastes desolate. Nothing lives there now, save for a few powerful Horrors and their twisted spawn. As with the Badlands, however, the Wastes hold their share of treasures in lost and hidden kaers. And the mysteries of those lost kaers, as well as the hope of unearthing valuable secrets, draws explorers into this terrible, perilous land.

The Wastes are said to hold more lost kaers than any other place in Barsaive, even more than the Badlands, and fabulous finds brought back from the Wastes have inspired many adepts to travel there and seek their own fame and fortune. The greatest wealth of the Wastes is said to lie not in gold or silver, but in enchanted items and legendary artifacts. Centuries ago, magicians from nearby provinces of the Theran Empire, among them Vivane and Rugaria, allegedly founded towns and even schools in the Wastes, and many of their magical treasures are presumed to have survived the Scourge. Stories abound of this or that legendary item, supposedly created by some famed wizard or elemental or nethermancer, lost in a kaer deep in the Wastes. So compelling are some of the tales that His Majesty's Exploratory Force has even sent out a few large expeditions in search of magical artifacts. Despite such efforts, the vast majority of the Wastes' lost kaers remain undiscovered, waiting to yield up their secrets and their wealth to whoever finds them.

Others travel into the Wastes in quest of knowledge. The terrible corruption of these lands may have serious implications for all of Barsaive, and certain adepts and questors have devoted their lives to discover its cause. In this way, they hope to undo the harm the Horrors inflicted and prevent the devastation of the Wastes from befalling any other area of Barsaive. Through their efforts, we may also gain knowledge of the Horrors that might enable us to drive them from Barsaive forever and perhaps even cleanse the astral realm of their taint.





THE CREATION OF THE WASTES

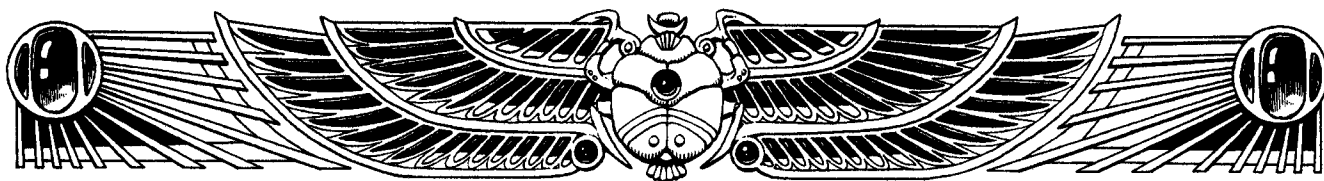
The Wastes lie to the northwest of the Delaris Mountains, just west of the Liaj Jungle. Settlers who came to Barsaive in ancient times from other parts of the Theran Empire were drawn to the Wastes by the richness of the land and its nearness to other Theran provinces. The city of Jerris, on the other side of the mountains, served as a gateway to the rest of Barsaive for the towns and villages of the Wastes. How many villages there were, we can only guess, based on fragmentary records preserved in the Great Library. The accounts we have suggest that more than a hundred kaers were breached and destroyed, and thousands upon thousands of Name-givers slain. If so few sources tell of so much destruction, we can safely surmise that the kaers destroyed in the Wastes are as numerous as the stars in the sky. Ever since those dreadful days, the Wastes have been a place of darkness and despair, casting their shroud over the mountains and covering even the city of Jerris in their pall.

Interestingly, the little evidence we have suggests that the widespread destruction of kaers may not have been entirely the work of the Horrors—or if it was, the Horrors of the Wastes were more subtle and diabolical than their fellows elsewhere in Barsaive. Scattered records and other information recovered by explorers suggests that many kaers were overcome by a mysterious and terrible wasting disease. Fragments of ancient journals tell of children dying slowly, coughing up their lungs like water; of men and women turning into thin, pale ghosts of their former selves before finally withering away into nothing. Some scholars believe this plague is simply the subtle workings of a Horror; other scholars think it a natural plague, taken into the kaers by the first inhabitants or somehow spawned during the centuries underground. Against this second possibility, however, is one frightening fact. The plague struck many kaers that lay a great distance apart, and given the isolation of the kaerfolk, it is difficult to see how such an illness could have been spread. The notion that it arose independently in so many different locations is likewise difficult to credit. A few scholars have suggested a connection with the mysterious black ash that falls over the Wastes, but as yet we have no more idea of what the ash is than we do of the illness.

THE BLACK ASH AND OTHER HAZARDS

Dark clouds hover perpetually over the Wastes, blocking out the sun and plunging the region into eternal night. The clouds are not made of air and water, as ordinary clouds are, nor yet are they smoke of any kind we might recognize. They are made of fine black powder, like wood or paper ash. Like a black snowfall, the ash covers the Wastes in a thin layer, blown about by the moaning winds into small drifts and choking eddies. Small ravines and depressions in the ground are filled with the stuff; many of these appear solid from a distance, but will quickly drag down and suffocate any unfortunate who steps into them.





The ash makes travel difficult and unpleasant, to say the least. Horses and other pack animals will enter the Wastes only with much coaxing, and carts and wagons often bog down where the silt has drifted deep. The ashfall also taints what little water exists in the Wastes, turning it brackish and foul-tasting. Ash-polluted springs and pools may also be a source of sickness. Travelers in these parts should therefore bring plenty of their own water and keep it tightly sealed in waterskins or other containers.

Magicians and scholars alike have studied samples of the ash and still have no idea what it really is or where it is coming from. It may stem from a Horror-curse on the land or may even be part of some strange kind of Horror—flakes of its body, perhaps, or tiny parts that make up a larger whole whose true appearance we can only guess at. Most people believe that the constant ashfall is the cause of the Wastes' desolation and the darkness of soul that hangs like a shroud over Jerris.

Food is scarce in this blighted land; no rain falls on it to nourish plants, and most of the creatures that live in the Wastes are Horrors or their constructs. The few other beasts native to the place are often disease-ridden or otherwise unwholesome—whether because of the Horrors, the black ash or both together no one can be sure. Adventurers' rations are frequently the only edible thing to be found for miles and may attract hungry scavengers unless properly sealed away from the air.

Despite these desolate conditions, life has found a foothold even in this largely lifeless region. Molgrims, leech rats, plague lizards, krillworms and other foul beasts live and even thrive in the Wastes. Unlike their fellows in other parts of Barsaive, creatures native to the Wastes all seem to be colored a dark, dirty gray or tan, either to blend with the terrain or because the ashfall blankets their fur and skin.

Explorers have also described encounters with numerous other creatures that dwell nowhere else in Barsaive. Many of these animals resemble such familiar beasts as brithans, thundras, lions and deer, but are often corrupted in some way or possess bizarre magical powers. Some magicians believe that the corruption of the Wastes has transformed these beasts into tainted versions of their common kin, like the pitiful creatures of the Poison Forest. Minor Horrors also abound; adventurers' journals tell of gnashers, kreescra and slipshades, more numerous in the Wastes than anywhere else in Barsaive. Few have reported seeing powerful Named Horrors, but their work is evident in the blighted land and its shattered kaers. In the kaers' depths, other adepts have encountered wormskulls, bloatforms, despairthoughts, plagues and wingflayers.

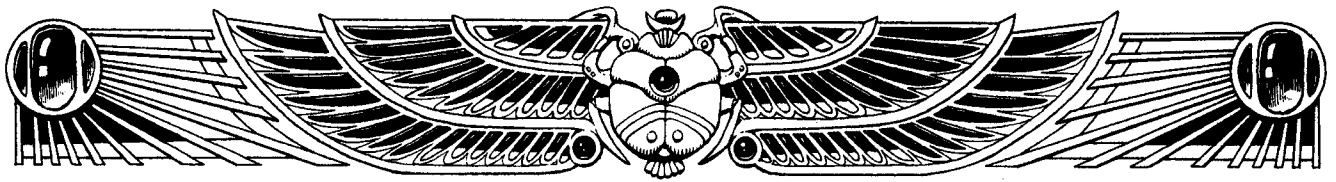
According to some wild tales making the rounds in Jerris, a strange tribe of Name-givers is reputed to dwell in the Wastes. The so-called Gray Folk—feral and barbaric Name-givers of human, ork or elven stock—supposedly wander the Wastes and savagely attack anyone they meet. Travelers have described them as dirty gray in color, wearing primitive clothing and wielding weapons of stone, bone and occasionally metal (salvaged from shattered kaers, undoubtedly). Some rumors claim that the Gray Folk serve a powerful Horror, which has a mysterious and sinister plan for them. No one knows the truth of these tales, though it is just possible that an isolated kaer or two might have survived the Scourge and fallen into barbarism. It is also possible that the Gray Folk are simply bandits or raiders who smear themselves with gray ash and assault travelers for their goods.

OF THE WASTES' TWISTED MAGIC

The most disturbing aspect of the corruption of the Wastes is its strange effect on magic. Everyone knows that the Horrors warped astral space wherever they traveled. In Horror-haunted ruins such as Parlainth, the astral taint is so thick that even looking into astral space is dangerous; as for using raw magic, one may as well slit one's own throat. These effects are even more pronounced in the Wastes, where the astral fabric is twisted and tattered, full of gaping black holes like an old blanket eaten by moths. Where the astral plane is intact, objects and distances look strangely distorted, as if viewed through ill-made glass full of bubbles and streaks. Scholars have been trying to discover what this particular corruption of astral space might mean for the Wastes and for Barsaive, but study of these phenomena is difficult. The twisted astral space takes its toll on magicians who look upon it for too long, and the holes and distortions warp the use of magic in the Wastes in ways Name-givers can scarcely comprehend. Many travelers report that the climate of the Wastes grows increasingly hotter as one travels west, and some magicians theorize that the distortions of astral space may be related to this phenomenon. So far, the exact nature of such a connection remains a mystery.

Spell magic in the Wastes is often more powerful than elsewhere, but also more dangerously unpredictable. Spells gain energy, but are difficult to control and may veer off course or have other unexpected effects. Even using magical talents can damage an adept by exposing him to the corrupt energies in nearby astral space. Powerful spells and talents also reputedly draw the attention of Horrors even more quickly than in other regions of Barsaive. Spell matrices and other protections dampen the effects somewhat, but not nearly enough in many cases. And those few adepts foolish enough to use raw magic or travel astrally in the Wastes have never been heard from again.





ON THE HEALING ARTS

Nearly every adventurer will undoubtedly suffer injuries or illnesses at some point during his explorations. To lessen the chance that such occurrences will prove fatal, we have provided the following excerpt from A Study of the Healing Arts, a work in progress by Loragale of Travar, a renowned healer, scholar and questor of Garlen. We are honored that she chose to grace this volume with her work. In her studies, Lady Loragale has documented the medicinal properties of more than three hundred different plants and animals in Barsaive, as well as dozens of different illnesses and treatments for many kinds of injuries. We have included a sampling of the lady's fine work on these subjects, but the constraints of space prevent us from going into exhaustive detail. Those seeking to learn more should read the Study when it is completed (at which time it will be made available at the Great Library, of course).

—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records



Just as life can sustain itself in the face of many disasters, so the bodies of Name-givers can use their inborn healing gifts to survive injuries and illness. Those of us privileged to study the healing arts learn the ways that the body repairs itself and how to aid that process with our own knowledge and abilities. With the right combinations of healing magic, practical knowledge of the body's ways and medicines given to us by bountiful Nature, Name-givers can heal an amazing number of wounds and maladies. Ever since the Passions imprisoned Death in legendary times, the power of life has grown so strong that we can even snatch some of our patients from Death's very grasp, curing injuries and illnesses that would otherwise be fatal.

Despite these advances, healing remains a slow but steady thing. Rebuilding the body is like rebuilding a city—it must proceed according to a careful plan, and it takes time to accomplish. Certain techniques and magic can hurry the rebuilding along, but the healer must take care that his methods are both safe and reliable. The healing arts will not be hurried; attempting to do so often only brings more harm to the sufferer. Patience is the most important quality for a healer—and a patient, for that matter—to have.

Healing belongs as much to the mind and spirit as to the body. A patient's strength of spirit and will to live must remain strong, or all the medicinal teas and healing potions in Barsaive will not save him. Those who fight for their lives and believe in their recovery will heal more quickly and completely than those who do not. Patients who abandon all hope often slip away despite the best treatment. Therefore, one of the healer's most important duties is to keep hope alive in the patient's heart so that he may heal himself. As the saying goes, "Garlen heals the patient; the healer merely takes the credit."

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY TREATMENT

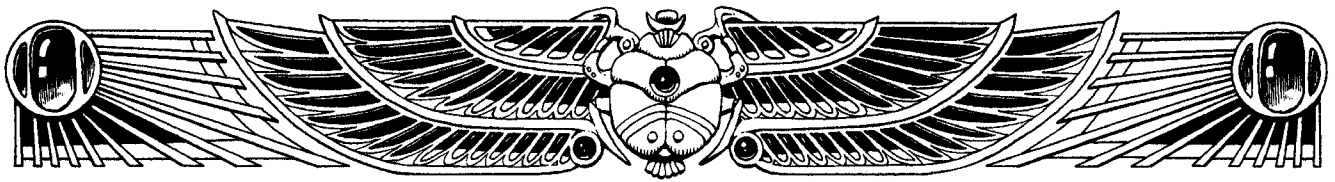
Any type of injury or malady must be treated as soon as possible, if the patient is to have any hope of full recovery. Injuries left untreated for too long or disregarded can become infected or otherwise worsened. Diseases that begin as mere discomforts can become fatal if the patient lacks the proper medicines and plenty of rest.

Immediate attention to injuries promotes rapid healing and prevents further harm. When treating a wound, the healer must first examine it thoroughly, clean it well and stop the bleeding. A broken bone must next be set, and finally, the wound must be properly bound or dressed to prevent infection and further injury. All these things can be accomplished by using certain herbs or magic. (With regard to stopping the bleeding, if no other means is available, a wound may be sealed with fire. However, this method is excruciatingly painful and should be used only as a last resort.)

Likewise, diseases must be treated when the first symptoms appear. Usually, we can recognize a disease from the signs it leaves on its victim. Sometimes, however, properly identifying a disease can be difficult. In such cases, certain information about the patient, such as his recent diet and activities, can often help a healer identify possible sources of disease. Studying the patient's reactions to different treatments can also provide useful information.

Once we know what the patient is suffering from, we can treat the illness with some herbal remedy or through the power of magic. A word of caution, however: disease is often more difficult to cure than a sword wound or a bite because it is elusive. Indeed, one illness sometimes masquerades as another, and sometimes only a skilled healer can tell which is which. Herbal remedies are not always effective, and strong healing magic cannot always be had quickly enough to do any good. Generally, a sick person should exert himself as little as possible—if he can spend several days in bed, so much the better.





COMMON DISEASES AND THEIR SIGNS

Many diseases exist in Barsaive to trouble us, including some that have been with us since the beginnings of our history. Other illnesses vanished during the Scourge, but more have emerged since the Scourge's end to take their place. Thus, the diagnosis of disease remains a difficult and challenging art, all the more so because we lost so much priceless knowledge during the Scourge.

Nearly all reputable healers recognize the following basic truths about diseases. First, Name-givers usually contract illnesses by eating or drinking tainted food or water or by touching someone who is infected. Less often, diseases are spread by breathing the air near an infected person or being bitten by vermin that carry infection with them. And many diseases have an affinity with dirt and filth, and so cleanliness of body and surroundings is every Name-giver's strongest weapon against infection.

Following are brief descriptions of several diseases and treatments known to healers in most regions of Barsaive.

The art of alchemy blends the humble skill of herbal medicine with magical techniques to produce potions, elixirs and salves from various ingredients and the hidden powers they contain. Although the practice is well known in Barsaive, it is a complicated and time-consuming process ill-suited to everyday needs or emergencies. Furthermore, improper alchemical treatments often cause more harm than the illnesses and injuries they seek to remedy. Therefore, we have omitted Lady Loragale's discussion of the alchemical arts.

For similar reasons, we have omitted much of her text on healing magic. As any adventurer knows (or should know), a magician's services are expensive, and many in need of healing cannot afford such remedies (assuming a skilled magician is near at hand to administer them in the first place). Thus, healing spells are largely the province of nobles, the wealthy and those adventurers fortunate enough to include a magician-healer among their number.

Thus, we have chosen instead to concentrate on the simpler herbal remedies that will be of more use to adventurers in Barsaive's wilder lands.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records

BONE PLAGUE

Bone plague begins with a mild fever, a feeling of listlessness and pains in the joints. Over the course of a few days, the victim becomes progressively more fatigued, and his joints turn rubbery. In serious cases, the victim's joints and bones become so weak that they no longer function as they should; he cannot stand, walk, hold onto things or lift so much as a feather. The illness itself is not fatal and passes within a few weeks even if left untreated. However, the weakness and paralysis that it causes can do great harm if the victim is far from help when the disease takes hold. I have read of cases where bone plague swept through a small village, striking down everyone virtually at once. With no able-bodied persons to help the sufferers eat and drink, many poor victims starved to death.

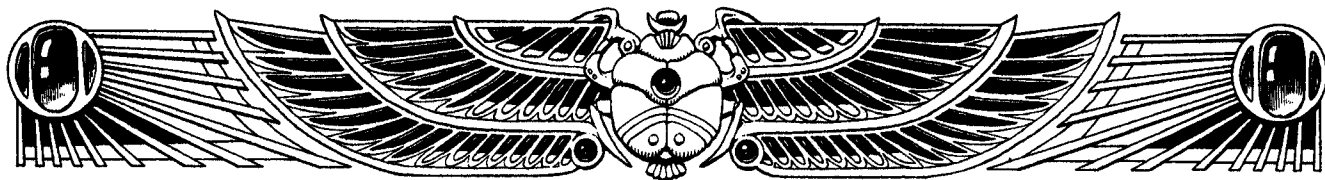
Those recovering from bone plague require a week's rest and hearty food to fully regain their strength. Increased appetite is a sure sign that the disease is departing.

DEATH'S CARESS

Also called fire plague in some areas of Barsaive, Death's caress is the most deadly and virulent plague known to us. It can be passed in water or food or from touching an infected person—the blood and other body fluids of victims are especially dangerous. Death's caress brings high fever, sweating, chills and painful muscle cramps. Victims become extremely sensitive to touch, smell, sound and light. Often, they must be placed on the softest possible surface in a darkened and quiet room, lest their own tortured senses drive them mad. If the illness is left untreated, the fever burns the victim up from the inside until no more moisture remains in his body. Many victims see visions of Death's fiery kingdom while afflicted by this plague, and some scholars speculate that Death created the disease to avenge his imprisonment. Places where outbreaks of Death's caress are known to have occurred are shunned by the wise, to prevent infection. The bodies and clothing of victims are usually burned.

We know of no cure for Death's caress, save for powerful healing magic. Certain methods of treatment offer comfort to the sufferer and may even give him strength enough to hold on to life while the illness runs its course—but this happens rarely. Most victims of Death's caress succumb within days of first displaying the symptoms. The principal treatment is to bring the fever down, using cool water or even ice (if it can be had). The patient must also be made to drink as much water as possible, to keep the proper balance between the elements in his body.

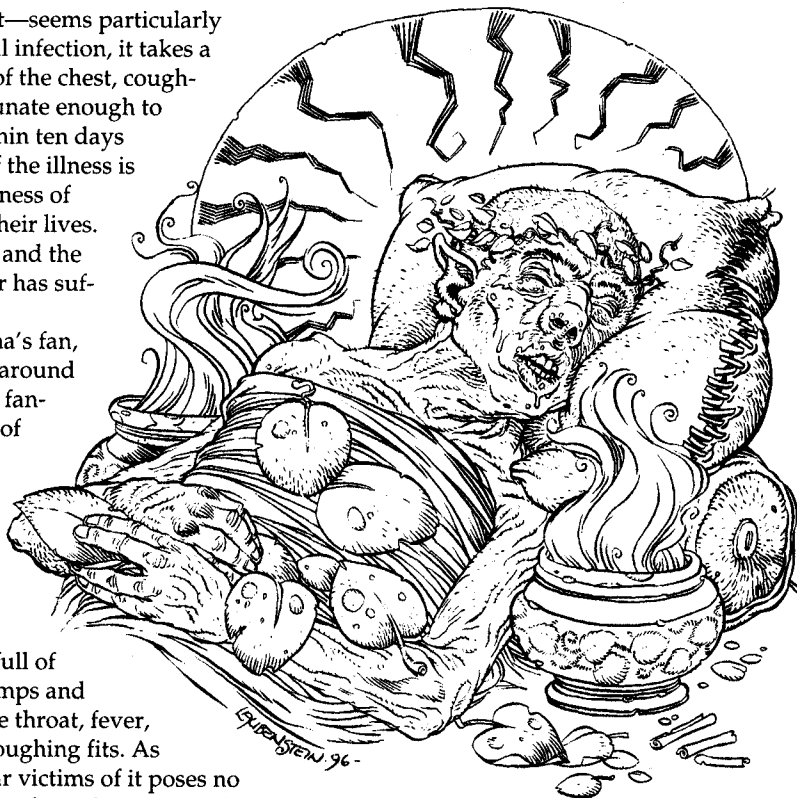




LUNG-ROT

Lung-rot—sometimes called galloping lung-rot—seems particularly prevalent in cold and damp regions. After the initial infection, it takes a few months to manifest—its marks are congestion of the chest, coughing, labored breathing and a mild fever. Those fortunate enough to contract a mild case of lung-rot usually recover within ten days or so, though they may suffer permanent damage if the illness is left untreated. Such patients often suffer from shortness of breath and a weakened constitution for the rest of their lives. In serious cases, the fever rises to dangerous levels, and the victim becomes gradually weaker until he no longer has sufficient strength to breathe.

The best-known treatment for lung-rot is Rianna's fan, a small forest-dwelling plant that grows in clusters around trees and stumps. The plant is Named for its broad, fan-shaped leaves, which are said to be the same shade of dark green as the legendary elf healer's eyes. Boiling the leaves produces steam that relieves congestion and eases breathing, as well giving off a strong, clean odor that freshens and cleanses the air.



QUAKING FEVER

Quaking fever generally breaks out in regions full of marshes and stagnant waters, such as the Mist Swamps and the Servos Jungle. Symptoms include swelling in the throat, fever, trembling limbs, an irritated nose and throat, and coughing fits. As this disease is not contagious, touching or being near victims of it poses no danger to others. There is no specific cure for quaking fever, but it is not fatal unless the sufferer is already severely weakened in some way. In most cases, it passes within seven to ten days. In the meantime, many common plants may help alleviate the coughing fits and running nose (which are universally acknowledged to be the most troublesome of the symptoms).

SMILING DEATH

This strange disease can be caught from tainted water or from contact with an infected person—even breathing the air too near an infected person may expose one to contagion. The marks of smiling death, which appear about a week after infection, include headaches, blurred vision, high fever, sweating and muscle cramps severe enough to incapacitate the patient. A few days after the illness sets in, victims suffer from facial grimaces and respiratory spasms that resemble smiling and faint laughter. In the most serious cases, victims lapse into unconsciousness after a week or so and die a few days afterward.

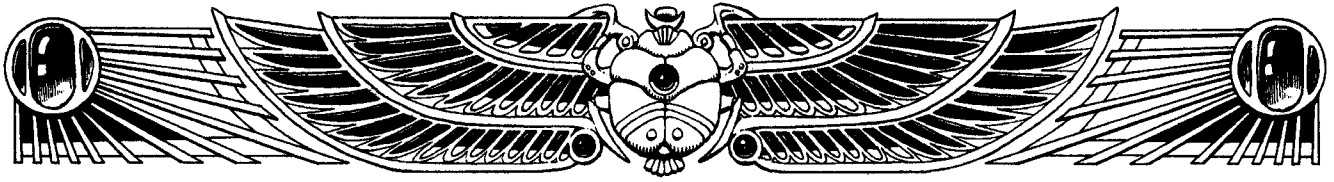
In the disease's early stages, patients must be kept warm, made to rest and given plenty of fluids, along with herbal teas to purge the body. Usually, healing magic can cure smiling death even after the patient has lapsed into a coma, provided the healer is powerful enough and the patient has been unconscious for no more than two days.

WALKING FEVER

Some scholars of the healing arts question whether walking fever is a true disease or not, but the illness strikes down unfortunate victims just the same. The fever is caused by exposure to the spores of the darkbloom fungus, which grows only in damp caves or dark patches of forest where sunlight does not reach—under logs, for example. At a certain point, the fungus releases a cloud of spores. Anyone who breathes in the spores develops the symptoms of walking fever within the next day or two: a sore throat, headaches and a mild fever. The fever progressively worsens until the victim eventually falls unconscious. If the victim has strength enough to fight off the infection, he will awaken during the next day or two with no symptoms and will recover fully in a matter of days.

A victim who succumbs to infection will also awaken after a day or so, but his skin is hot to the touch and he becomes unusually sensitive to bright light. Such victims will seek shelter in some dark, dank place, and anyone who comes too near them for the next ten to fourteen days risks infection from the spores that they disgorge with every breath. At the end of that time, the victim dies and his body becomes host to new sprouts of darkbloom fungus.





YELLOW JIG

Yellow jig can be caught from tainted water or by touching an infected victim. Initially, the disease causes a slight yellowing of the victim's skin, the whites of the eyes, and underside of the tongue. Within two to four days of these signs, the victim experiences weakness and trembling limbs. Victims also suffer from random fits of jerky, uncontrollable muscle spasms; they move as if engaged in some macabre dance, much like the effects of certain nethermantic spells. The disease itself is not fatal, though some have died from accidents caused by convulsions at precisely the wrong moment. One record I know of mentions an ancient hero who broke his neck when a spasm shook him at the top of a steep flight of stairs. Yellow jig commonly passes within two to four weeks, during which time various potions and elixirs can be used to ease the spasms and provide the patient with much-needed rest.

SOME USEFUL NATURAL MEDICINES

Nature exists in perfect balance. Thus, the very same Nature that gives rise to many diseases has also created countless plants and herbs with curative powers. Much knowledge of these marvels was lost to us during the Scourge, but we are fast re-learning what we once knew. Some scholars believe that there exists a cure in Nature for every disease that has or ever will exist—incurable maladies, they say, remain so simply because we have not discovered their cures. Whatever the truth of this assertion, it is certain that correctly prepared plants and herbs act as marvelous healing aids. I shall describe some of the most common and useful medicines known to healers across Barsaive.

ALOE

The fleshy, spike-shaped leaves of the aloe plant hold a thick, sticky sap that makes an excellent poultice for burns. The sap also soothes such skin irritants as rashes and insect bites. Found throughout Barsaive, aloe is often cultivated for its healing properties; many Name-givers use it to make salves and creams that also contain other herbs.

BLOODWORT

Bloodwort grows in small clusters of rough stalks, topped with leafy tassels and lined with thin, spear-like leaves. The leaves and tassels are dark green, edged and speckled in dark red (hence the Name bloodwort). A poultice made from bloodwort leaves or tassels helps blood to clot quickly, prevents wounds from re-opening and promotes swift healing.

BOG MOSS

Found in large quantities in marshes along the lakes and tributaries of the Serpent River, bog moss is excellently suited for dressing wounds. When dried and cleaned, a small amount of bog moss can absorb a vast amount of liquid. Wounds dressed with bog moss (and regularly cleaned and changed, of course!) are far less prone to infection and heal more swiftly and cleanly than wounds not so treated. The dry moss can be easily stored in loose cloth bags. Take care to keep it dry, however, as wet bog moss is useless as a healing aid.

DRAGON'S TONGUE

The dragon's tongue plant features two or three broad leaves surrounding a long, thin flower colored a vivid red. The flower petals remain tightly closed until the plant goes to seed, giving it the look of a long, serpentine tongue with a slight fork at one end. When boiled in water or wine, the leaves make a broth that can fight the effects of many poisons. This bitter-tasting drink can also keep a groggy patient conscious and alert.

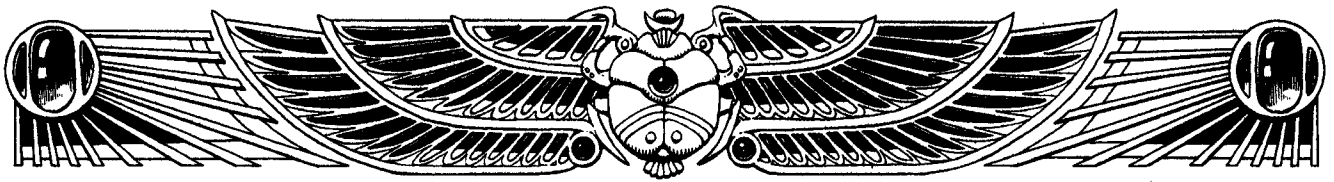
EYEBRIGHT

This small, thorny bush grows amid various species of brambles. Its brilliant violet flowers can be dried and then steeped to make a tea that improves the imbiber's night vision, thus enabling humans to see at night as well as an elf or an ork. The tea makes the drinker's eyes unusually wide and sparkling, and its effects generally last for several hours. Though the dried flowers retain their potency for months, the tea loses its effect an hour or two after brewing.

FIRESTONE MUSHROOMS

Firestone mushrooms grow virtually anywhere with sufficient moisture to feed fungi. They appear in clumps and are easily recognizable by their reddish-orange tops. Though they are (barely) edible, their greatest value lies in a certain potion made from them, known as adept's blood. This red, syrupy liquid is made by boiling the mushrooms, straining the rendered broth, then boiling it again. The resulting syrup mixes easily with water or wine. Healers in some areas of Barsaive use this potion to spark visions in apprentice adepts as they advance in skill—such vision-quests are particularly common among the





Dingani, the crystal raiders and certain windling tribes. Adept's blood induces a state in which the adept experiences extraordinarily realistic waking dreams that guide him to new levels of understanding. In some cases, images from such visions have been known to foretell the future.

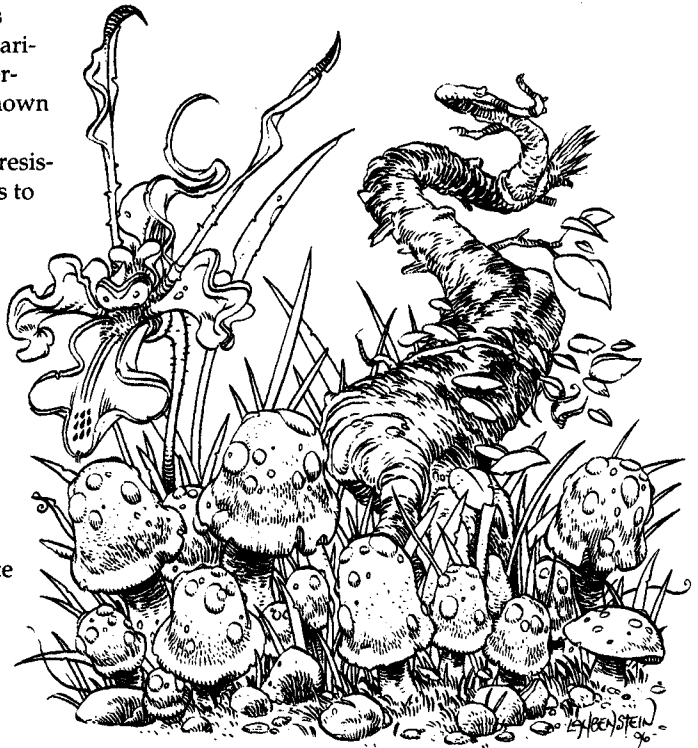
As a side effect, adept's blood greatly lowers the imbiber's resistance to illusion magic. Illusionists have occasionally turned this to their advantage, as have some spirits and even Horrors when dealing with an adept under the influence of the potion. For this reason, adept's blood must be used with great care.

GARLEN'S HAND

This wonderful flower is a true gift from the Healing Passion. The blossom has five white petals, shot through with veins of red and pink. The broad leaves are a rich, dark green, and the stem and root are fleshy and soft. The plant grows in damp lowlands and moisture-rich places such as the Servos Jungle.

When crushed, the flowers yield a reddish oil that can be mixed with water to make a poultice or taken in a tea to promote healing and recovery from loss of blood. An infusion made of dried and crushed flowers produces the same benefits.

The fresh root yields a clear syrup that likewise promotes healing and helps to close wounds. The root loses its potency once dried, but the liquid can be extracted from fresh roots and kept in sealed bottles for later use.



GARLIC

The pungent bulb of the garlic plant, used to season food in many regions of Barsaive, can be prepared and used to keep wounds clean and free of infection. Fresh juice squeezed from a garlic bulb also soothes pain and itching from insect bites and rashes and repels small insects. Garlic grows wild in many areas of Barsaive and is a commonly available medicine in almost every Barsaivian village.

HELMET MUSHROOMS

Helmet mushrooms grow wild in dark, moist forests but can be cultivated in any suitably wet climate. The mushrooms are quite tasty when fresh, though they have no medicinal effect. A brown powder made from their caps, however—known as helm of bravery—can be mixed with hot water to produce a dark, bitter brew that dispels the imbiber's fears and produces a temporary feeling of courage. Some Dingani warriors use helm of bravery before a battle or hunt to help them resist fear; this artificial fearlessness, however, often leads the user to foolishly disregard dangers. The effects of the powder generally lasts a few hours.

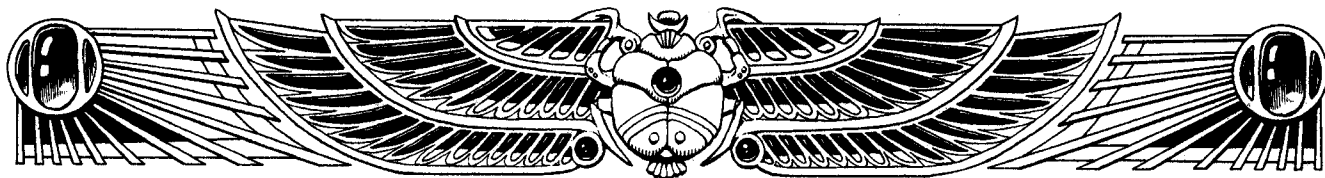
JIKAR ROOT

The jikar plant is mostly long, wide leaves that spring from a white, fleshy root. Whether cooked or eaten raw, fresh jikar root serves as a powerful heart tonic, granting the eater great vigor and energy. The root can be used to counteract the sleep-inducing effects of some poisons and diseases, as well as to maintain wakefulness for a full day and night without sleep. When the effects of the root wear off, the patient will feel tired, listless and irritable. Prolonged use of jikar root can endanger one's health, causing chronic nervousness and bouts of irrational terror.

MAHOGANY TRINROSE

The rust-colored mahogany trinrose is native to the Mid Reach of the Serpent River, where its vines climb the steep sides of the region's many canyons and cliffs. Its strong, unmistakable cinnamon-and-musk scent often wafts across the whole of the Mid Reach on warm, breezy days. The petals can be boiled to make a pleasant-tasting tea that promotes healing and general well-being; it is especially tasty taken with a touch of honey. Trinrose blossoms are also the only known cure for infestations of the blood algae that blooms along large stretches of the Serpent.





MIST BLOSSOMS

These ghost-white, trumpet-shaped flowers grow abundantly in the steamy heat of the Mist Swamps, where they were first discovered, and also in other hot and swampy regions of the Servos Jungle. So strong is the mist blossom's affinity for warmth that it dies rapidly if moved to cooler climates.

The white flowers and delicate leaves can be crushed and boiled to form a poultice for treating burns of all kinds. A mist blossom poultice soothes pain and discomfort, promotes healing, wards off infection and helps to repair burned skin without scarring.

MYNBRUJE'S BALM

This plant, also known as Mynbruje's staff, grows in a straight stalk some two feet tall. Its leaves are hairy and broad, and small, bluish-purple flowers grow in a dense cluster near the top of the plant. Mynbruje's balm flowers in high summer and can be found in open fields and forest clearings. When boiled as a tea or steeped in wine, the leaves create a brew that reduces pain and discomfort. Mynbruje's balm smells and tastes much like lavender, with a slightly bitter aftertaste.



SARFRAN

Also known as bone stem, the sarfran plant has a thin, brittle, cream-colored stem and broad, jagged leaves. When broken in pieces and boiled, the stem and leaves yield a milky broth that promotes the mending of broken bones if taken regularly every two days. The broth's chalky flavor can be disguised somewhat with the addition of sugar or honey.

SERPENT VINE

A flowering creeper, the serpent vine grows wild throughout many of Barsaive's forests, where it climbs the trunks and branches of large trees. The serpent vine has glossy, arrow-shaped leaves and a sprinkling of white and yellow flowers that can be dried and then ground into a fine powder. When mixed with a little water to make a paste, this powder can draw poison from a wound. It is especially effective against snake venom of all kinds.

SINDOLIN

The small, pale-blue flowers of this ground-covering creeper can be crushed and applied to a wound or brewed as a tea. The crushed flowers temporarily prevent blood from clotting, allowing a wound

to be cleaned and tended. Once a wound treated with sindolin has been cleaned and closed, other herbs can be used to speed the clotting of the blood and seal over the wound. The tea serves admirably as a blood tonic and also cures certain diseases of the blood and heart.

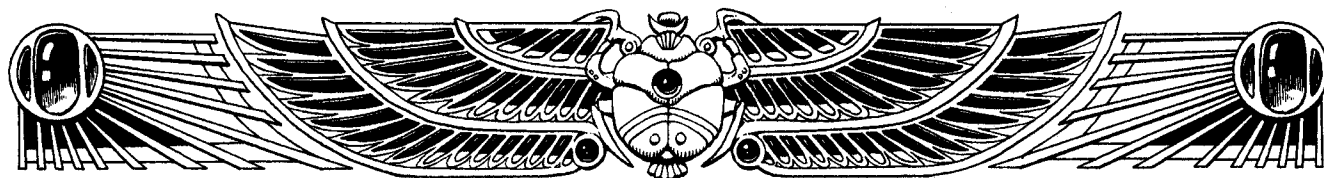
STAR ROOT

A low-growing forest plant, star root has silvery leaves covered with delicate hair and bears a small, star-shaped flower. The fruit of the flower, a dark blue berry, can be crushed and the juice mixed with wine to make a tincture that helps to counteract the effects of poisons and cleanse them from the body. However, star root closely resembles night root, which is a deadly poison if taken internally. Thus, one must gather star root with great care to avoid making a potentially fatal mistake. The leaves of night root are lighter on the underside than those of star root, and the berries are somewhat darker in color.

SURRUNIC

The surrunic plant has a hard, brown stalk that produces pods filled with small black seeds. When roasted, these seeds can be chewed or brewed into a dark tea. In either of these forms, the seeds induce a state of single-minded concentration on





whatever objective those who consume it have in mind. This stubborn attention to one single thing tends to make those who eat surrunic rude and thoughtless toward others, especially if those others are attempting to change his mind. According to persistent rumor, Theran spies use surrunic to resist interrogation.

THALEN

Thalen is a low-growing shrub native to the Servos Jungle whose flat, triangular leaves can absorb amazing amounts of liquid. Thalen leaves make an admirable dressing for wounds, soaking up blood and soothing pain at the same time. I have heard tales of thieves and gamblers placing a thalen leaf under their tongue to allow them to engage in drinking bouts without becoming drunk. Apparently, the leaf absorbs most of the wine or ale, so the miscreant stays sober while his mark becomes sodden. Whether these tales are true or not, I cannot say.

VREELA

Vreela grows in a thin, woody stalk one to two feet tall, from which spring thin leaves that are slightly curled along the edges. Fresh leaves, bruised and then boiled in water, make a poultice that relieves the pain of many wounds. This poultice will make the patient slightly drowsy and disoriented, however.

If taken internally, vreela induces convulsions and vomiting, followed by unconsciousness. If enough is consumed, the victim will die. In certain hinterland villages, small amounts of vreela are ingested as an emergency measure to purge the system of some more-lethal substance. However, calculating a safe dosage is so risky that such use is ill-advised. Care must also be taken when brewing the leaves, as the steam rising from the infusion sometimes induces hallucinations.

ON THE DANGERS OF POISONS

Name-givers have a sad talent for turning Nature's bounty into weapons against each other, and medicinal herbs and other substances are no exception. From the lethal experiments of the ill-intentioned and the insatiable but thoughtless curiosity of those Name-givers foolish enough to try untested herbs or remedies without proper caution, we derive our knowledge of poisons. Of the many different poisons known to us, only a handful see regular use. I shall describe the commonest of these, as well as treatments that may help anyone suffering from their effects.

BLACK BRINE

Black brine, a dark oil that smells strongly of salted fish, is extracted from the shelgar fish native to Lake Vors. Black brine may be ingested but is more commonly used on the tips of weapons. Certain t'skrang of House Ishkarat dip their arrowheads and dagger-blades in black brine, and rumor has it that agents of the secretive Holders of Trust use this poison along with numerous others to advance their unknown ends.

Black brine causes muscle weakness and a painful stiffness in the tendons, making it difficult to move quickly or perform any feats of strength such as fighting or running. The toxin wears off within a few hours.

BLACK MERCY

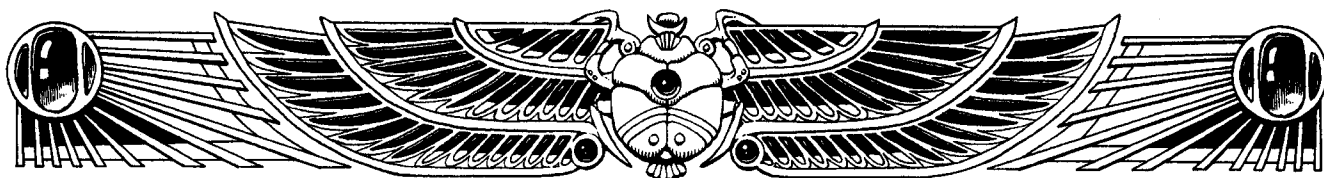
This poison comes from the pollen of the black mercy flower. When the flower reproduces, its pollen often attracts animals, which soon die; their decomposing bodies enrich the soil around the plant. When ingested or inhaled, black mercy induces a powerful sense of euphoria and vivid hallucinations in which the victim imagines his fondest wishes granted. While under the poison's influence, the victim is unaware of the world around him. If he is given regular doses—for example, if he unwisely lingers near enough to the plant to keep breathing the pollen—he will eventually die from starvation or thirst. A single dose, however, wears off in a matter of hours with no lasting effect.

ELFBANE

This rare flower grows in the northern reaches of Barsaive, just north of the Serpent River. The blossoms are pale blue with three petals, each roughly the size of a human's thumb. They contain a poison that affects only elves; it is commonly extracted by boiling the flowers and rendering their juices down to a thin, bitter-smelling liquid that can be mixed with wine or poured on the edges of weapons. Elfbane causes wracking joint pain, muscle spasms and eventual death unless counteracted by an antidote such as the mahogany trinrose.

According to legend, during the Separation of the Elven Court before the Scourge, bitter feelings ran high on both sides. Many elves cast out by Queen Alachia's decrees were so heartsick at being torn from the heart of elven culture that they preferred to die rather than obey, and so they took their own lives. The clumps of elfbane that grow in small patches throughout northern Barsaive are said to have grown where the exiles spilled their blood.





EYEBITE

Eyebite is a greasy, dark liquid drawn from the boiled roots of the corak shrub, a hardy plant that grows in patches in and around Barsaive's mountain ranges. Eyebite must be ingested and mixes well with many foods, though not with drink. Only a few drops are needed to affect most Name-givers; trolls and obsidimen require a small cupful, on account of their greater size. The poison's bitter, burnt taste is most often disguised in spiced meat dishes or savory sauces. Eyebite causes temporary blindness; a victim's eyes appear to have no pupils, merely irises. When the drug wears off, usually within a few hours, the victim's eyesight returns. According to certain adventurers' accounts in the Great Library, eyebite is sometimes administered to imprisoned magicians and adepts to prevent them from using spells and talents that require clear vision.

FIRELEAF

This ground creeper bears small, dark and glossy, arrow-shaped leaves that some say resemble tongues of dark flame. The leaves produce a colorless oil that severely irritates the skin, causing a red, itching rash similar to a mild burn. Though uncomfortable, the rash is largely harmless. Distillations of fireleaf oil can cause more serious burns, blistering and scarring where they touch bare skin. The pain and itching of fireleaf can be relieved with soothing poultices of aloe and mist blossoms, both of which help to keep down swelling and promote swift healing.

HEMLOCK

The juices of this fleshy plant are a deadly poison. When consumed, they cause nausea, chills, convulsions and, eventually, death. Victims of hemlock poisoning often feel cold and lethargic when the toxin begins to work. Hemlock grows in cool, damp places and is most prevalent along the Serpent River and its tributaries.

KEESRA

Keesra is most often made by windlings from the same berries that they use for keesris wine. Victims who absorb keesra through their skin fall into a deep sleep and awaken some hours later with splitting headaches and smelling of overripe berries. Windling warriors use keesra on the nets in which they capture their enemies.

LAÉSAL

Native to the Blood Wood, the laésal tree bears a fruit similar to a golden cherry. Eaten fresh, laésal fruit is sweet and produces feelings of mild euphoria. The fleshy red center of the fruit is filled with small, dark seeds in place of a cherry's hard pit, however. The seeds can be ground into a powder that dissolves easily in food or liquids (wine is particularly effective, especially wine made from laésal fruit). When consumed, laésal powder causes the victim to fall deeply asleep for a brief time; when he awakes, he has forgotten the experiences of the past several hours. We know of no way by which a victim can recover these lost memories.

Laésal is used by blood warders when removing intruders from the Blood Wood they do not wish to imprison or kill outright.

NIGHT POLLEN

This fine, gray powder comes from the night-blooming moon creeper that grows from tree to tree throughout the Servos Jungle. Inhaling night pollen causes irritation of the throat and lungs, severe coughing and shortness of breath. Some victims of this poison may suffocate, but most recover soon after exposure. Warriors of the Servos tribes sometimes use night pollen as a weapon, blowing it from hollow tubes into the faces of their enemies.

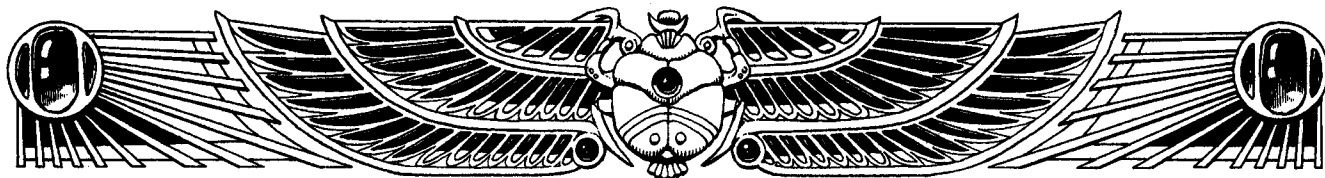
PADENDRA

The only fatal poison known to be used by windlings, padendra may be injected or ingested. It causes nausea and painful muscle cramps, followed by paralysis and death. Because windlings prize life so highly, they never use padendra lightly, and they carefully guard the secret of its making. Some scholars of healing believe that the poison comes from the same insect that produces the less-deadly whadrya venom.

REMIS BERRIES

The small white berries of the remis bush are gathered in the dark of the moon, when they reach their full potency. Pressing the berries yields a milky juice that can cause painful muscle cramps when ingested, eventually leading to paralysis and death. The Dinganni collect remis berries on their travels and frequently sell them to traders. "Whiteberry wine," or "mother's milk," as the potion is mockingly called in some circles, is commonly sold in the markets of Kratas to assassins and poisoners.





SHADOWMANT VENOM

This dark, syrupy liquid drips from the stinger in a shadowmant's tail. Highly toxic when mingled with a victim's blood, shadowmant venom is the favored poison for coating spearpoints and sword blades. Shadowmant venom is so virulent that it can kill any Name-giver in a matter of minutes. It also resists all treatments other than strong healing magic. Thankfully, the dangers involved in acquiring shadowmant venom keeps this toxin expensive and rare. In fact, many would-be venom collectors end up sampling their potential wares first-hand in the dark caves where the creatures hunt.

WHADRYA VENOM

Whadrya venom is derived from the natural venom of the common wasp. The venom seeps through the skin of its victims and temporarily paralyzes them. Windlings often use it to tip blowgun darts. It must be handled carefully, as even small amounts absorbed through the skin will affect the user.

WITHERFANG VENOM

This thin, clear liquid comes from the stinger of the witherfang serpent, a creature found in and around the Blood Wood. When properly stored in an airtight container, the poison retains its potency for up to a year. Witherfang venom must enter the victim's bloodstream through a cut in the skin; ingesting it produces no effect. The serpent's bite causes the affected limb or area of the body to wither and weaken until it becomes useless. The venom alone is less potent but causes severe weakness and muscle pain. No known antidote for witherfang venom exists, apart from healing magic. Rumors persist that some archers among the blood elves coat their arrowheads with witherfang venom.

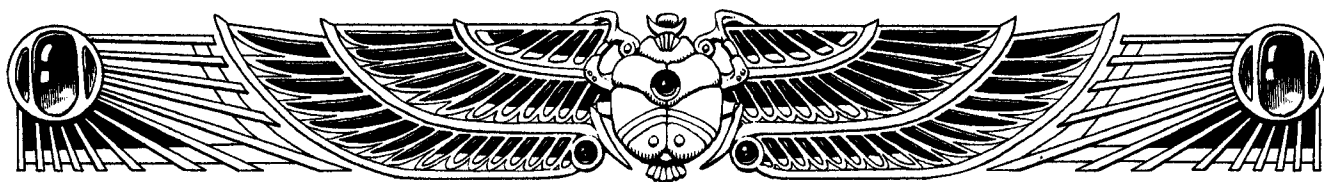


HEALING MAGIC AND GARLEN'S BLESSING

Healing magic is swifter than herbal remedies, though not always as sure. Spells of healing infuse energy into the patient's pattern, thereby repairing damage to the pattern caused by injury or illness. Such spells can restore a patient to health with wondrous speed but can also be disastrous if used without sufficient knowledge of the patient's condition. For example, a spell might heal the scars caused by a ravaging disease without eliminating the imbalance of bodily elements that first brought on the illness. Likewise, I have known ill-informed magicians to set broken bones through magic—but because the magician knew nothing of setting and splinting the bone before working his spells upon it, the bone failed to re-knit properly. Some wielders of healing spells take trouble to learn the non-magical healer's art to complement their talents, and these are healers of surpassing skill. But far too many so-called healers merely offer a magical shortcut to real healing. Such shortcuts should be used with care.

The greatest healing power known to us belongs to Garlen, Passion of Hearth and Home. Through all who heal, by magic or other means—but most especially through her devoted questors—she eases the suffering of Name-givers and cures us of our ills. The Passion's power enables her questors to restore others to health with a mere touch, healing a wound or making a broken limb whole again as if no injury had ever been done to it. According to legend, some questors of Garlen who show her the greatest devotion are rewarded with abilities far beyond those that most of us enjoy. No ailment or injury is beyond their power to cure, and it is said such questors can wrestle with Death himself to protect a fellow Name-giver from harm.





Garlen has also chosen certain places as her own, investing them with her comforting and healing presence. The Passion prefers sheltered, secluded spots that symbolize the renewal of life and hope—she particularly favors small springs, groves of young trees and grottos. The waters and the plants that grow at these sites have greater healing powers than ordinary specimens, and many such blessed places have become the most sacred sites of various healing orders and followers of Garlen. Members of these orders minister to the needs of all who come in search of succor and protect the sacred sites from any who intend to abuse their power. My own Order of the Blessed Hearth lives in a small chapter house in the Grove of Rowandown, four days' walk north of Urupa. There, we offer food and shelter as well as healing to all in need of it. Many of us also spend much of the year ranging across Barsaive, bringing the healing gifts of our Passion to isolated villages.

Additionally, those injured or dying far from all aid have often described visions of Garlen, who appears to them and miraculously brings them to safe havens. I have transcribed here one such account, from my dear friend Jorlan Kel—once a warrior, who became a questor of Garlen after this experience.

The evil minions of the Hand of Corruption fought fiercely against us. Though we vanquished them, our victory was a hollow one—all of my comrades died at the very hands of those they slew. I alone was left alive, and so grievously hurt that I knew I could not live much longer.

With the last of my strength, I dragged myself from the field of battle into the dark woodland. I was too weak to think clearly—I had some confused notion of finding some shelter to die in, such as a woodsman's hut or some such, so that at least the vultures could not pick my poor bones. Arm-length by arm-length I dragged myself along, feeling my lifeblood ebb from my wounds. Just as my strength seemed about to fail me, I saw a small cottage in a clearing. Hope gave me new strength, like the last flare of a candle flame before the candle dies—but before I reached the cottage door, darkness and pain overcame me.

I awoke some time later in a warm bed, before a banked hearth-fire. My wounds had been carefully cleaned and bandaged. Warmth and comfort surrounded me like an embrace. Over the fire hung an iron cauldron, from which arose the savory smell of bubbling stew. Bunches of dried herbs hung from the rafters, adding their rich, spicy scents to the air. A woman was sitting near the fire, mending my torn clothes. Her belly was rounded with child, and when she saw me gazing at her, she smiled at me. Her smile was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

She fed and tended me for three days and nights, during which my wounds healed with impossible speed. I asked her Name, but she wouldn't tell me. She said she lived alone, and she never spoke of her child's father. When I had fully recovered, she gave me my clothes and weapons—all of which had been restored to bright newness—and sent me on my way. Some months later, I returned to the site of the cottage but the clearing showed no sign of ever having been disturbed by a Name-giver's hand. When I saw this, I knew that my savior had been the Passion Garlen, and I swore to serve her faithfully from that day.

Though the power of Garlen allows us to work seeming miracles, it is not without limit. Questors of the healing Passion must all learn the hard lesson that we cannot cure all the world's suffering or even all the suffering we see. Few questors can halt the ravages of disease or poison without the aid of herbal medicines and other non-magical cures, and even Garlen cannot always hold back the specter of Death.

THE KINGDOM OF DEATH

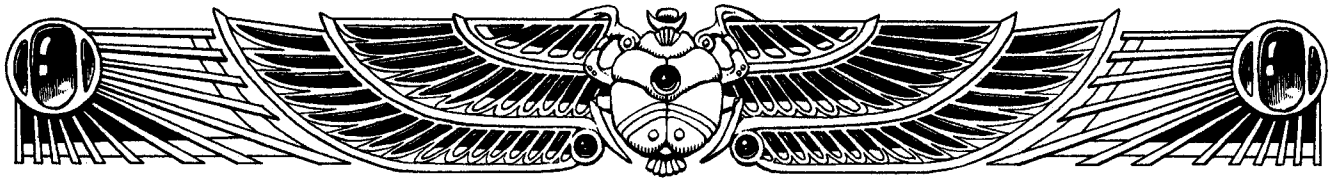
In an age long past, the Passions imprisoned Death beneath the liquid fire of Death's Sea. They did this out of their love for their children, the Name-givers, so that we might not die.

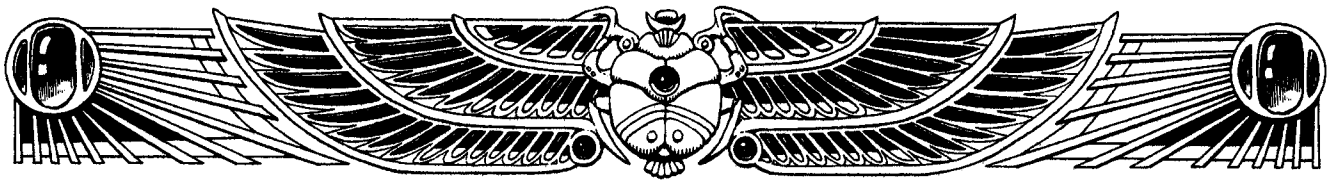
But Death is too powerful to be wholly conquered, even by the Passions. Though his power is weakened, Death still holds sway over the realm of the living. Because of the Passions' bold act, however, it is possible to cheat Death of his prize. If a Name-giver is brave or foolhardy enough to dare Death's kingdom, he may snatch the life of a loved one from Death's very hands.

Those few who have traveled to the Kingdom of Death and returned to speak of it each tell a different tale. Some have described Death's domain as a paradise. Others speak of it as a realm of endless torture, while still others tell of an unfathomable place where certain themes or acts are played out over and over again, apparently for eternity. Many claim that a Name-giver's deeds in life determine his experience in death, but no one can prove this for certain. Some claim to have met and spoken with the Passions in Death's domain; others say that the Twelve are barred from that realm, save perhaps for the Mad Passions, who seek to end Death's imprisonment for some arcane purpose of their own.

Death's true form is likewise unknown to us. Those Name-givers who claim to have encountered Death all describe him in different ways. Sometimes Death appears as a close relative or friend, sometimes as a hated enemy or rival, sometimes as a complete stranger. Others have described Death taking the form of a Passion or even a Horror. (This last incarnation may mean that Horrors can travel to the realm of the dead or simply that Death takes the form of the things Name-givers most fear. The truth remains unknown.)







ON ESCAPING DEATH'S DOMAIN

Of the form and substance of Death's realm, we can know nothing for certain. Of traveling to and from it, we know a little. Death comes to Name-givers when the body can no longer sustain its true pattern—with the pattern broken, the spirit flees its confines and enters the kingdom of Death. (Some spirits remain in the world of the living as creatures of astral space, bound to life by some vow or strong magic, such as the workings of Horrors—but such things are the province of nethermancers and beyond the scope of this work.)

Once the spirit has fled, only powerful magic can bring a Name-giver back to life. Some charms, magical salves and whatnot can prevent the spirit from fleeing the dying body, if they are administered in time. I know certain warrior adepts who use their fierce magic to come back from the brink of death in battle or bargain with Death, gaining themselves longer life by promising to surrender to Death when their last battle is over. Other enchantments of even greater power can allow a spirit to return from Death's kingdom. However, retrieving a spirit that has fallen under Death's dominion is a heroic task that only the strongest magic and bravest heart can accomplish.

Blood Magic and Spells

Blood magic is intimately connected with the forces of life and death. Death-cheat charms, which are fashioned with blood magic, enable their bearers to escape death at the very last moment—but only at some cost to the bearer's life force. More powerful forms of blood magic consume the wielder's life but allow him to perform great feats of magic before he dies.

Certain spells can also bring a Name-giver back from the dead, but these enchantments are rare and difficult to cast. All of them require the lost spirit to find its way back to the body in which it lived, a slow process indeed. The body must be kept whole and free from decay while the spirit wanders, for no spirit can stay in the world of the living unless it has a sound body in which to reside. Tales abound of nethermancers whose spells permit spirits to possess the bodies of other living beings, rather than returning to their own, but as far as I know these tales are no more than frightening stories.

On the Mystery of Death's Favor

Some dying Name-givers who unaccountably revived have spoken of appearing before Death, only to be told that their time had not yet come. Upon regaining consciousness, they claimed that Death sent them back to our living world. Others who so appeared before Death speak of having begged for a reprieve, that they might finish some matter of great importance in life. According to legend, the troubadour Elaen of Travar wrote so sad a ballad about his own demise that Death himself was moved and allowed Elaen to return to life for hundreds of years before he finally claimed his soul.

On Retrieving a Soul from Death's Kingdom

According to legend and tradition, certain magical rituals allow living Name-givers to enter the kingdom of Death. For example, one tradition contends that when Death sleeps, the living can visit the masque of Death's dreams through magic and attempt to retrieve a lost spirit. However, the visitor's life is forfeit if he should choose the wrong soul, and the masked spirits of the dance use flattery and all manner of deception to secure their own chance for renewed life. Other tales tell of tunnels, caves and passages deep in the Earth that lead beneath Death's Sea. These hidden ways may indeed be real, but none that we know of for certain have returned to speak of such a journey.

The following tale illustrates another magical rite by which a brave heart may rescue a lost spirit from Death—but only at a price.

The Tale of Josara, the Thief Who Stole from Death

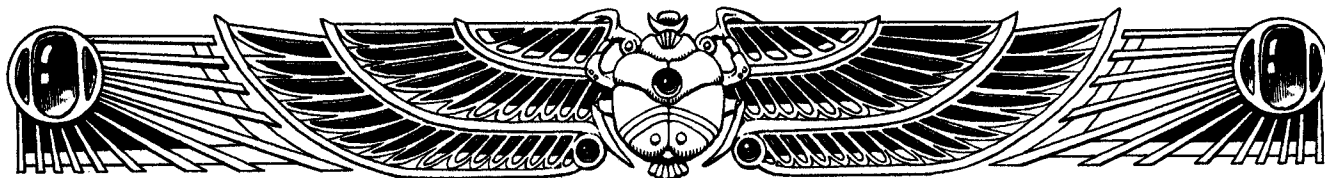
Long ago, before the Scourge, the thief adept Josara lived in the human kingdom of Landis. Josara had performed many a daring deed and was far advanced in the ways of her Discipline. So skilled a thief was she that she could steal the sun and the moon from the sky if she chose to.

Of all the treasures Josara ever stole, the one she loved most was the heart of her husband, the air sailor Orlan Windrunner. Now Orlan was himself an adventurer of great renown and had always sworn that nothing but the spirit of adventure itself should ever claim his love. So when Josara stole his heart away, it was a feat truly worthy of a master thief. These two heroes loved each other deeply and spent many a year traveling Barsaive together and performing daring deeds.

During one such expedition, a shadow spider attacked the pair. Although Orlan and Josara escaped from the terrible creature's lair, the spider managed to bite Orlan, who died from its deadly poison not long after. Grief-stricken, Josara spent most of the treasure the two of them had gained to buy her dead beloved a tomb that floated high above the mountains. This wondrous monument could be reached only by airship or through the aid of a bound air spirit that protected the tomb from looters.

But as rich and beautiful as the tomb was, it could not soothe Josara's wounded heart. And so she gathered her few remaining possessions and set off across Barsaive, seeking sages and scholars and magicians who knew the way to the realm





of Death. Josara even spoke to the Keys of Death, those madmen who claim to be Death's questors, that she might learn their secrets. All this she did with one end in mind—to travel to Death's realm and steal her beloved from Death's cold grasp.

In time, Josara learned that Death hoards lives as a miser hoards gold, and a master thief like Josara knew nothing so well as how to relieve a miser of his treasures. So she gathered a vast store of knowledge about Death and his kingdom and made her way to the shores of Death's Sea. There, she wove the many secrets she had learned into a powerful magical ritual. For nine days and nights she worked in the rocky badlands along the shores of the fiery sea, until all was in readiness.

In the darkness of the new moon, Josara drank a vial of poison she had made of white remis berries, ground pearls from Aras oysters and venom from the shadow spider that had killed Orlan. Then she lay upon a blanket embroidered with magical runes and symbols. She felt a terrible cold overtake her limbs, dispelling the fierce heat of Death's Sea. Lethargy crept over her, but she fought to keep her wits about her. She knew she would need them if she hoped to succeed.

Josara passed into the realm of Death, far below the liquid fire into an endless maze of underground passages, tunnels and caves. All were lit by the flickering flames of the burning sea above, and all were stuffed with treasures. Gems and fine weapons, gold and silver and pretty trinkets, even orichalcum coins enough to ransom a kingdom lay scattered about as far as Josara could see. Josara's thief heart leapt at the sight of such wealth; she could feel the warm fingers of the Passion Chorrolis brush across her soul, urging her to take just one pretty bauble.

But Josara had not come into the realm of Death to seek such treasures as might be found in the world of the living. She wanted only the life of her beloved Orlan. So she turned her eyes away from the glittering heaps and moved through the dim tunnels like a shadow, looking for her love. For hours and hours she walked, but saw no one. In all those tunnels there was no living thing—neither Name-giver nor mouse nor even the smallest insect. Josara began to despair of ever finding Orlan—instead, she would be trapped forever in these forlorn tunnels, with untold wealth as her only companion.

"Passions!" she cried in anguish, "I would give all this wealth—all the wealth in the world—to be with my Orlan once more!"

Just then, a man appeared before her. He was human, broad and fat, dressed like a wealthy merchant. He wore all manner of costly jewels, and the purse at his belt bulged with coins. Everything about him cried out to Josara to give him the gift of theft.

"Would you indeed, Josara?" he asked as he reached into the folds of his velvet cloak. He withdrew a ruby the size of a child's fist and the color of blood. It gleamed seductively in the tunnel's dim light. Josara's thief heart skipped, for she had never seen so fine a gem.

The merchant held the ruby out to her. "Would you truly surrender such treasures as this?"

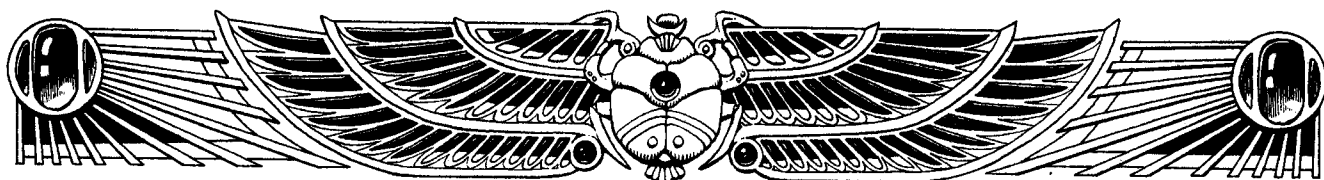
Visions danced in Josara's head. She knew she could take everything this merchant had, and much of the treasure that lay all around her. She could be the richest thief in the world, living in luxury for the rest of her life. But her love for her husband was greater than the call of her Discipline.

"I want no treasure but the life of my true love," she replied.

The merchant smiled and tucked the ruby away. In an instant, Josara found herself lying on the shore of Death's Sea with Orlan asleep in her arms.

Some say the mysterious merchant was Death himself, who traded Josara's thief magic for Orlan's life. Others say it was the Passion Chorrolis who made the bargain. But all anyone knows for certain is that Josara lived quietly and happily with her beloved for many more years.





GAME INFORMATION

This section provides rules and game information for many of the subjects introduced in the preceding sections of the **Earthdawn Survival Guide**, as well as rules that expand those presented in **Adventuring in Earthdawn**, pages 204–17 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook. Consider the following rules optional and add them to your **Earthdawn** campaigns only after careful consideration. (In cases where rules from the **Adventuring** section conflict with those presented below, the information in this book takes precedence.)

Gamemasters using the **Survival Guide** will find the **Creatures of Barsaive** and **Horrors** sourcebooks helpful. Many of the creatures and Horrors mentioned in this section appear in those books, and both contain plenty of suggestions for using creatures and Horrors in **Earthdawn** campaigns.

TRAVEL

Most player characters end up traveling overland, either on foot or mounted. For long distances or otherwise appropriate situations, player characters may also travel by riverboat or airship (the latter for those who can afford it, or who must move with the speed an airship offers). Whatever mode of travel they choose, adventuring parties are likely to spend a great deal of time getting from one place to another in Barsaive. Gamemasters can use the following guidelines to make journeys more interesting for players.

NAVIGATION

Navigation in Barsaive most often means relying on the constellations of the Passions, the movement of the sun and similar astrological phenomena for direction. Most Barsaivian maps (see pp. 40–42, **The Explorer's Guide to Barsaive**) have the constellations drawn around their borders for use with Shantaya's sextant (see pp. 8–10, **Barsaive Gamemaster Book**) and similar navigational tools. Consequently, characters can navigate most effectively on clear nights when the stars shine brightest.

Traveling characters primarily use Navigation skill (p. 131, **ED**) to navigate. Some adepts can also use half-magic to navigate in certain situations (p. 109, **The Adept's Way**). For example, scout adepts can navigate by half-magic in all circumstances; air sailors and sky raiders can use half-

magic on airships; and boatmen (p. 106, **Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I**) can use half-magic to navigate aboard river craft. Suggested Difficulty Numbers for Navigation Tests under various conditions are listed in the Navigation Difficulty Number Table.

NAVIGATION DIFFICULTY NUMBER TABLE

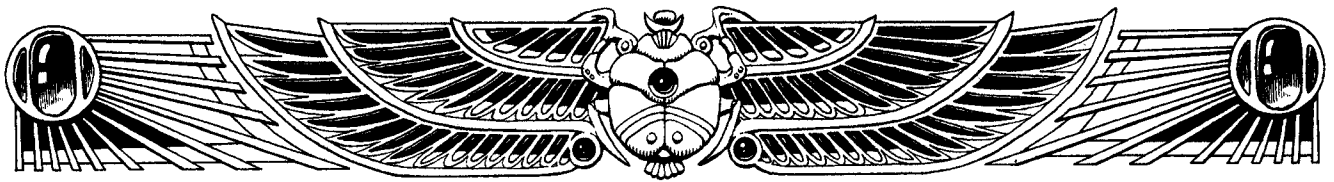
Condition	Number
Clear night sky, few obstructions blocking character's view (e.g., out on an open plain)	5
Scattered clouds and/or minor obstructions, such as low buildings	7
Partly cloudy or significant obstructions (trees, nearby mountains, and so on)	9
Overcast, heavy foliage or other conditions blocking character's view of the sky	12

A character cannot make a Navigation Test in severe rainstorms or blizzards, as he or she cannot feasibly observe anything under such extreme weather conditions. Characters must also have accurate maps to determine the location of specific destinations. The Difficulty Number of a Navigation Test increases anywhere from +1 to +5 if the character's map is incomplete or inaccurate, depending on the quality of the map. For example, a fairly accurate map missing only a landmark or two might add 1 to the Difficulty Number; a hastily drawn map with little detail might add 4 or 5.

The result of the Navigation Test determines how accurately the character can plot his destination. An Average success gives a position that is accurate to within 10 miles. A Good success yields one accurate within 5 miles; an Excellent success, within 2. An Extraordinary success places the navigator within a mile of his target location.

On a Poor result or a failed test, the character becomes lost (see **Getting Lost**, p. 91).





NAVIGATION TEST TABLE

Test Result	Plotted Destination
Extraordinary	Within 1 mile of intended destination
Excellent	Within 2 miles of intended destination
Good	Within 5 miles of intended destination
Average	Within 10 miles of intended destination
Poor	20–25 miles away from intended destination; character becomes lost
Failed	Character becomes lost

Getting Lost

On a Poor success, the navigator inadvertently plots a destination 20 to 25 miles wide of the intended destination. The navigating character recognizes his mistake only if he makes another Navigation Test that yields a better result or arrives at the plotted destination and realizes that it's not the intended place.

A failed Navigation Test means that the navigator has no idea where he is. In such cases, he can simply guess the best direction to travel or make another Navigation Test.

Maps and Mapmaking

Without a good set of maps, a character cannot do more than determine general directions. Therefore, maps are invaluable navigational tools for any traveler in Barsaive.

Mapmaking is a Craftsman skill (p. 130, ED) that characters can learn as they might any other. Scouts and map maker troubadours (p. 135, *The Adept's Way*) can also use half-magic to make maps. Whether using the Mapmaking skill or half-magic, characters can create maps in two ways—by copying existing maps or drawing original maps. To draw an original map, a character must have traveled over the area he is mapping.

To copy a map, a character makes a Mapmaking Test against a Base Difficulty Number 5. To draw an original map, the character makes a Mapmaking Test against a Base Difficulty Number 7. The success level of the test determines the quality of the map produced. An Average success yields a functional map with a few basic details and landmarks. A Good or Excellent success yields a map that characters can use with Shantaya's sextant. An Extraordinary success yields a highly accurate map that provides a +1 step bonus on any Navigation Test made with the map.

TRAVEL TIME

Travel time in Barsaive is most often measured in days or hours. Characters can calculate travel times between two locations simply by using Shantaya's sextant (see the **Barsaive Campaign Set**). Alternatively, characters can calculate travel times by dividing the distance of the trip by their travel rate. For example, a single horseman can make a 100-mile trip in four days (100 miles ÷ 25 miles per day = 4 days).

Most maps made in Barsaive (and in most **Earthdawn** products) contain scales for determining distance, and travel rates are provided in the following Travel Rate Table.

TRAVEL RATE TABLE

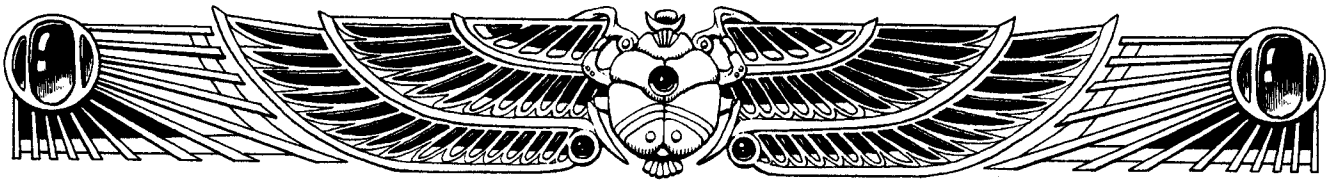
Method of Travel	Rate
Caravan on foot	20 miles per day
Name-giver on foot	25 miles per day
Mounted caravan	30 miles per day
Mounted Name-giver	40 miles per day
Riverboat	100 miles (16-hour day)
Airship	300 miles (16-hour day)

Note: Mounted and foot rates are based on 8-hour days.

Characters on foot or mounted usually travel for eight hours a day, with occasional stops along the way to rest and eat. Every few hours, travelers should also stop briefly to check their location and verify that they are still on the correct route. Characters can attempt to travel for longer than eight hours per day but may become fatigued (see **Fatigue and Injury**, p. 96). If characters with mounts travel for longer than eight hours, their mounts also suffer fatigue. Additionally, each hour of travel beyond eight causes 3 Strain Points of damage to the mount. Thus, a careless traveler can keep a mount going until it falls unconscious. Cavalrymen, who know how to deal with their animals, make sure not to run their mounts too ragged. On long rides, they often use their Blood Share talent to restore a flagging mount's vigor (see p. 99, ED).

Riverboats and airships can travel for longer than the standard eight hours by rotating their crews (which requires them to carry enough crewmen for an extra shift). Except for occasional stops to repair and take on supplies, such vessels can travel almost indefinitely.





AVOIDING ATTENTION

In many situations, traveling characters may wish to avoid the notice of patrols, guards, creatures, suspicious locals and other potential threats. Moving through an area unobtrusively reduces the chances that someone will spot a character or group of characters, but it also reduces the characters' travel rate by half. If a group of adventurers is making no attempt at concealment, the Difficulty Number for guards, other gamemaster characters or creatures attempting to detect them is equal to the lowest Dexterity step of all the player characters in the group, appropriately modified for visibility and other factors. If characters traveling overland take steps to avoid attracting attention, however—sneaking past a walled village rather than walking up to the front gate, keeping to less-traveled roads, and so on—the Difficulty Number for spotting them is the *highest* Dexterity step of the group (with appropriate modifiers).

Despite the penalty to travel rate, player characters may well find this benefit desirable, especially when approaching areas prone to conflict (territory being fought over by rival scorcher tribes, for example) or traveling to cities known for their harsh treatment of strangers (such as Iopos). Gamemaster should consider such factors when determining if anyone spots the adventurers.

MOUNTS

For long journeys, characters may prefer riding, because mounts can carry them faster and farther in a single day than their own two feet. The following guidelines apply to the animals in the **ED** rulebook and those described on pp. 118–23 of **The Adept's Way**. The following Mount Cost Table shows the costs of buying, feeding and stabling several different mounts. All costs are in silver pieces unless otherwise noted. Feeding and stabling costs are per day and per night, respectively.

Mounts and Name-giver Races

Not every mount can carry a character of any Name-giver race; some races are either too large or too small for certain types of mounts. Humans, elves and orks can ride nearly any type of mount except for the tiny kue and zoaks, which are used primarily by windlings. T'skrang can also ride just about any mount, though most strongly prefer not to do so. Dwarfs can ride ponies, huttawas, troajin and pack mules, but their legs are too short to reach the stirrups on most horses. Most trolls are too big and heavy for riding horses and smaller mounts, but war horses are strong enough to carry them. More often, trolls ride sturdy granlains or (on occasion) thundra beasts. Only thundra beasts and elephants are strong enough to carry obsidi-

MOUNT COST TABLE

Mount	Purchase Price	Feeding Cost	Stabling Cost
Elephant	3,000	30	good luck
Granlain	115	1	3 cp
Griffin	7,500	10	5
Horses			
Draft	150	5 cp	3 cp
Riding	125	5 cp	3 cp
War	1,500	5 cp	3 cp
Huttawa	95	8 cp	3 cp
Kue	100	2 cp	1 cp
Pack Mule	100	2 cp	2 cp
Thundra Beast	4,000	5	2
Troajin	100	2	3 cp
Zoak	115	1 cp	N/A

Note: cp = copper pieces

men. In many adventuring groups, obsidian members don't ride mounts at all—instead, they ride in wagons or carts pulled by a pair of pack mules or large draft horses. Griffins are the most exotic mounts used in Barsaive, and only high-Circle cavalryman adepts have the necessary skills to ride them.

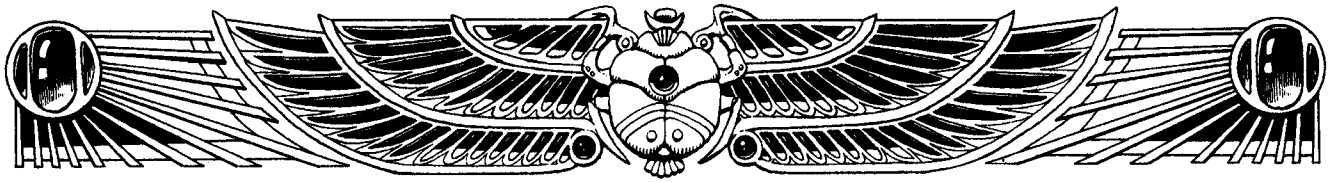
Care and Feeding

A rider must ensure that his mount gets adequate rest, warmth and food if he wants the mount to perform well. Ideally, a mount should be rubbed down after a long day's ride or a long gallop, given a clean stable to sleep in every night, and fed and watered each day. Make sure that characters spend the time and money needed to care for their mounts. If they don't, their mounts become irritable and sluggish, slow down the pace of travel and force the characters to stop frequently.

Most mounts are herbivores—they eat mostly grass and hay, occasionally supplemented by high-energy grains such as oats. A few mounts, such as troajins and griffins, are carnivores. Meat usually costs more than grain, so feeding a carnivorous mount costs more than feeding a horse or a mule. Characters can allow carnivorous mounts to hunt, but a mount cannot hunt while being ridden—and most riders are understandably reluctant to let their valued mounts wander into the wilderness in search of prey.

Riders usually allow their mounts to graze whenever they stop to rest, and they frequently carry an additional





supply of feed to supplement the mount's diet. Carnivorous mounts can consume preserved meat, but they prefer it fresh. When hunting or using survival skills to provide food for a band of adventurers, player characters should treat a carnivorous mount as another member of their party (see **Hunting and Foraging**, p. 95). Troajins generally eat as much meat per day as a Name-giver, while griffins require at least three times that amount.

Healing Mounts

Mounts injured in combat can be healed by some of the methods used on Name-givers. Healing spells work normally on mounts, as does the Healing ability of questors of Garlen. However, many booster and healing potions and most of the healing herbs and treatments described in **On the Healing Arts** are designed for Name-givers and may not be effective on certain mounts, depending on their physiology. Additionally, mounts may refuse to ingest potions and herbs. Characters can mix potions and herbal remedies with a mount's feed, but this reduces the effectiveness of such medicines by half. For example, a booster potion mixed with feed adds only 4 steps to the mount's Recovery Test.

The most effective means of healing certain mounts are the Blood Share and Heal Animal Servant talents,

which allow a mount to recover damage quickly. Keep in mind that a character can only use these talents to heal his own mount or animal servants.

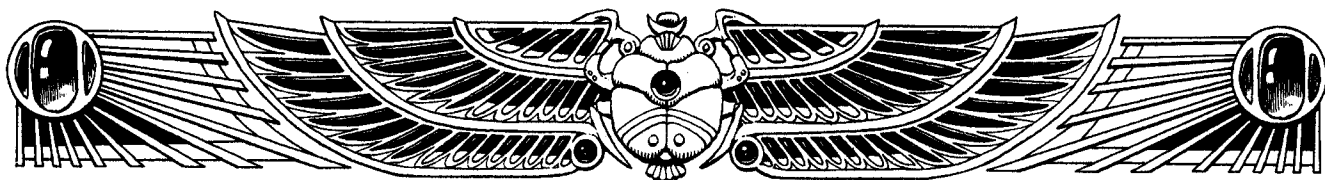
If a mount goes lame, its rider has a serious problem on his hands. A mount that suffers more than 3 Wounds in combat or is hit by spells such as Bone Shatter may suffer a crippling injury to one of its limbs or wings. And if you are using the optional Damage to a Limb rule (p. 117, **Earthdawn Companion**), a mount may suffer a broken limb in the normal course of combat.

A lame mount cannot walk or fly until it heals, and even then it will never again be able to move at more than half its former rate. For this reason, most riders simply put down lame mounts rather than spend the effort needed to heal them. Cavalrymen whose mounts go lame often perform the Rite of the Hero (p. 33, **The Adept's Way**) for their suffering mounts rather than condemn them to crippled lives.

AIRSHIP TRAVEL AND CONSTRUCTION

Airships are the least common method of travel in Barsaive. Only a few dozen airships exist in all of Barsaive, and most of those are military or merchant craft. Consequently, gaining passage on an airship is usually an expensive and difficult proposition.





Airship Passage

Passage aboard an airship usually runs about 30 silver pieces per day for cramped quarters and a no-frills meal. Adepts may be able to negotiate this rate with airship captains if they can provide services the ship will need. In most cases, adepts offer to help protect airships from raiders, slavers and airborne creatures that might attack during the trip. Some airship captains are also willing to take on skilled air sailors or sky raiders as temporary crew members, though the two Disciplines rarely mix well. Captains might also lower their prices for elementalists or skilled navigators. However, airship captains are notoriously difficult to negotiate with—most of them are troll sky raiders with deservedly fearsome reputations or overburdened merchant captains—so they drive hard bargains.

Cargo space on airships is at a premium, so airship passengers are rarely allowed to bring along more than their personal equipment. Bringing a mount aboard could cost 50 silvers or more, with the price going way up for especially large mounts. For obvious reasons, many airship captains won't hear of having a mount the size of a thundra beast aboard their ships. Trunks, chests, and other large pieces of luggage cost at least 10 silvers apiece to bring aboard, with larger pieces costing more at the gamemaster's discretion.

Building Airships

Constructing an airship is a complex, time-consuming and expensive undertaking that requires the expertise of many highly skilled artisans. Indeed, even the great airship yards of Barsaive only turn out a few new airships each year.

Under the direction of a shipwright, carpenters and other craftsmen construct the keel and hull of the ship. Sailmakers, woodcarvers, metalsmiths and the like outfit the ship, and then one or more elementalists and their assistants weave into the wood the many kernels of True air needed to make the ship fly. The whole process takes many months; in a single year a shipyard might turn out three or four drakkars, or perhaps one or two galleys.

While a group of player characters is unlikely to have the skills needed to build an airship on its own, a group can commission or purchase one from the shipyards of cities such as Jerris or Travar. Demand for airships is high, however, so characters may not find one right away. Additionally, the purchase of an airship by a group of adventurers is unusual enough to draw attention.

Airships are sold for whatever cost the market will bear. Generally, a drakkar costs 50,000 silver pieces and a galley 150,000. Galleons are no longer constructed in Barsaive, but an intact one would be worth at least 250,000

silver pieces. Stone airships are built only by the Therans, who never sell them. The cost of such ships can only be guessed at, but even a single stone ship is undoubtedly worth several wooden airships.

ENCOUNTERS ALONG THE ROAD

Traveling characters may have any number of interesting encounters during their journeys. Among other things, they may notice or encounter various creatures, other travelers, natural hazards such as rivers or streams to be crossed, potential rockslides, precarious bridges, and so on. To liven up a road trip, have the characters make Perception Tests whenever they might spot anything of potential interest, whether dangerous or not. When characters make Perception Tests outdoors, use the guidelines for Perception Test modifiers given on page 247, **ED**. Note that followers of several Disciplines, particularly scouts and archers, can also use various talents and abilities to improve their perception and extend their ranges of vision.

Social Interaction

Characters may meet any number of different people along the road—fellow travelers, local townspeople, bandits and raiders, and so on. In some cases they may fight, but combat is not the only or even the best way for adventurers to deal with their fellow Name-givers. Through social interaction, gamemasters can offer player characters some challenges in areas other than combat. Complex negotiations, political maneuvering and intrigue can also form the basis of adventures or campaigns in civilized settings, such as the great cities of Barsaive or the Kingdom of Throal.

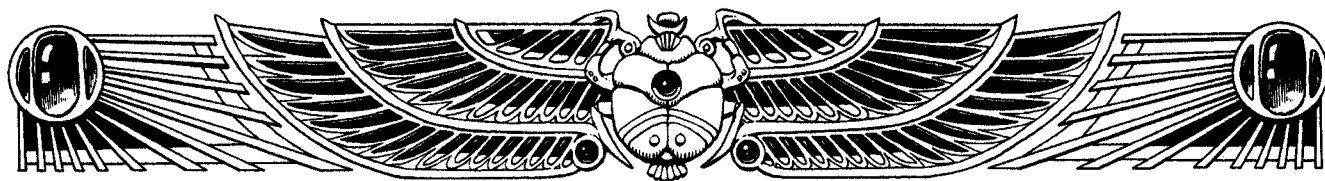
The **Social Interaction** and **Interaction Test** rules (pp. 235-40, **ED**) offer useful guidelines for encounters with gamemaster characters on the road. While these rules are no substitute for good roleplaying on the part of the players, they can help the gamemaster determine how gamemaster characters might respond to player characters' actions.

Greeting Rituals

In many isolated regions of Barsaive, local inhabitants remain wary of the dangers posed by lingering Horrors. In such areas, inhabitants commonly require that strangers use their artisan skills to prove that they do not carry Horror taint. Consequently, player characters can expect many opportunities to demonstrate their artisan abilities.

A character using an artisan skill as part of such a greeting ritual should make his Artisan Skill Test against a Difficulty Number 5. If the test succeeds, the character proves himself free of Horror taint and the locals will likely accept him.





Gamemasters can also treat the Artisan Skill Test as a method of making an impression (p. 239, ED) to determine how people respond to the character. To do so, compare the result of the Artisan Skill Test to the highest Social Defense among the gamemaster characters present. An Average success improves their attitudes by 1 degree; a Poor success worsens their attitude by 1 degree and may even lead people to believe that the player character is Horror-touched.

WILDERNESS TRAVEL AND EXPLORATION

Much of the time, adventurers in **Earthdawn** travel through wilderness. Even established trade routes often cut through regions that remain wild and largely unexplored. Whether traveling through jungles, mountain ranges or sparsely inhabited plains, adventuring characters must obtain adequate food, water and shelter—which can be just as challenging as dealing with hazardous terrain and dangerous creatures.

Though adventuring characters will likely carry rations and water with them, they may well need to live off the land if and when their supplies run out—if the characters get lost, for example, and subsequently take longer than they'd planned to get where they're going. The Wilderness Survival and Hunting skills (pp. 131 and 134, ED) enable characters to find food, water and shelter in the wilderness.

Gamemasters can also use the following guidelines to add more realistic detail to the player characters' wilderness journeys. Specific rules for hazards unique to or especially prevalent in the Badlands, Death's Sea, the Mist Swamps and the Wastes appear in the **Places of Legend and Peril** rules, p. 110.

HUNTING AND FORAGING

Characters can hunt game animals or forage for edible vegetation such as berries, roots, fruits, mushrooms and other plants. The Wilderness Survival skill enables characters to distinguish between edible and non-edible plants or animals, tell which parts of a plant or animal can be eaten and properly prepare various plants or the meat from various animals to make them fit for consumption. Scout adepts can do all of these things using half-magic. Use a Base Difficulty Number of 6 (appropriately modified for the surrounding terrain) for any Skill or Half-Magic Test to identify and/or prepare edible plants or animals.

Foraging requires a Wilderness Survival or Perception Test (Perception Tests made for this purpose receive a +2 penalty to the Difficulty Number). Scout adepts can make

Half-Magic Tests against the Base Difficulty Number. An Average success on any of these tests provides enough daily food for 1 person. Each level of success beyond Average increases the amount of food by either 1 person or 1 day—for example, a character who achieves an Excellent success finds enough food to feed 3 people for 1 day or to feed 1 person for 3 days. Each Foraging Test takes 4 hours, and characters may make up to 2 tests per day. The Difficulty Numbers for foraging in various areas appear on the Hunting and Foraging Table, below.

Hunting requires a Hunting or Dexterity Test (for Hunting Tests, see p. 131, ED). Dexterity Tests made for this purpose receive a +2 penalty to the Base Difficulty Number. An Average success provides enough daily food for 1 person. A Good success provides enough food for 1 person for 2 days (or daily food for 2 people), an Excellent success for 5 days (or daily food for 5 people), and an Extraordinary success for 10 days (or daily food for 10 people). Each Hunting Test takes 4 hours, and characters may make up to 2 Hunting Tests per day.

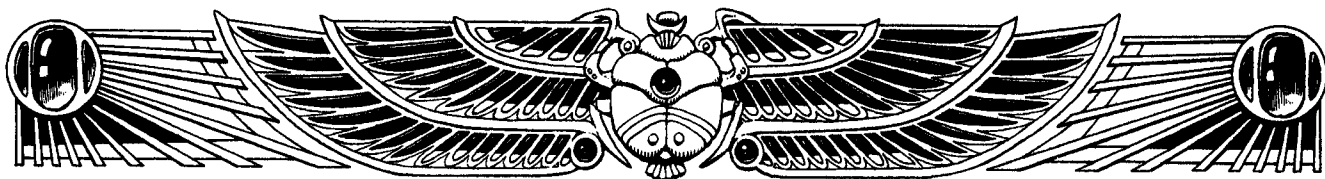
Terrain can make hunting easier or more difficult. Some of the essays in previous sections of this book can help the gamemaster determine how difficult hunting is in various regions.

Characters who follow certain Disciplines may gain a bonus to Hunting Tests for creative use of their various talents and half-magic abilities. For example, a beastmaster can gain a bonus if he uses his Borrow Sense, Creature Analysis or Tracking talents. Scout adepts can gain a bonus for using the Tracking talent or their unique ability to improve their senses. At the gamemaster's discretion, characters can also use other talents and spells to aid in hunting. The Difficulty Numbers for hunting in various areas of Barsaive appear on the Hunting and Foraging Table.

HUNTING AND FORAGING TABLE

Terrain	Difficulty Numbers	
	Foraging	Hunting
Woodlands	6	5
Jungles	7	7
Poison Forest	12	12
Blood Wood	10	10
Plains	6	7
Hinterlands	7	6
Mountains (lowlands)	6	5
Mountains (highlands)	7	8





WATER

Generally, a Name-giver requires a quart of water per day to remain healthy. Characters can use the Wilderness Survival skill to find water; scout adepts can also use half-magic. Unfortunately, not all the water found in the wilderness is safe to drink. Adventurers must therefore take certain precautions before drinking from any untested water source.

For the most part, water from running brooks, streams, or rivers is clean enough for drinking, though characters may wish to purify it just to be safe. Standing water, such as that found in ponds, puddles or even small lakes, is more likely to be tainted than running water, but it is safe more often than not. The most effective method of purifying water is the Circle 1 elemental spell Purify Water (p. 159, ED). This spell can purify even the most polluted, stagnant water. Some adventurers carry magically enchanted pots that cast the Purify Water spell on any water (or other liquid) placed in them. These pots typically cost 150 silver pieces. Characters can also purify water by boiling it, which sterilizes water tainted by disease. This method, however, is ineffective against magical taint or the waterborne Horrors known as dread iota (see p. 78, *Horror*s sourcebook).

In areas without obvious sources of water, characters must use the Wilderness Survival skill or some form of magical divination to find water sources. The Base Difficulty Number for the appropriate test is 7 but can rise as high as 12 in certain barren parts of the hinterlands. An Average success provides enough daily water for 1 person. Each success level achieved increases the amount of water by 1 person or 1 day; for example, a character who achieves an Excellent success finds 1 day's supply of water for 3 people or a 3-day supply of water for 1 person.

Some adventurers use magical divining rods to locate water sources. These items resemble forked branches and are enchanted with True water. They typically cost 75 silver pieces. A character with a magical divining rod need not make a test to locate water.

SHELTER

Unless adventurers carry tents or tarps with them, they will need to find or build shelter when traveling through the wild. Natural shelters include caves, rock formations, fallen trees, or anything else that can block the wind and/or offer some sort of protection from the elements. Characters can also make lean-tos or tents.

Characters can find or build shelter using the Wilderness Survival skill; scout adepts can use half-magic. Finding or building a shelter requires a Wilderness Survival

or Half-Magic Test against a Base Difficulty Number 6, modified as appropriate for the weather. A successful result allows the character to find or build a shelter that provides adequate protection from light rain, wind or snow. High winds and severe storms, such as are common in the upper regions of Barsaive's mountain ranges, require sturdier shelter. To find or build suitable shelter in such conditions requires a successful test against a Difficulty Number 9.

FATIGUE AND INJURY

Existing rules for dealing with damage in *Earthdawn* are designed to reflect significant injuries inflicted in combat with creatures, Horrors or enemy Name-givers. Even without combat, however, journeying through Barsaive's wilderness is often risky and arduous. Several days of relatively uneventful travel can often leave characters fatigued or injured. The following rules allow players and gamemasters to incorporate fatigue and minor injuries such as sprained ankles, burns and other impairments into their games.

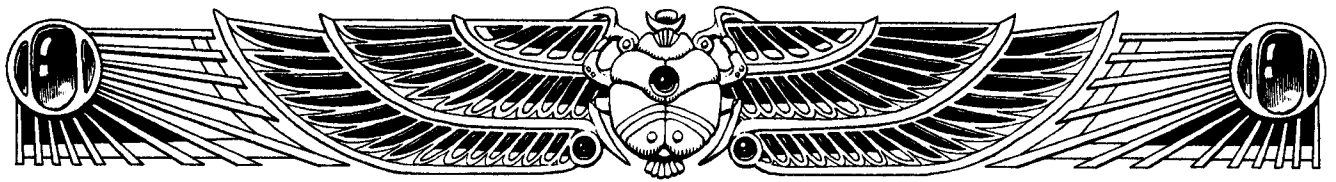
Generally, minor injuries such as sprained ankles, severe blisters from ill-fitting footwear, serious sunburns and so on inflict a -1 penalty to the injured character's appropriate Attribute Value. This penalty, in turn, can affect his Attribute step numbers as well as other characteristics. For example, a character who sprains his ankle (a common mishap while traveling through the Badlands) suffers a -1 penalty to his Dexterity Attribute, which can affect the character's Movement Rates and Physical Defense rating. A character who becomes seriously sunburned (another injury common in the Badlands) might suffer a -1 penalty to his Strength Attribute, which, in turn, can affect his Strength step and his Carrying/Lifting Capacity. The gamemaster determines which Attribute is affected by which type of injury.

Some common minor injuries are described below. Minor ailments such as colds and mild fevers are considered injuries for purposes of these optional rules. This list does not describe all possible minor injuries characters may suffer—gamemasters can create additional injuries if desired, patterned on the following examples.

Sprained Ankle

Characters can sprain an ankle when traveling in rough or rocky terrain. To cross a stretch of rough ground, the gamemaster may have all the characters make Dexterity Tests against a Difficulty Number between 4 and 6, depending on the specific terrain. Characters whose tests fail sprain their ankles and receive -1 penalties to their Dexterity Attributes. A sprained ankle takes at least 2 days to heal.





Severe Blisters

Characters with inadequate or improper footwear often blister their feet. If left unattended, blisters can become infected. This severely limits a character's mobility, not to mention hurting a lot! Blisters impose a -1 penalty to an affected character's Dexterity Attribute and take at least 1 day to heal.

Sunburn

Characters who spend a lot of time in the sun without wearing protective clothing can get badly sunburned, especially in and around the Badlands, the hinterlands or when traveling by airship or riverboat. A badly sunburned character suffers a -1 penalty to either his Strength or Toughness Attribute, at the gamemaster's choice. Extremely severe sunburns can also result in heat stroke (see *Heat Exposure*, p. 99). A sunburn takes at least 2 days to heal.

Bad Food/Water

A character who eats bad food or drinks unsafe water may suffer from any number of maladies, from nausea to diarrhea to fever and/or flu. Most often, a character who eats bad food or drinks bad water suffers a -1 penalty to his or her Toughness Attribute, though this penalty can affect a character's Strength or Perception Attribute instead at the gamemaster's discretion. Impose this type of injury only when a character eats or drinks something potentially dangerous (such as a poisonous animal or obviously dirty water) without taking precautions. Recovering from the effects of bad food or water takes at least 2 days.

Strained Arm/Wrist Muscle

Much like a sprained ankle, a strained arm or wrist muscle can occur when a character missteps and falls or over-exerts himself. In game terms, this kind of strain occurs when a character rolls all 1s on a Strength Test to lift a heavy object or while performing some other Strength Test where the possibility of injury exists—such as breaking down doors, raising fallen tree trunks, lifting an unconscious or semi-conscious obsidiman and so on. A character who strains a muscle suffers a -1 penalty to his Strength Attribute and the muscle takes at least 2 days to heal.

Cold

Characters who get caught in a torrential downpour or other severe weather can catch colds, especially if they are ill prepared for rain and/or travel through terrain prone to rain and snowstorms, such as the high mountain slopes. As with bad food or water, impose this injury only on characters who

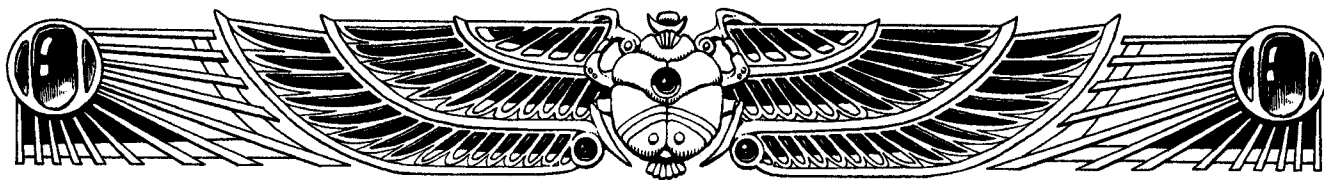


take few or no preventive measures when planning a trip through territory with bad weather. A character who catches a cold suffers a -1 penalty to his Strength, Toughness, Dexterity or Perception Attribute, at the gamemaster's choice. The character will take at least 5 days to recover.

Fever

Fevers often accompany colds but can also occur when a character is exposed to other diseases or when a wound becomes infected. Characters succumb to fevers most often when traveling through the jungles, where they are often bitten by disease-carrying insects. A fever makes a character light-headed and nauseous, and so an adventurer who





catches a fever suffers a -1 penalty to his Perception Attribute. Recovery from a fever takes at least 3 days.

Recovering from Injuries

Characters can heal a minor injury with one night's uninterrupted sleep (8 hours) and a Recovery Test. Before healing, however, the character must wait the minimum number of days listed in the appropriate injury description. For example, a character who suffers a sprained ankle must wait at least 2 days before he can make a Recovery Test to heal it.

After the required sleep, a character can make his Recovery Test and heal 1 injury. The character must spend a Recovery Test to heal the injury even if he has taken no other damage. Injuries do not affect the healing of Wounds, nor do Wounds prevent the healing of injuries.

Characters who use appropriate healing aids need not wait to sleep before healing themselves. The magic of healing aids speeds up the healing process, and so a character can automatically heal 1 injury for each booster or healing potion he uses.

Fatigue

Characters normally travel 8 hours per day when walking or riding, but in some instances may need to travel for longer durations. A character or mount (or both) that travels for more than 8 hours per day can suffer from fatigue, depending on how hard the character pushes himself. In addition to fatigue, mounts also suffer the effects described in **Travel Time** (p. 91). Each level of fatigue reduces all of a character's step numbers by 1. For example, a character with 1 level of fatigue suffers a -1 step penalty to all actions, while a character with 3 levels of fatigue suffers a -3 step penalty. (Such penalties apply to Fatigue Tests as well.)

For every 2 hours (or portion thereof) beyond 8 that a character or mount travels in a single day, that character or mount must make a Fatigue Test using his Toughness dice against his own (or his mount's) Toughness step number. If the test succeeds, the character or mount suffers no ill effects. If the test fails, the character or mount suffers 1 level of fatigue.

Because not all Name-givers come from the same terrain or climate, characters of certain races can suffer additional penalties when in certain types of terrain. For example, highland trolls come from the mountains and are accustomed to thin air; consequently, they may suffer far more from fatigue when slogging through a jungle than would a t'skrang, who is accustomed to living in or near water and moist air. In such cases, characters receive Toughness step penalties when making Fatigue Tests.

TERRAIN/CLIMATE AND RACES

Terrain/Climate Step Penalties

Race	Mist			
	Mountains	Swamps	Badlands	Jungles
Highland Trolls	0	-1	-2	-1
T'skrang	-1	0	-1	-2
Other	-1	0	-1	-1

These penalties are listed in the Terrain/Climate and Races Table.

Use this optional rule sparingly—it works best when used with characters traveling through unfamiliar regions for the first time. After adventuring for a few months, assume that most characters have adapted themselves to Barsaive's varying terrain and climates and suffer only the penalties listed for *Other*.

Recovering from Fatigue

To recover from fatigue, a character must rest for 4 hours for each level of fatigue suffered. (These 4 hours are in addition to the normal 8 hours of rest that most Name-givers require each day.) During this time, characters attempting to recover from fatigue cannot take any strenuous actions, such as practicing talents or skills, foraging, or hunting. Brief exertion, such as quickly fighting off creatures attacking a character's camp, does not interrupt this rest unless the combat lasts for more than 15 or 20 minutes.

HAZARDS

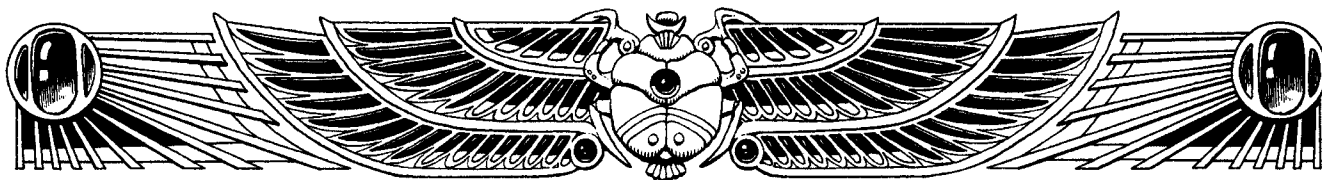
In many ways, the impersonal forces of nature can present a threat more challenging than any Horror or creature that characters might encounter. To survive in harsh conditions, characters must frequently use their wits and all the skills and talents at their command.

Here are several common hazards that await adventurers as they travel through Barsaive's wilderness.

Exposure and Frostbite

Exposure to severe cold can seriously injure Name-givers. If a character spends time exposed to the cold without adequate protection (warm clothing or some kind of magic), he or she runs the risk of frostbite. For every half hour of exposure, the character suffers Step 4 damage. The gamemaster may increase the Damage Step for exceptionally harsh conditions such as snowstorms or being buried beneath an avalanche. If the character remains in the cold long enough, he will eventually fall unconscious and freeze to death.





If any single Damage Test for exposure to cold exceeds the character's Wound Threshold, he or she suffers minor frostbite. Apply a -1 injury penalty to the character's Dexterity or Strength Attribute, depending on the affected body part. A frostbitten finger, for example, would affect Dexterity, while a frostbitten calf might affect Strength.

If the character does not get to shelter within two hours of being frostbitten, he or she suffers from severe frostbite. At this point, the injury is considered a Wound and must be healed magically. (Any method of magical healing applicable to Wounds—such as a healing potion—will eliminate frostbite.) If left untreated, the frozen portions of flesh begin to rot and become infected. Unless infected portions are amputated, the character may die.

High Altitudes

Multiply all Strain costs by 2 for characters operating at high altitudes to reflect the difficulty of breathing at such altitudes. Characters also tire more quickly at high altitudes. To reflect this, all characters—except for highland trolls, who are accustomed to the mountain environment—receive -1 step penalties to Fatigue Tests made in high mountain regions.

Falling

Adventuring often involves climbing up high mountains, into crumbling ruins and through vast caverns, not to mention sailing in high-flying airships—which all place adepts at risk of falling. Whenever a character fails a Climbing Test, he falls from half the height he was attempting to climb and takes the appropriate falling damage (pp. 206–7, ED). Armor does not protect against this damage.

Heat Exposure

Exposure to intense heat, such as that of Death's Sea or underground volcanoes, can cause damage to characters who lack adequate protection. Such a character suffers Step 4 damage per hour of exposure and may also suffer dehydration if he or she is not carrying enough water. If heat exposure results in a Wound, treat it as a serious burn that will blister and require appropriate treatment.

Extreme heat also causes fatigue. To reflect this, double all Strain costs and apply a -1 step penalty to all Fatigue Tests in hot environments. Characters wearing armor heavy enough to impose an Initiative Penalty take Strain equal to the Initiative Penalty for every hour they travel in the armor, as well as every round they fight in it.

Burns

Burns are typically difficult to treat, prone to infection and slow to heal completely. Minor burns (heat-exposure damage below a character's Wound Threshold) are considered injuries and impose a -1 step penalty to the afflicted character's Strength Attribute. At the gamemaster's discretion, a character may receive a Wound per standard rules if he suffers fire- or heat-related damage that exceeds his Wound Threshold. Burn Wounds heal twice as slowly as normal Wounds and must be carefully treated with clean dressings and poultices to keep them from becoming infected. Many of the healing herbs described in **On the Healing Arts** can help prevent infection and speed the healing of burns.

Dehydration

For each day that a character does not get sufficient water, he takes 3 points of damage from dehydration. Additionally, he receives a penalty to his Recovery Tests equal to the number of days without adequate water. This damage may be added to any damage inflicted by heat exposure.

Alternatively, the gamemaster may treat dehydration as an injury and impose a -1 penalty to the affected character's Strength and Toughness Attributes.

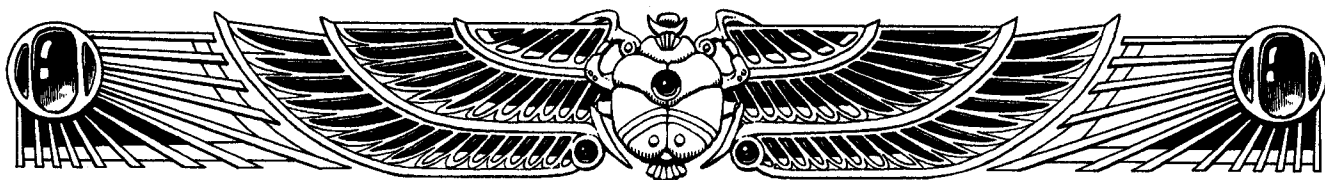
Suffocation/Drowning

Characters begin to suffocate whenever they cannot get sufficient oxygen into their lungs. Insufficient or depleted air in a mine shaft, being buried under snow, a 400-pound troll sitting on your chest—these are just a few examples of such situations.

A character can hold his breath for a number of Combat Rounds equal to his Toughness step. After that, he begins to take suffocation damage. In the first round that a character is suffocating, he or she takes Step 2 damage. This damage increases by 1 step during each subsequent round. Characters do not take Wounds from suffocation, however, regardless of their dice rolls. Strain-causing actions such as combat speed up the rate at which the character suffocates.

Suffocating characters suffer a -2 step penalty to all actions, and their movement rates drop by half. Magical spells and effects that inflict suffocation (for example, Suffocating Paste or the illusionist spell Suffocation) cause additional damage because of their magical nature. For these spells, use the effect as given in place of these rules.





Drowning occurs when a character cannot get sufficient oxygen because he is immersed in water. Rules for drowning appear on page 123 of *Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I*.

ANIMALS, CREATURES AND HORRORS

Many of Barsaive's wild beasts are little more than part of the scenery, but others are potentially dangerous opponents. On the other hand, some animals and magical creatures can be useful to player characters if properly trained.

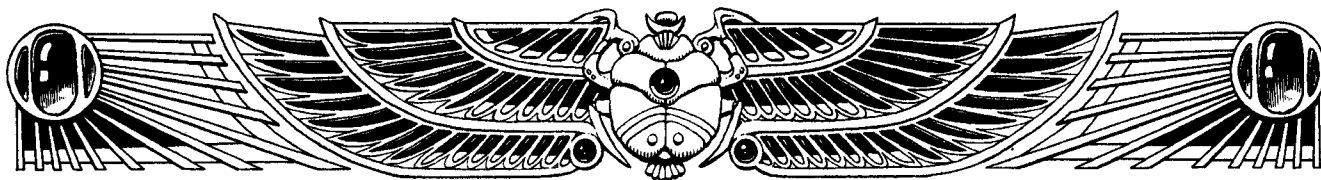
Attribute Step Numbers and other information for several common beasts appears on page 311, ED. Beastmasters and adepts of other Disciplines frequently take these mundane animals as animal companions or familiars (see pp. 100–1, *Magic: A Manual of Mystic*

Secrets). Statistics for several magical creatures appear on pages 284–312, ED. Additional creatures appear in the *Barsaive and Parlainth: The Forgotten City* campaign sets and the *Creatures of Barsaive* sourcebook. Descriptions and statistics for Horrors appear on pages 297–304, ED, as well as in *Parlainth: The Forgotten City* and the *Horrors* sourcebook.

Encountering Wild Animals and Creatures

Characters traveling through the wilderness most often encounter beasts in their natural habitats. This gives many beasts a camouflage bonus that increases the difficulty of spotting the beast. This holds particularly true for predators, which sneak up on their prey. Additionally, heavy foliage, rain and darkness often provide cover for animals and enable creatures to approach characters unseen.





Detecting creatures and animals in the wilderness requires a successful Perception Test against the creature's or beast's Dexterity step, appropriately modified for the surrounding conditions. Natural camouflage adds 3 to the Difficulty Number. Heavy forest or jungle foliage adds 5, and heavy rain or darkness adds 7. If the creature is a predator stalking the characters, the gamemaster makes a Dexterity Test for the creature. The result of that test, plus any appropriate modifier, is the Difficulty Number for detecting the animal. If the creature remains undetected, it may strike the characters with the advantage of Surprise (pp. 202–3, ED).

When planning creature encounters, keep in mind that mundane animals are far more common than creatures or Horrors.

Fighting Wild Beasts

Wild animals and creatures can use many of the same Combat Options (pp. 198–202, ED) open to characters. Most animals favor charging or swooping attacks; they often Attack to Knockdown on their first attack and then follow up while their opponent lies prone. If characters enrage them—by trespassing on their lairs, nests or hunting grounds, for example—animals may attack quite aggressively. Generally, animals and creatures attempt surprise attacks, so apply Blindside bonuses to their initial attack. Also, packs or flocks often attack a single opponent, which gives the opponent a Harried penalty (p. 202, ED).

Intelligent beasts can use any of the combat maneuvers and tactics described in the **Combat** section of the ED rulebook, and they always use their surroundings to give themselves an advantage over intruders. Such a creature may also set traps or have various servitor creatures protecting the approaches to its lair.

For more information about creature encounters and using creatures in combat, refer to **Using Creatures**, pp. 110–15 in **Creatures of Barsaive**.

Animal Training

The process of winning an animal's trust and training it to perform various tricks on command is described in the Animal Bond and Animal Training talents (p. 97, ED). Both of these talents can also be used as skills, and any character seeking to develop an animal companion should learn them to properly establish a rapport through which he can train an animal.

Keep a close eye on the number of animal companions that characters—especially beastmasters—acquire. Animal companions are not pieces of equipment. They are living creatures that must be treated as friends, just as if they

were fellow adepts. Animal companions need food, water, shelter, attention and affection from their Name-giver comrades, and failure to provide these things will have negative consequences. A neglected animal will become more demanding, bothering the character for food, affection and attention at the most inopportune times. Neglect will also tend to make the companion less and less willing to do as the character asks. If seriously neglected or mistreated, a beast will either leave or turn on its former friend.

Stress the requirements of a training bond between character and animal companion to remind the player of the responsibilities his or her character is taking on. Such reminders become even more important if a character intends to take the animal as a familiar (p. 100, **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets**). A character must swear a blood oath to the familiar and will suffer the consequences of neglecting or mistreating it.

At the gamemaster's option, certain domesticated animals can become loyal to a character without his using the Animal Bond skill or talent. Dogs and cats, which have long lived with Name-givers, can become loyal through feeding and kind treatment. Horses and other domesticated mounts may also form bonds with Name-givers this way. Wild animals and magical creatures, on the other hand, must always be tamed and taught to respect their trainer before any training can take place.

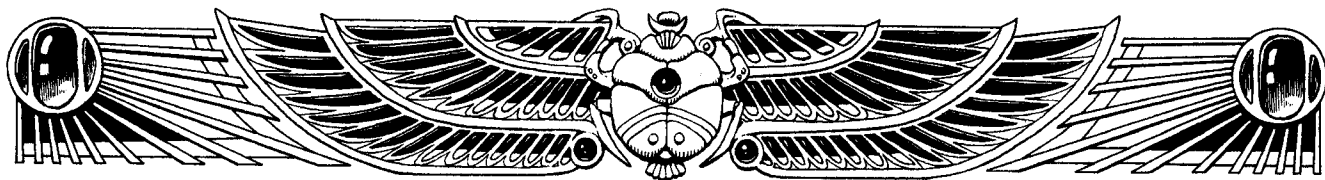
Using Beastmaster Talents

Certain beastmaster abilities stem from the adept's instinctive understanding of different kinds of animals. The following guidelines give the gamemaster additional options for using these abilities in play.

Animal Bond: As written, the Animal Bond talent does not limit the number of animals with which a character can bond. As an optional rule, the gamemaster can use a character's Animal Bond talent rank as a limit for the number of animals the character can bond with at any single time. For example, a character with Rank 5 Animal Bond could bond with a maximum of five animals at a time. If a bound animal dies, is given away or leaves for any reason, the character can find and bond with another animal. This optional rule prevents beastmasters and other characters from developing huge menageries without first increasing their talent ranks.

Animal Training: Similarly, gamemasters can limit the number of animals a character can train at once. If desired, use the character's rank in Animal Training + 1; the talent rank is a good measure of how many "pupils" an animal trainer can handle at a time.





Keep in mind that each use of Animal Training lasts a number of months equal to the character's talent rank and that each use requires a week's work with the animal. If a character tries to maintain too large a collection of trained beasts, he or she will find the training slipping unless the character works with the beasts constantly. The oldest tricks learned will be the first forgotten if the character neglects his animals' training.

Certain predators can be taught to co-exist peacefully with other animals that should be their prey. Beastmasters often have pairs of predator/prey animal followers (i.e., a wolf and a stag), that work together in harmony because of the beastmaster's influence. The beastmaster must work hard to make sure his animal companions don't forget this trick.

Borrow Sense: The Borrow Sense talent allows a beastmaster to temporarily use one of an animal's five senses. The beast loses the use of that sense for the duration of the borrowing; in effect, the two "trade senses" while the talent is active. For example, a beastmaster who borrows a dog's keen sense of smell simultaneously gives the dog a Name-giver's pitifully limited sense of smell. Animals find this experience disorienting and distressing, so it is best done with animals whose loyalty to the beastmaster will lessen their distress. Also, keep in mind that the lack of an animal's usual sensory abilities will affect what the animal can do for the duration of the talent use.

The beastmaster does not literally "see through the animal's eyes." Instead, the beastmaster's own sense becomes like that of the animal. A beastmaster who borrows the sight of an eagle companion can see as accurately for long distances as the bird can, but he does not see what the eagle can see from high above the earth.

The gamemaster has the final word on the specific effects of borrowing any given animal's sense. Generally, some senses give the beastmaster new sensory abilities—a bat's sonar, a snake's ability to smell by "tasting" the air, and a cat's night vision are a few such senses. In other situations, borrowed senses improve the beastmaster's existing senses—the sharp vision of an eagle, and the keen hearing or smell of a dog are a few such animal senses. In these instances, assign a bonus of +1 to +3 steps to any Perception Tests the beastmaster makes with the borrowed sense.

Creature Analysis: Under standard rules, characters using this talent can learn about unknown creatures by observing them. A successful Creature Analysis Test (p. 101, ED) allows the player to ask one question about the creature's game statistics such as, "What is its Physical Defense?" or "What is its Death Rating?" The question must be about a specific trait—general questions such as

"How tough is it?" should rate equally vague answers ("Pretty tough.").

At the gamemaster's discretion, a character using Creature Analysis can also learn some things about a creature by examining the creature's lair, droppings, recent kills and so on. This rule might allow a beastmaster to identify a creature that is killing a village's herds, for example. The Difficulty Number for this type of Creature Analysis Test is the creature's Spell Defense, modified according to the available evidence. For example, tracks alone might add +5 to the Difficulty Number, while examining the creature's lair would add only +1 or +2.

Beastmasters often use this talent to size up an unknown creature's Spell and Social Defenses to determine how well talents such as Dominate Beast will work on it. Similarly, such uses of the Creature Analysis talent can also yield insights about a creature's vulnerabilities—insights that can prove very useful to any adventuring group about to tangle with an unknown beast.

UNDERGROUND TRAVEL

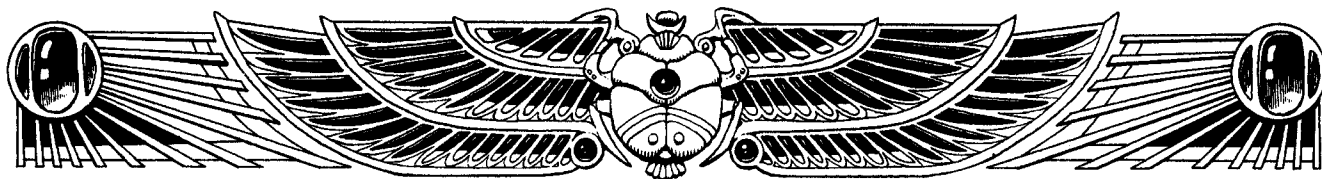
Characters in **Earthdawn** are bound to explore an abandoned or ruined kaer at least once during their adventuring careers. In addition to kaer-crawls, characters may venture underground in search of True earth, while tracking down creatures or Horrors, or seeking shelter from storms. The following passages provide rules that reflect the myriad hazards of underground travel and kaer exploration.

MOVEMENT UNDERGROUND

Movement underground is somewhat slower than movement above-ground. Characters going underground will almost always travel on foot, simply because the ceilings of most tunnels and caves are too low to accommodate mounted characters, and few mounts can navigate the slopes and upgrades commonly found beneath the earth's surface. Additionally, characters must follow the paths already formed by natural tunnels and caves. Not being made by Name-givers, as roads are, many of these paths do not represent the most direct route from place to place. In most circumstances, characters can travel at a rate roughly half to three-quarters of their surface travel rate—about 10–15 miles every 8 hours.

Most tunnels are narrow and have uneven floors covered with loose rocks and dirt. Characters should take their time traveling through these areas, as it is easy to slip and fall if they move too quickly. In particularly rough spots, gamemasters may call for Dexterity Tests against a





Difficulty Number no higher than 5. A failed test should result in either a few points of damage (which armor does not protect against) or a minor injury (see p. 96). Furthermore, many tunnels and caves slope upward or downward, restricting movement even more. Some upgrades and slopes can be so extreme that characters must make Dexterity Tests to safely traverse them. Set the Difficulty Number for these tests between 5 and 7, depending on the grade of the slope. A failed test can cause either a minor injury (for example, a sprained ankle or strained muscle), or falling damage if the slope is severe enough (pp. 206–7, ED).

HAZARDS

The most common hazards of underground travel are unbreathable air, explosive gas, cave-ins and collapses.

Unbreathable Air

Whenever characters enter areas containing stale air or poison gas, allow each character to make a Perception Test to detect any odor or taste that might alert them to the danger. Base the Difficulty Number on the specific conditions that have rendered the air unfit to breathe. Oxygen-poor air is very difficult to detect, and so tests to detect it should have a Difficulty Number of 10 to 12. Air tainted with toxic gases is more likely to smell or taste odd, and so the Difficulty Number might be 6 to 9. A successful Perception Test alerts a character that something is wrong with the air but does not tell him the cause of the problem. Characters with knowledge skills appropriate to underground travel and exploration, such as Natural Science, Geology or Mining, can identify the problem by making an appropriate Skill Test against the same Difficulty Number as the Perception Test. A success enables the character to recognize the specific hazard in the air and suggest an appropriate precaution (wearing cloths over the mouth, running like blazes, and so on). Some animals, especially birds and rodents, are more sensitive to bad air than most Namegivers; characters with familiars or beastmasters with animal companions often rely on these to help them detect hazardous air when traveling underground.

Characters traveling through regions with stale air will suffer from suffocation, as described on p. 99. Extended travel through these areas can also impose a –1 Step penalty on a character's Toughness step for purposes of Fatigue Tests (if applicable).

Traveling through areas containing poison gas can cause damage to the character beyond suffocation. Gamemasters determine the Damage step of any poison gas their characters encounter, to a maximum of Step 6.

Characters suffer this damage once per round for each round they remain in the toxic area.

Explosive Gas

Many natural gases are highly flammable and explode when exposed to open flames such as torches and candles. Treat explosive gas buildup as a trap (pp. 209–10, ED). The following sample statistics offer suggested ratings for explosive gas traps.

SAMPLE EXPLOSIVE GAS TRAP

Detection Difficulty: 7–12

Disarm Difficulty: See preceding text

Trigger Condition: Exposure to open flame

Trap Initiative: 6–9

Trap Effect: Explosion that causes Step 10–20 damage to all characters within the area of the explosive gas.

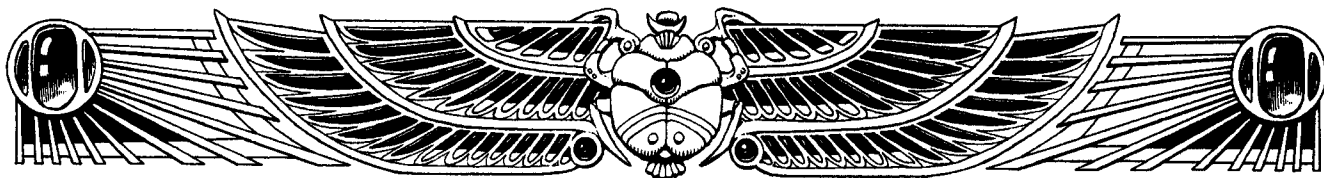
Characters can detect explosive gas by making successful Perception Tests against a Difficulty Number equal to the Detection Difficulty of the gas. If characters detect explosive gas, they can attempt to douse all fire sources before accidentally triggering an explosion. To do so, each character carrying a fire source must make an Initiative Test against the Trap Initiative of the gas. If the test succeeds, the character manages to douse his flame in time. If one or more of the tests fail, the gas ignites and causes the damage listed under Trap Effect.

Cave-Ins and Collapses

At best, cave-ins and collapses impede characters' progress by blocking the way ahead. At worst, they can trap characters under tons of dirt and stone. Collisions with walls or braces or even loud noises in an unstable area can trigger cave-ins. Combat, especially using spells such as Fireball and Ricochet, can trigger a collapse; gas explosions and natural tremors can also trigger them (though these are far less frequent).

Characters entering an area where a collapse may be imminent should make a Perception Test to notice cracks in tunnel walls and ceilings, or weakened or rotting braces in the case of mine or kaer tunnels. Base the Difficulty Number for such tests on the visibility of the cracks or other faults. Characters with knowledge skills associated with mining or underground exploration, such as Geology or Mining, may make appropriate Skill Tests in place of the Perception Tests. Characters can detect potential cave-ins or collapses by sensing minor shifts and tremors in the earth. Typically, these shifts are harder to detect than a





crack in a wall but are often a much more reliable warning of an impending collapse.

Treat cave-ins and collapsing tunnels as traps. The following sample statistics provide suggested ranges for the characteristics of this type of trap. An imminent collapse cannot really be disarmed, except through elemental magic or the aid of an earth spirit at the gamemaster's discretion. The best that most characters can do is leave the dangerous area and/or find shelter from the falling rocks. In the event of a cave-in or collapse, each character should make an Initiative Test and compare the result to the result of a Trap Initiative Test. If the character's result is higher, he or she escapes from the unstable area in time to escape the collapse. Any character whose test fails takes damage from the falling rocks and earth.

SAMPLE CAVE-IN TRAP

Detection Difficulty: 6–10

Disarm Difficulty: See preceding text

Trigger Condition: Collision or loud noise

Trap Initiative: 7–12

Trap Effect: Damage Step 12–18

Besides causing damage, cave-ins can also trap characters underground by blocking their way out of a cave or mine or burying them in rocks. In the latter case, trapped characters may also have to contend with a limited supply of fresh air. Gamemasters must determine how much air any trapped characters have and how long it will last before they begin to suffocate. If such characters attempt to dig themselves out, they must make a Strength Test each round against a Difficulty Number from 5 to 7, to reflect the difficulty of moving all that fallen rock aside without triggering a second collapse. If the characters have talents, spells, or skills that the gamemaster deems appropriate for digging out, he may allow them to use the ability in place of the Strength Tests.

On a Poor result, the trapped characters make no progress freeing themselves. A result lower than Poor causes a minor secondary collapse that causes Step 7 damage to the character(s) doing the digging. It takes an average of 10 success levels to dig out, though gamemasters may adjust this number as they see fit. Each success level achieved counts as 1 success. Each minor collapse reduces the character's accumulated-success tally by 1. For example, a character attempting to dig his way out achieves an Excellent success on his Strength Test. That result counts as 3 success levels. On the next round, however, he fails the Strength Test completely, causing a minor collapse. This costs him 1 of his

3 success levels, leaving him with 2. He must now achieve 8 success levels to free himself.

EXPLORING KAERS

Barsaivian kaers fall into two broad categories: *opened* and *sealed*. Most of the kaers that adventurers are likely to explore have already been opened, either breached during the Scourge by a Horror or opened voluntarily by the kaer's inhabitants after the Scourge ended. Opened kaers that survived the Scourge are the least appealing to explorers; in most cases, they contain nothing of value, unless the kaer's former residents use the place for storage.

Kaers that succumbed to Horrors or some other calamity during the Scourge are far more interesting to the average adventurer. Many such kaers have since become the lairs of various nasty creatures, from stingers and shadowmants to brithans and gargoyles (see **Creatures of Barsaive** and the **ED** rulebook for descriptions). These creatures defend their homes aggressively, attacking characters who try to enter.

Sealed Kaers

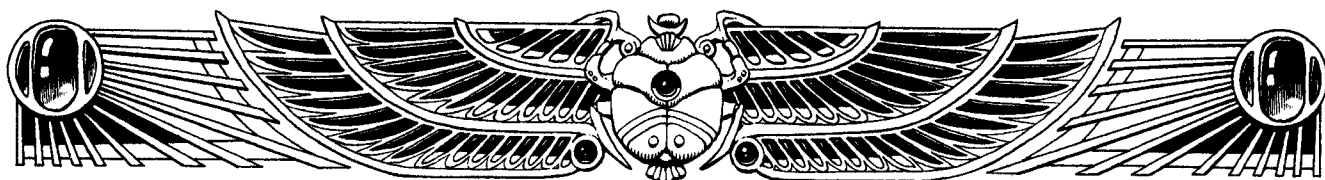
Occasionally, explorers may find an unopened kaer with intact magical wards and defenses. Such kaers may still hold Name-givers unaware that the Scourge has ended and too afraid to emerge. Alternatively, the inhabitants may have died of plague or internal strife, in which case the kaer's treasures are undisturbed.

Kaers were designed to keep out the Horrors, who are both physically and magically powerful, and so entering a sealed kaer is no easy task. The greatest obstacle to entering a sealed kaer are its wards, or sealing spells, which shield the kaer from outside magical influences and keep out Horrors, spirits and other astral beings.

Characters can defeat such sealing spells in two ways. First, characters with the Unraveling Thread Weaving talent knack (p. 31, **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets**) can use it to break such wards. Alternatively, characters can use the Dispel Magic spell.

The rituals used to seal most kaers used Named spells, and so dispelling them is tough (see **Dispelling Named Spells**, p. 37, **Magic: A Manual Of Mystic Secrets**). Typically, adepts attempting to dispel Named spells must obtain pattern items. But in the case of kaer-sealing spells, characters can study the runes that make up the wards and learn enough of a sealing spell's pattern to dispel the spell without a pattern item. To obtain the necessary information from ward runes, a character must spend at least 1 hour studying the runes and make a successful Read and Write Magic Test or Item History Test against the sealing





Dealing with Traps

After entering a kaer, explorers must get past the many traps set by the kaer's original residents (pp. 209–10, ED). Kaer-builders commonly filled kaer entryways with traps of all kinds intended to incapacitate or drive off Horrors that might manage to penetrate the kaer's wards and outer seals. In sealed kaers, many such traps are still in place and functioning; others may have been repaired or even improved by new inhabitants.

Spike traps, blade traps, pits and crushing traps are the most common physical traps found in kaers. Magical traps were also frequently employed as well, such as those that cast terrible spells like Onion Blood and Skin Shift on their victims. The **Ruins of Parlainth** section of the **Parlainth: The Forgotten City Campaign Set** provides examples of nine different types of traps. Gamemasters can use those traps as examples when creating their own traps for characters to encounter when they explore kaers.

The following sample trap has been reprinted here for the benefit of readers who do not have the **Parlainth** book.

MAGICAL TRAP

Detection Difficulty: 5

Spell Defense: 19

Disarm Difficulty: 19

Trigger Condition: The gamemaster makes a Step 17 Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of any character within 10 feet of the trap. If the test succeeds, the character triggers the trap.

Trap Initiative: 30

Trap Effect: The trap casts an Onion Blood spell (p. 86, **ED Companion**) against the character who triggered it. The spell has Spellcasting Step 17 and Effect Step 23, and it causes damage in each round for 10 rounds.

Dangerous Kaer Dwellers

Horrors and other intelligent inhabitants of ruined kaers may set traps, wards and other barriers to capture, harry or incapacitate intruders in and around the entrance of their lair. The Horror Artificer is well known for the fiendish traps it lays for unsuspecting explorers (see p. 16, **Horrors**). Though most of these kaer-dwellers are Horrors or Horror constructs, some kaers have become havens for Name-giver cults such as the Horror-worshipping Cult of the Great Hunter. Many kaers inhabited by Horrors or cults set cadaver men (p. 288, **ED**) to guard entry tunnels; most often, these guards are the re-animated corpses of the kaer's former residents. In some instances, Named Horrors

use Horror constructs as guards. Jehuthra, bone shamblers, black mantises and blood bees are among the favorites (see the **ED** rulebook and **Parlainth: The Forgotten City** for game information on these constructs).

HEALTH AND HEALING

The following section provides rules and game information for healing damage, dealing with diseases and poisons, making natural medicines, and other subjects covered in **On the Healing Arts** (p. 77).

FIRST TREATMENT

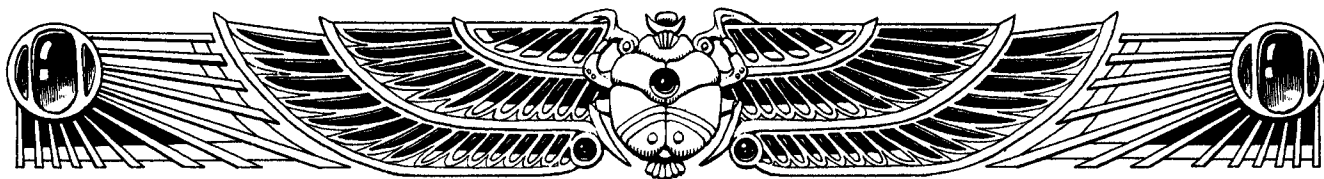
When a character suffers damage, standard rules assume that he has been cut or bruised and is most likely bleeding. If desired, gamemasters can use the optional **Wounds that Bleed** rules (p. 117, **Earthdawn Companion**) in such instances. Otherwise, simply assume that characters dress and clean any open cuts following a battle.

Wounds become infected if they are particularly dirty, or if the character fails to change his dressings regularly or otherwise exposes the Wound to especially unsanitary conditions. For example, say a character suffers a Wound in combat during which he has been knocked down repeatedly in a large mud puddle. He is also unable to treat the Wound, so after 1 or 2 days it becomes infected. Likewise, if the character cleaned and dressed his Wound right away but the next day joined a battle and got knocked into swamp water, the Wound would become infected unless he takes care to clean it again.

Treat infected wounds as injuries (see p. 96) that impose a –1 penalty to the character's Dexterity or Strength Attribute (gamemaster's choice). Infected Wounds cannot be healed for at least 2 days, and then only if the Wound is treated and cleaned each day after the infection sets in.

Dressing Wounds is especially important if the gamemaster is using the optional Wounds that Bleed rule. Bleeding Wounds continue to cause the character damage until they are treated properly. In most circumstances, simply applying pressure to a Wound will stop the bleeding. Gamemasters may rule that particularly nasty Wounds must be cauterized, which is most often done with heated knife blades or other hot implements that burn the Wound shut. Cauterization is extremely painful, and a character whose Wound requires such treatment suffers from an injury that imposes a –1 penalty to his Dexterity or Strength Attribute as appropriate. This type of injury can be healed after only 1 day. Wounds can also be cauterized by certain magical spells, such as Flame Flash or Ignite. Unfortunately, using these spells in this way causes the





DISEASE EFFECTS TABLE

Disease	Type	Onset Time	Spell Defense	Step Number	Duration
Bone Plague	Debilitation	2–3 days	6	9	3–4 weeks
Death's Caress	Death	3–6 hours	8	12	4–5 days
Lung-Rot	Debilitation	1–4 months	7	7	Chronic
Quaking Fever	Debilitation	1–3 days	6	6	7–10 days
Smiling Death	Debilitation	1 week	6	10	2 weeks
Walking Fever	Death	1–2 days	7	9	3 weeks
Yellow Jig	Paralysis	2–4 days	6	8	2–4 weeks

character to suffer the normal damage inflicted by the spell. However, the Flame Blade spell can be used to cauterize Wounds without causing additional damage.

REST AND RECOVERY

Rest and recovery is the best prescription for healing damage. Characters can recover from damage by using their allotted daily Recovery Tests (p. 51, ED). At least 1 hour must pass between each test, and players whose characters lapse into unconsciousness must wait at least 1 minute before making the first Recovery Test for that character.

If a character is injured (takes any non-permanent damage), he or she must make a Recovery Test after each night of rest. Characters with only 1 Recovery Test per day use their test each morning and can only recover after a full night's rest. If a character has more than 1 Recovery Test per day, the player may make the tests during the day per the rules for **Recovering from Damage** (p. 203, ED).

Characters often use healing aids, such as booster and healing potions, to enhance their Recovery Tests. However, a character must be conscious and able to swallow to use such a potion—these healing aids cannot be poured down an unconscious character's throat. Doing so inflicts suffocation/drowning damage on the character (see p. 99).

DISEASES

Diseases in **Earthdawn** work like poisons (p. 207–8, ED). Each disease has a standard onset time, a given duration, a specific effect, a Spell Defense and an Effect Step. Characters can catch a disease from exposure to a disease-carrying Name-giver or creature, or from disease-prone environments such as jungles and swamps.

A character who is exposed to a disease must make an immediate Toughness Test against the disease's Spell Defense to determine if he has become infected. If the test succeeds, the character resists the disease. If the test fails, the character comes down with the illness, which begins to

take effect after the onset time has expired. Many diseases cause minor symptoms during onset that allow other characters to detect and diagnose them. However, some diseases produce no visible symptoms until the character has developed a full-blown case.

After the initial infection (the first failed Toughness Test), an infected character may make up to two more Toughness Tests to throw off the disease. The first test is made when the onset time expires, the second halfway through the disease's duration. If either test succeeds, the character recovers after the duration listed in the disease description. If both tests fail, the character and his companions can only let the disease run its course and hope for the best. If the disease is Deadly, the character may very well die at the end of the disease's duration unless he receives additional treatment.

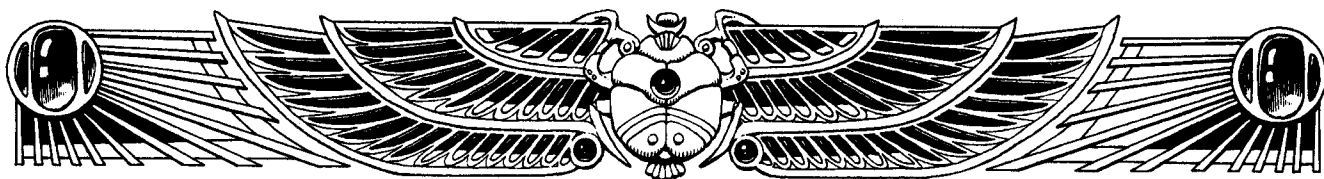
Diseases and Their Effects

The following Disease Effects Table provides game statistics for the diseases described in **On the Healing Arts** (p. 77). Instructions for using each disease are provided after the table.

Many additional diseases exist in Barsaive, along with plagues and illnesses spawned by curses, Horrors and magic gone wrong. Feel free to invent new and insidious diseases to inflict on your players as they explore Barsaive. Generally speaking, a disease should provide some obstacle or limitation for a character to overcome, rather than simply laying him flat on his back for a week of game time. Playing sick for a whole game isn't much fun.

Bone Plague: Each week that a character is infected with bone plague, make a Disease Effect Test against the character's Toughness step. Treat the effect of the illness like a Debilitating Poison (p. 208, ED). The step penalty affects only tests for physical actions. If the disease reduces a character's Strength or Dexterity step to 0 or lower, the character becomes too weak to stand or move on his own.





Lost steps are recovered at a rate of 1 per day of rest after the end of the bone plague's duration.

Death's Caress: Death's caress is one of the few Deadly diseases listed here. A character who fails all tests to overcome this illness is likely to die at the end of the disease's duration without powerful magical healing.

Lung-rot: Each month a character suffers from lung-rot, make a Disease Effect Test against the character's Toughness step. Treat the effect as a Debilitating Poison, with a maximum step reduction of -2 per test. This penalty affects only physical Attributes: Dexterity, Strength and Toughness. If the disease reduces the character's Toughness to 0, the character dies.

The disease is chronic, and so its effects continue until the character is healed by mundane or magical treatment. Once the disease is cured, make a final Disease Effect Test against the character's Toughness step. If the test yields an Excellent or better success, the disease scars the character's lungs and permanently reduces his or her Dexterity, Strength and Toughness steps by 1.

Quaking Fever: Treat the effects of quaking fever like a Debilitating Poison. This disease is never fatal.

Smiling Death: Make a Disease Effect Test every three days for characters infected with smiling death. Treat the disease's effect like a Debilitating Poison. If the disease reduces the character's Toughness step to 0, the character dies. Otherwise, he or she eventually recovers. Enforced rest and plenty of fluids allow an afflicted character to recover lost Toughness steps at a rate of 1 per day, which should be enough to keep the character alive in most cases.

Walking Fever: If a character exposed to darkbloom spores fails his first Toughness Test, he becomes infected and begins to develop symptoms. The second Toughness Test, made halfway through the disease's duration, determines if the character lives or dies. If the second test succeeds, the character throws off the infection and awakens.

If the test fails, the character succumbs to the infection and becomes a gamemaster character. Victims seek shelter in a dark, dank place. Anyone coming into contact with them for the next 10 to 14 days risks infection from the spores the infected character bears. At the end of that time, the victim dies and his body becomes host to a new collection of darkbloom fungus, which will quickly begin sprouting.

Yellow Jig: Treat the effects of yellow jig like a Paralyzing Poison (p. 208, ED). Each day after the onset time expires, make a Disease Effect Test against the afflicted character's Toughness step. An Average success reduces all of the character's step numbers by 1; a Good success reduces them by 2. An Excellent success or better reduces all step numbers by 2 and indicates that the character will

have 1 to 4 convulsive episodes that day, each lasting 2D6 Combat Rounds. Treat a convulsing character as if he is affected by a Bone Dance spell (p. 174, ED); use the result of the Disease Effect Test as the normal Effect Test result.

Disease Treatments

Diseases can be treated with herbal medicines and the Physician skill (p. 132, ED), as well as by magic.

Gamemasters should determine exact herbal treatments for the various diseases in their games, based on the following guidelines. First, any disease whose effects act like a poison may be treated with any remedy that works against poisons. For example, dragon's tongue, serpent vine and star root (see **Medicines and Remedies**) can all be used to treat disease. These simple remedies give an infected character additional Toughness Tests or provide a step bonus for these tests. If desired, create other remedies that work in the same manner.

Other treatments, such as magical ones, can completely cure a disease if applied correctly.

MEDICINES AND REMEDIES

The following game mechanics apply to the herbal medicines and remedies described in **On The Healing Arts**.

Adept's Blood

A character who consumes a dose of the adept's blood elixir experiences vivid hallucinations and waking dreams for the next 4 to 16 hours. This prevents the character from fully resting and reduces his Recovery Tests by 1 for the next day. The character's Spell Defense against illusion magic drops to 3 for the duration of the extract's effect.

Bloodwort

Dressing a wound with bloodwort stanches bleeding and grants +2 steps for Recovery Tests made to heal cuts and open wounds.

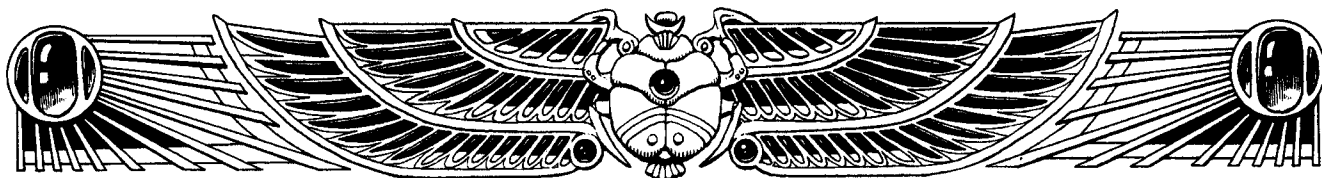
Bog Moss

Bog-moss dressings prevent most infections and help keep wounds clean if used and changed regularly. They also grant an additional Recovery Test to the injured character every other day of treatment. This effect ceases once a character has healed all of his Wounds and damage.

Dragon's Tongue

Dragon's tongue is a mild stimulant and grants any character who drinks it a +3 step bonus on Toughness Tests against ingested poisons, provided that the character consumes the dragon's tongue before the poison's onset





time. If taken after the onset time, the character gains an additional Toughness Test against the poison's Spell Defense, but without the +3 step bonus.

Eyebright

Fresh eyebright tea gives a human drinker low-light vision like that of an elf or ork for 1 hour after the tea is taken. This effect shows itself by a slight shine and sparkle to the drinker's eyes. Eyebright tea has no effect on other Name-givers.

Garlen's Hand

Treatment with Garlen's hand encourages healing of all kinds. It provides an additional Recovery Test each day of treatment and helps promote smooth and rapid healing of most injuries.

Garlic

Garlic juice soothes and cleans rashes, repels small insects and forces larger ones to make successful Willpower Tests against a Difficulty of 7 before approaching a character liberally coated with it. (It won't do much for the character's social life, either.)

Helm of Bravery

When consumed, Helm of Bravery provides a +3 bonus to a character's Social Defense against fear and intimidation. Unfortunately, the bravado it inspires prohibits the character from taking a Defensive Stance or Giving Ground while under the influence of the drug. The character must make a successful Perception Test against a Difficulty of 9 to recognize and withdraw from certain danger. The effects of Helm of Bravery last 2 to 4 hours from the time the mushroom is consumed.

Jikar Root

Fresh jikar root gives the character a powerful energy boost that allows him or her to immediately recover all damage from Strain and fatigue (see p. 98). However, when the root wears off, the character gains all that damage back again and must recover it normally. This can be dangerous if the character has continued to exert himself since taking the root; the accumulated damage can render the character unconscious or even kill him if it exceeds his Death Rating.

Mahogany Trinrose

Any character who drinks tea brewed from mahogany trinrose petals gains a +3 step bonus on his or her next Recovery Test that day. The blossoms are also the only

known cure for an infestation of the blood algae (p. 111, **Serpent River** sourcebook) that blooms in many regions of the Serpent River.

Mist Blossoms

A poultice of mist blossoms heals burn damage more rapidly than normal. If using the optional rules for burn damage (see p. 99) the burns will heal like normal Wounds, at the rate of 1 burn per Recovery Test used. Otherwise, mist blossoms add +3 steps to all Recovery Tests to recover from burn damage.

Mynbruje's Balm

A tea or infusion of Mynbruje's balm eliminates all step penalties from Wounds and the effects of injuries for up to 4 hours, allowing the character to act normally during that time. However, it does not heal damage or protect the character from further injury, and existing injuries may be aggravated if a character using the balm strains himself too much while under its pain-killing influence. At the end of 4 hours, the character once again suffers the full penalties of any current Wounds or injuries.

Sarfran

A broth of sarfran gives a character an additional Recovery Test per day to recover from damage to his or her bones, such as that caused by the Bone Shatter spell and similar effects.

Serpent Vine

A poultice of serpent vine paste, applied immediately to a poisoned Wound, grants the character an additional Toughness Test against the Spell Defense of the poison to purge it from his system. The character gains a +5 step bonus on his Toughness Test if the poison comes from a snake or snake-like creature.

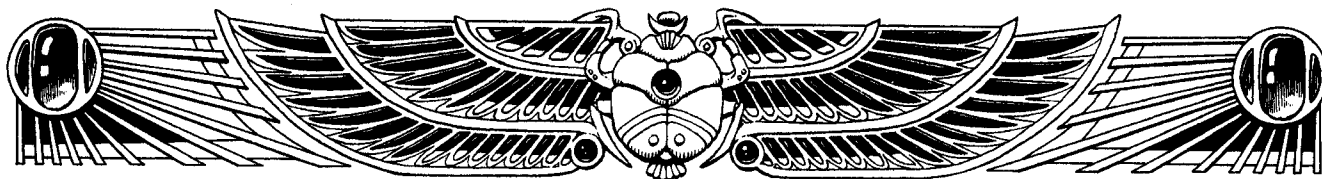
Star Root

Consuming the juice of star-root berries lets the character make an immediate Toughness Test against the Spell Defense of any poison in his or her body.

Surrunic

Surrunic seeds give a character who chews them or drinks them in tea a +3 bonus to his or her Social Defense for all Interaction Tests (p. 237, **ED**). However, surrunic also imposes a -3 step penalty on all of the character's own tests made against other characters' Social Defense Ratings and makes the character single-minded, brusque and rude. These effects usually last for a couple of hours.





POISON EFFECTS TABLE

Poison	Type	Onset Time	Spell Defense	Step Number	Duration
Black Brine	Debilitation	2 rounds	6	9	2 hours
Black Mercy	Paralysis	Instant	8	11	6 hours
Elfbane	Death	1 hour	8	10	Permanent
Eyebite	Blindness	3 rounds	6	8	4 hours
Fireleaf	Damage	1 round	6	8	Permanent
Hemlock	Death	10 minutes	7	11	Permanent
Keesra	Sleep	Instant	7	10	Effect Test hours
Laésal	Forgetfulness	5 rounds	8	12	Permanent
Night Pollen	Damage	1 round	6	10	Permanent
Padendra	Death	2 rounds	7	10	Permanent
Remis Berries	Death	2 hours	7	9	Permanent
Shadowmant					
Venom	Damage	Instant	8	9	10 rounds
Whadrya	Paralysis	Instant	6	10	1 hour
Witherfang					
Venom	Withering	Instant	7	12	Permanent

Vreela

A vreela poultice relieves any pain from Wounds and eliminates all penalties for Wounds and injuries (p. 96). It also makes the user drowsy, giving the character a -1 step penalty to all actions while the effect lasts.

Vreela is toxic if taken internally. It will induce convulsions and vomiting, then unconsciousness and eventually death if enough is ingested.

POISONS

The Poison Effects Table above provides game statistics for the various poisons described in **On the Healing Arts**. For more information on poisons, see pages 207–8, ED.

RESURRECTION

Certain **Earthdawn** talents, spells and items enable characters to cheat death by avoiding it at the moment it comes knocking or even resurrecting dead characters. Both methods are difficult, but the former is more common than the latter. Death Cheat blood charms, the Life Check talent and last-chance salves all enable a character to escape death at the moment of reckoning by allowing the character to make an immediate Recovery Test. If the test result heals enough of the character's Total Damage to prevent it from exceeding his or her Death Rating, the character lives.

Resurrecting characters who have been dead for some time—from hours to centuries—requires even more power-

ful magic. When using spells such as Journey to Life, the subject can have been dead only a short time. For characters who have been dead for a long time, returning them to life is best handled as a special adventure in which the dead character's companions and friends travel into the realm of Death and attempt to return their loved one to the world of the living. Stories and legends about Death in this book and other **Earthdawn** products provide suggestions on how a band of adepts might make such a journey. **The Masquerade of Death's Dreams**, in **Legends of Earthdawn Volume II: The Book of Exploration**, is just one example of such a journey.

PLACES OF LEGEND AND PERIL

The following game rules and guidelines apply to travel in those unique Named places described in the **Places of Legend and Peril** section, beginning on page 60.

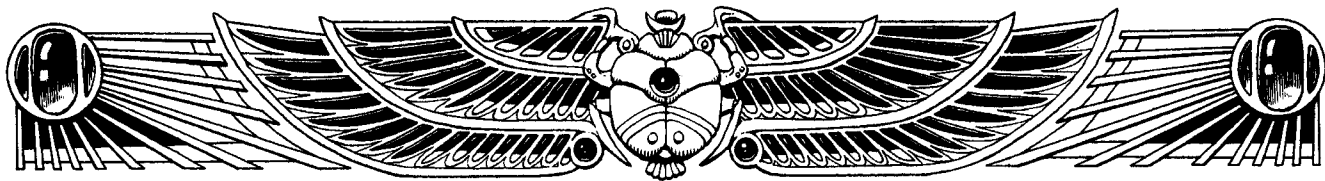
THE BADLANDS

The Badlands lie between Byrose River and Death's Sea, stretching north to the shores of the Serpent River and south to the foothills of the Dragon Mountains.

Travel and Survival

The rough, uneven terrain of the Badlands is too rough for most mounts; only the stajin used by some ork scorcher tribes are tough enough to traverse the rocky, barren ground for any length of time without injuring a limb.





Wagon and cart wheels are likely to break after a scant few miles, so foot travel is the only feasible option for overland travel. However, the uneven ground even slows foot travelers; characters can expect to move roughly half to three-quarters of the distance they can normally cover in 8 hours. Travel in the Badlands is also extremely tiring, and so characters who travel for longer than 8 hours per day must make Fatigue Tests (p. 98) for each extra hour.

Few creatures and little plant life exist in the Badlands, and so finding food is quite a challenge. The Difficulty Number for Foraging Tests in the Badlands is 13; for Hunting Tests use a Difficulty Number 12. At night, when some of the animals native to the Badlands come out, the Difficulty for Hunting Tests drops to 10.

The Badlands contain little standing water; the Difficulty Number for finding water is 13, except for the region near the River of Bones. Virtually all water sources in the Badlands are tainted or contaminated, so characters should purify any water drawn from them if possible. Furthermore, much of the water in the Badlands contains dread iotas, microscopic Horrors that pose as much or more danger than any disease (see p. 78, **Horrors** sourcebook).

Finding shelter in the Badlands is fairly easy, as it abounds in caves and rocky outcroppings. The Difficulty Number for finding shelter is 5. Travelers should note, however, that many caves in the Badlands lead to abandoned kaers, most of which fell to the Horrors during the Scourge. Many other caves are lairs for creatures and Horrors. Building shelter in the Badlands is extremely difficult, as suitable materials aside from rocks are hard to find. The Difficulty Number for building a shelter in the Badlands is 9.

Special Hazards

Travelers in the Badlands risk various injuries, as well as encounters with vicious creatures, Horrors and their constructs, and Theran patrols. Sunburn is a particularly prevalent injury; the sun beats down mercilessly in this land of parched stone, and characters who do not take proper precautions may suffer sunburns severe enough to impede their abilities. Characters are also likely to suffer such minor injuries as sprained ankles or strained muscles, from climbing and crawling over the rough terrain. In especially rough areas, the gamemaster may have the characters make Dexterity Tests against a Difficulty Number of 5 to avoid slipping or falling and injuring themselves. If the test fails, the character has tripped or fallen and suffers an injury. (See pp. 96–99 for rules governing sunburn, sprained ankles and so on.)

Most of the Badlands' dangerous beasts remain hidden in their lairs during the heat of the day. When night

falls, however, the area's creatures, minor Horrors and Horror constructs emerge. The most common creatures in the Badlands include lightning lizards, basilisks, chimeras, hell hounds, hydras and molgrims (see the **Creatures of Barsaive** sourcebook for statistics; lightning lizards also appear on p. 306, **ED**). Dread iotas are the minor Horrors that characters are most likely to encounter; gnashers and wingfayers are also common, however, and many abandoned kaers are home to wormskulls and bloatforms. (See pp. 78, 79 and 81, **Horrors** sourcebook, for dread iota, gnasher and wingfayer statistics. For bloatforms and wormskulls, see pp. 299 and 303–4, **ED** rulebook.)

Horror constructs are more common than Horrors in the Badlands, however. Characters are most likely to run into jehuthras, plagues and shadows, but they may encounter bone shamblers as well. The most unusual Horror construct in the Badlands is the vektha, which has the same statistics as the bone shambler. Additionally, vektha can magically compel onlookers to stare at them and then afflict the victims with a thirst so terrible that weak-willed Name-givers have been known to drown themselves attempting to quench it. (Statistics for these Horror constructs appear in the following books: jehuthra, p. 305, **ED**; plagues, p. 84, **Horrors**; shadows, p. 85, **Creatures of Barsaive**; bone shambler, p. 63, **Parlainth** sourcebook.)

Raw Magic in the Badlands

The level of devastation in the Badlands rivals that of the Wastes and the Forgotten City of Parlainth. For purposes of casting raw magic, consider the Badlands a Corrupt region (p. 156, **ED**).

DEATH'S SEA

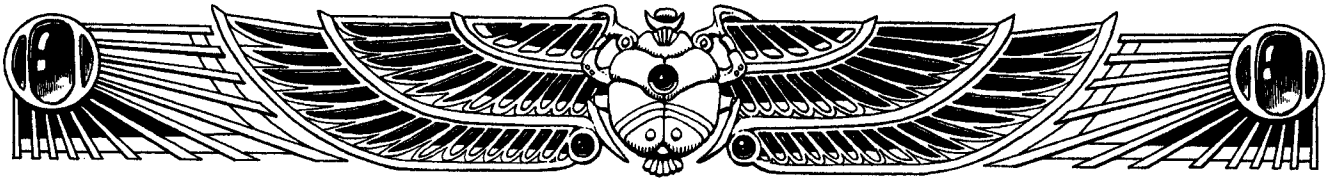
The game rules given for travel and survival in and around Death's Sea also apply to the nearby Scarlet Sea.

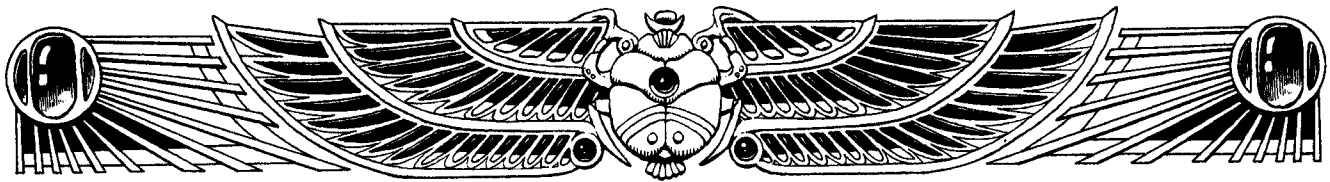
Travel near Death's Sea

Death's Sea is ringed by high cliffs and rock formations that contain paths leading down to the fiery shoreline. Characters who travel down these paths must contend with the sea's intense heat, as well as creatures that dwell in and near the Sea.

The heat of Death's Sea makes characters traveling near it more susceptible to fatigue (see p. 98). Such travelers may even risk burns or heat stroke if exposed to the heat for prolonged periods of time. When traveling within two hundred yards of Death's Sea, characters suffer a –1 step penalty when making Fatigue Tests. Armor worn near Death's Sea adds its Initiative Penalty to this step penalty. For example, a character wearing crystal ringlet armor would suffer a –3







step penalty to his Fatigue Tests (-1 for the heat alone, plus -2 for the armor). Traveling within fifty yards of the sea increases the standard penalty to -2 steps.

Any character within 50 yards of Death's Sea must make a Toughness Test every 2 hours to resist the heat. The test takes a Difficulty Number of 6. If the test succeeds, the character suffers no ill effects. If the test fails, the character suffers from either heat stroke or a severe burn at the gamemaster's discretion. (See p. 99 for game effects for both of these injuries.)

The only way to cross Death's Sea itself is via airship.

Special Hazards

Aside from the heat, common hazards of travel near Death's Sea are encounters with various native creatures and exposure to the molten magma that constitutes the sea.

The few creatures that live in and around Death's Sea are firebirds and fire eagles, brocchas, viraas, fire wraiths and magma beasts. Firebirds and fire eagles nest in the cliffs surrounding the sea, while brocchas and viraas live on the clenkas that bob along the sea's surface. Magma beasts live in the magma itself, and fire wraiths can be found anywhere within the general environs. Few Horrors or constructs live near Death's Sea, with the exception of wingflayers. Wingflayers in this region often resemble small piles of ash and may be the remains of unfortunate victims of magma beasts. (For firebird and magma beast statistics, see the **Creatures of Barsaive** sourcebook; for fire eagles, brocchas, viraas and fire wraiths, see the **Barsaive GM Book** from the **Barsaive Campaign Set**.)

Climbing the paths along the seashore cliffs requires Climbing or Dexterity Tests against a Difficulty Number of 4, though the more treacherous paths may raise the Difficulty Number to 7 or even 9. If such a test fails, the character stumbles and falls toward Death's Sea. The player character may then attempt to grab hold of something by making a Dexterity or Strength Test against the same Difficulty Number as the Climbing Test. If this second test fails, the character falls into the magma.

The boiling magma inflicts Step 50 damage on any character who falls into it, for each Combat Round that he remains immersed plus 2 Combat Rounds after he gets out. No armor protects against this damage. The character loses everything he is carrying or wearing (weapons, armor, and so on), and the magma vaporizes him in seconds. (Technically, a character can survive this experience, but very few characters can survive such massive damage.)

Occasionally, the magma pops and bubbles, sending spurts into the air that can strike nearby characters. When this happens, the gamemaster makes a test using Step 4 dice and compares the result to the Physical Defense of any

character within 10 yards of the spurt. If the test result equals or exceeds a character's Physical Defense, the magma hits that character, and he or she suffers Step 40 damage for 3 rounds. Characters can avoid this damage by successfully using the Avoid Blow talent or skill or by making Dexterity Tests. The Difficulty Number for all such tests is the result of the gamemaster's test for the magma.

Dying by falling into molten stone or at the hands of a random magma spurt may seem arbitrary to many players, so gamemasters should carefully consider the consequences before inflicting either fate on player characters.

THE MIST SWAMPS

The Mist Swamps are shrouded in thick steam that covers more than three hundred square miles. Characters may come to the Mist Swamps in search of the ancient city rumored to lie beneath the swampland; seeking an audience with the great dragon Aban; or in search of the Castle of Assassins, the training center of the dreaded living legend cult known as the Hand of Corruption.

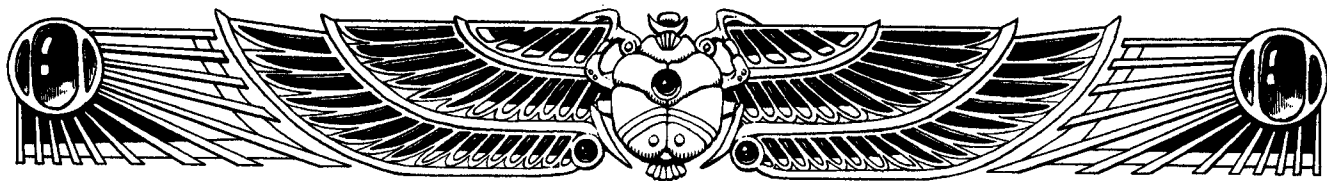
Travel and Survival

The wet and muddy terrain, pervasive heat and humidity, and heavy mists all make travel through the Mist Swamps much slower than normal. Adventurers must wade through long stretches of bogland where the stagnant water ranges from ankle- to waist-deep. Obsidiman and troll characters, who are larger and heavier than Name-givers of other races, are especially prone to sinking into the soft ground. Dwarfs also face a special difficulty—they are too short to step easily from muddy ground into deep bog and back out again. The perpetual mist and high humidity dampen the wings of windling characters, making flight more difficult for them.

Windlings can only travel for 15 minutes before suffering Strain (pp. 123–24, **Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I**). Along stretches of particularly uneven ground, where watery patches are at least knee deep and nearby ground is at least three feet above the water's surface, all characters may have to make Dexterity or Climbing Tests when stepping down from mud flats into water or climbing up out of deep bog onto higher ground. The Difficulty Number for these tests should be 5 or 6, at the gamemaster's discretion. If the test fails, the character stumbles into the water—headfirst if he is entering the water and backward if exiting. The character gets soaked and may also catch a disease from ingesting water, or come up covered with leeches.

Under the best conditions, daytime visibility in the Mist Swamps never exceeds 100–200 feet. Most often, however, visibility is limited to 10–15 yards and worsens as





daylight fades. At night, visibility drops to 20 feet at best, regardless of any light sources adventurers carry. Day or night, reduced visibility means that characters can travel only half to three-quarters the distance they would normally cover in 8 hours. Mounts can travel in the Mist Swamps, though at similarly reduced speeds.

Reduced visibility and rough terrain also make hunting and foraging fairly difficult. The Difficulty Number for Foraging Tests is 8, for Hunting Tests 7. Finding water is simple enough, but so little of it is suitable for drinking that all of it should be purified. Characters should take extra care when purifying water in the Mist Swamps, as it is often infested with disease.

Use a Difficulty Number of 9 for tests to find shelter, as the only suitable natural shelter in the swamplands is the few hollow trees. Building shelters is slightly easier, as the abundant fallen trees and loose branches make suitable building materials. The Difficulty Number for tests to build shelters is 7.

Special Hazards

Special hazards of the Mist Swamps include oppressive heat and humidity, disease, quicksand, encounters with native creatures, Theran exploring parties and the great dragon Aban.

The steamy heat of the Mist Swamps makes characters more susceptible to fatigue, and so they must make Fatigue Tests for each hour of traveling beyond 8. For characters wearing armor, subtract the armor's Initiative Modifier from the character's Toughness step for these tests. For example, a character wearing plate mail armor in the Mist Swamps suffers a -4 step penalty when making a Fatigue Test.

No place in Barsaive is as disease-ridden as the Mist Swamps. The combination of a hot, humid climate and a staggering variety of animals and insects creates an ideal breeding ground for diseases. Characters traveling through the Mist Swamps may be exposed to disease primarily by falling into the dirty swamp water or being bitten by insects, leeches or infected animals. Once exposed to a disease, follow the rules for **Diseases** (p. 107 of this section) to determine if the character actually succumbs to the illness.

If a character falls into the water, make a test using Step 4 dice against the character's Toughness step. If the character is suffering from a Wound at the time, use Step 5 dice to account for the added risk that the Wound will become infected. If the test succeeds, the character is exposed to a disease of the gamemaster's choice.

Insect bites are common in the Mist Swamps, and preventing them is next to impossible. To determine if a character is exposed to a disease from insect bites, make a test using Step 1 dice against the character's Toughness step.

On a Good or better success, the character is exposed to a disease of the gamemaster's choosing.

Characters bitten by leeches may also become ill. Any time a character falls into the water or walks through knee-deep or higher water, roll D10. If the result is a 10, 1-6 leeches (the exact number to be determined by the gamemaster) attach themselves to the character. If the leeches remain on a character for more than 5 minutes before they are detected, the character is exposed to any disease the leeches carry. Detecting leeches while in the water requires a successful Perception Test against a Difficulty Number of 9. If this test fails, the character can attempt to detect leeches when he exits the water by making a Perception Test against a Difficulty Number of 5. Characters can easily remove any leeches they detect.

To catch a disease via a bite from a diseased animal or creature, the beast must inflict a Wound on the character. If the bite does not break the character's skin, the character is not exposed to the disease.

Quicksand, a hazard specific to bogs and swamps, is treated as a trap in **Earthdawn**. In the following game statistics, the Detection Difficulty represents the character's ability to recognize the quicksand before stepping in it. Characters with the Survival skill or applicable knowledge skills add +2 steps to all Skill Tests to recognize quicksand. The Trap Initiative represents the difficulty of jumping away from the quicksand before it begins to suck the character in.

If a character sinks below the quicksand's surface, he or she begins to take damage from drowning. During the first round in which he is submerged, the character takes Step 5 damage. For each additional round, the character takes 3 additional steps of damage.

QUICKSAND TRAP

Detection Difficulty: 9

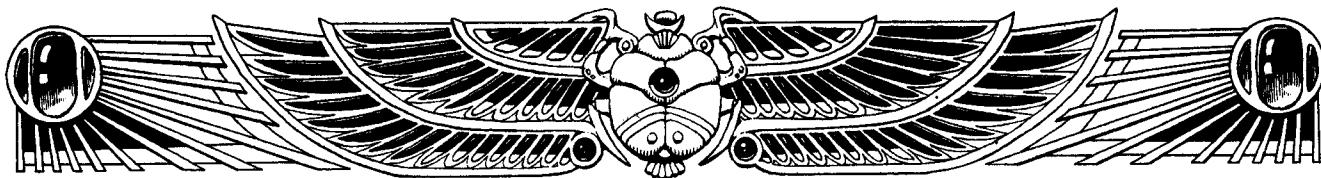
Disarm Difficulty: NA

Trigger Condition: Character stepping into quicksand

Trap Initiative: 17

Trap Effect: A character who falls into quicksand begins to sink at a rate of 3 feet per round. To free himself, the character must grasp a rope or something like it (a tree root, a sturdy vine, a thick stick and so on) and pull himself out. During the first round the character spends in the quicksand, he must make a successful Strength Test against a Difficulty Number of 5 to pull himself out. The Difficulty Number increases by 2 for each round after the first. Alternatively, other characters may pull the victim out by successfully making the same tests.





Travelers in the Mist Swamps may encounter a wide variety of creatures, other Name-givers (primarily Therans) and even the great dragon Aban. The Mist Swamps are home to a dazzling variety of snakes, lizards and other potentially dangerous reptiles, and many of the creatures found in the Servos Jungle (p. 111, **The Serpent River**) also live in this region. In the area of the swamps closest to the Scarlet Sea, characters may run into creatures such as the viraas, which normally lives on clenkas and fool's islands in the Scarlet and Death's seas.

Encounters with other Name-givers are much rarer, though recently the Therans at the fortress of Triumph have sent numerous groups into the swamp. Reportedly, these groups are searching for the ruins of Yrns Morgath, the so-called Great City of the South (see p. 70), as well as ruins of Theran encampments abandoned before the Scourge. Any Therans the characters meet in the Mist Swamps attempt to avoid the adventurers but happily engage in battle if the characters force the issue. Theran exploring groups consist largely of non-adept soldiers, usually accompanied by two to three Second or Third Circle adepts.

The dragon Aban claims the Mist Swamps as her territory, and so characters trespassing in the region may run into her or her drake servants. The drakes always appear before Aban herself shows up and make every effort to force the characters out of the Mist Swamps. However, they attack characters only as a last resort. (Aban isn't interested in killing Name-givers; she just wants them off her lands.) Characters who meet Aban are advised to not question her claim to the Mist Swamps, lest they become a quick snack. Since the Therans have begun their incursions, Aban has

grown more tolerant of non-Theran Name-givers in the Mist Swamps, especially if she can persuade them to track down the Theran intruders. If the characters have participated in the events described in **The Dragons' Daughter** (pp. 65–84, **Prelude to War: An Earthdawn Epic**), Aban will know of their efforts on the great dragons' behalf. In this case, she will leave them unmolested. She may even aid them, depending on their reasons for being in the Mist Swamps.



THE WASTES

The Wastes form the western border of Barsaive, stretching from the Delaris Mountains to just south of the Serpent River where it turns north past Iopos. Once home to some of the wealthiest kaers and citadels in Barsaive, the Wastes were devastated beyond redemption during the Scourge. Adventurers who travel to the Wastes in search of its vast riches and hidden treasures are often never heard from again.

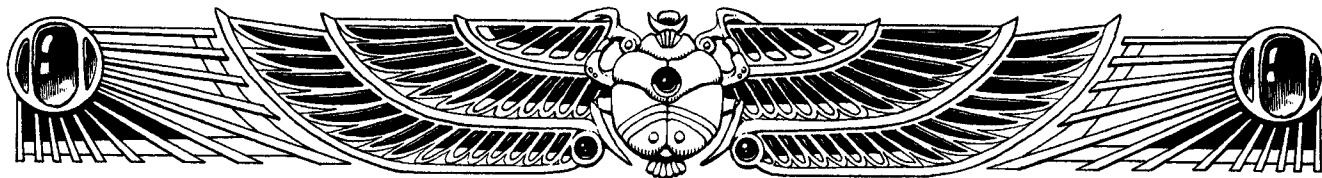
Travel and Survival

The ever-present ash clouds that hover over the Wastes and the nearby Poison Forest reduce visibility and traveling speed. In the best conditions—during daylight when a strong wind is blowing—the clouds limit visibility to roughly 100 yards; usually, maximum daytime visibility is 50–75 yards. At night, maximum visibility drops to 20–30 yards. The clouds often cause travelers to move a bit more slowly and cover 10 to 20 percent less distance than normal—about 20 miles per day on foot and 35 miles per day mounted.

The ash clouds also affect navigation, increasing the Difficulty Numbers of all Navigation and Mapmaking Tests by 3.

The barren, blighted landscape holds few wholesome plants or animals, and so foraging and hunting are difficult. The Difficulty Number for Foraging Tests is 13, for





Hunting Tests 11. Most of what little is edible is covered with ash and tastes revolting. Characters who ingest too much of the ash along with their food may become mildly ill, as if they had eaten bad food (see p. 97).

Finding water—another tough proposition—requires a successful test against a Difficulty Number of 13. Little standing water exists in the Wastes, and no sizable rivers run through them. Like foodstuffs, sources of water are contaminated by the ash and taste just as awful. Filtering the water through cloth is the only known effective means of removing the ash, though even this does not remove the bad taste. Characters who drink filtered water, however, suffer none of the ill effects described in **Special Hazards**.

The blasted landscape offers few natural shelters and few building materials. The Difficulty Number for finding or building shelter is 10.

Special Hazards

The most significant hazard in the Wastes is the pall of ash that covers the land. The ash can have a number of effects on characters exposed to it for prolonged periods of time. Travelers in the Wastes risk ingesting the stuff whenever they eat and drink, unless they take extreme care when preparing meals; they may also breathe it in. Most travelers wear cloths over their noses and mouths to filter the ash from the air they breathe and prevent themselves from inhaling too much. Even the most cautious travelers can't avoid inhaling some of it, but characters are advised to make at least a token effort to protect themselves lest they suffer dire consequences.

To reflect the effects of exposure to the ash, have characters make Toughness Tests. Characters who attempt to avoid inhaling or ingesting the ash make their first test after 1 week of travel and repeat the test once a week thereafter; characters who take no precautions make their first test after 3 days and repeat it once every 3 additional days that they remain in the Wastes. The Base Difficulty Number for the first Toughness Test is 5 and increases by 1 for each subsequent test. For example, a character who must make the test once a week and has been in the Wastes for 5 weeks makes the Toughness Test against a Difficulty Number of 9 (5 + 4 additional weeks).

If the test fails, the character becomes sick and his Toughness Attribute drops by 1 (see **Fatigue and Injury**, p. 96). If the test succeeds, the character resists the effects of the ash. The effects of multiple failed Toughness Tests are cumulative, and characters may die if their Toughness Attributes drop to 0.

A character who fails a Toughness Test may also suffer additional effects. Because the ash is magical in nature,

ingested ash can affect his or her use of magic in a way similar to the Corrupt Magic power of the Horror known as Taint (pp. 55–8, **Horrors**).

Whenever a character affected by the ash uses a magical ability, make a test using Step 4 dice. Increase the dice step number by 1 for each –1 penalty to the character's Toughness step beyond the first. For example, if a character has failed three Toughness Tests, use Step 6 dice for the test (the original Step 4 dice, plus 2 for second and third failed Toughness Tests). If the test result equals or exceeds the character's Spell Defense, that character's use of magic is corrupted. His magic backfires (if possible) or simply fails to work properly. A corrupted use of a talent may cause Warping damage similar to that associated with casting raw magic (p. 156, **ED**). In this case, the character's rank in the talent becomes the Circle for determining Warping damage. For more information, see the Corrupt Magic power (p. 58, **Horrors**) or **Optional Effects of Warping** (p. 40, **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets**).

Once characters leave the Wastes, they recover any ash-related Toughness step penalties at a rate of 1 point every 2 days. Once a character's Toughness Attribute is fully restored, he no longer suffers from the magic-corrupting effects of the ash.

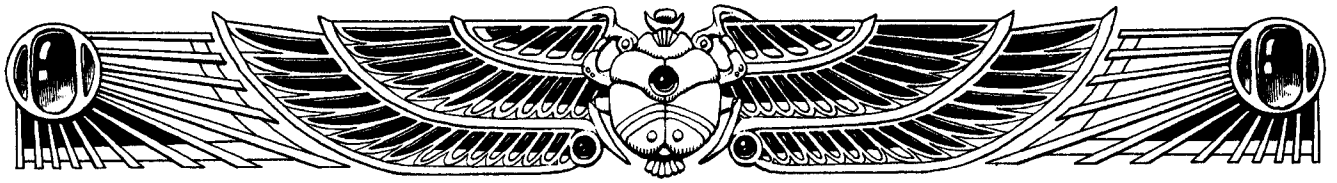
Most of the animals and creatures native to the Wastes suffer from prolonged ash exposure in the ways described above. Some creatures inflict magic-corrupting effects on victims when they bite or strike hard enough to cause a Wound; the bites of others exacerbate the effects of the ash on their victims, inflicting a –2 penalty to the victim's Toughness Attribute for each failed Toughness Test.

Relatively few Horrors and Horror constructs live in the Wastes, largely because the devastation of the Scourge has left very few potential victims in the area. However, a few particularly powerful Horrors remain in abandoned kaers or in the ruins of fallen citadels. These Horrors often travel astrally across Barsaive and wreak havoc among Name-givers, retreating to the Wastes when threatened or sated.

Spellcasting and Raw Magic

The corruption of the Wastes warps magic, especially spell magic. The entire area of the Wastes behaves as if affected by a weaker version of the Circle 10 wizard spell Warp Astral Space (p. 86, **Earthdawn Companion**). All characters who make Spellcasting Tests in the Wastes suffer a –4 penalty to their Spellcasting steps. This penalty manifests in the physical world as spells that miss their mark, careening around or simply vanishing into a twist of the astral fabric. This warping of astral space does not appear to affect Horror spells or powers, though it does





affect the spell-like powers of magical creatures. This –4 step penalty also applies to uses of the Dispel Magic spell and dragon powers. In the former case, the penalty applies to the spell's Effect step.

For purposes of using raw magic, the Wastes are considered a Corrupt region of astral space (p.155, ED).

CAMPAIGN THEMES

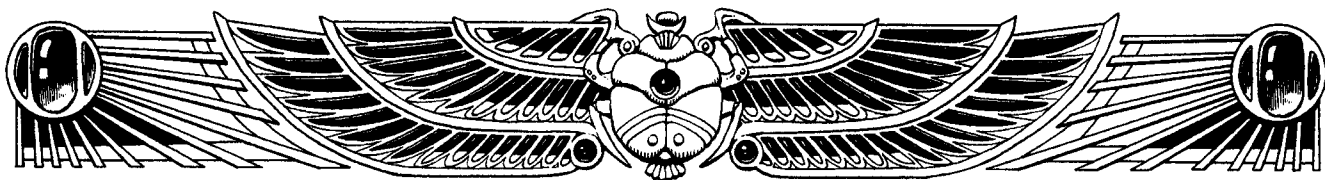
Barsaive offers many opportunities for different styles of adventures and campaigns. Far from being limited to kaer-crawling and slaying Horrors, player characters can become legends in the world of **Earthdawn** in a variety of ways.

The following paragraphs offer themes for different campaigns that employ material from the **Survival Guide** and other **Earthdawn** books. These suggestions are intended as a source of ideas for individual stories, adventures and campaigns.

CARAVAN CAMPAIGN

Trade moves throughout Barsaive over land, water and air, as merchants transport goods from one place to the next quickly and safely enough to secure a profit (if Chorrolis is kind). The constant demand for new trade routes gives explorers and adventurers a ready-made excuse to blaze new trails through the wilderness.





A caravan campaign can begin with a wealthy merchant or merchant company hiring player characters to explore new routes. One such potential employer is His Majesty's Trade Commission, the informal cooperative of merchant companies in the Kingdom of Throal (pp. 39–40, **Throal: The Dwarf Kingdom**). In addition to the various hazards of wilderness travel, the characters may also face competition from agents of other, rival merchant groups seeking similar routes or attempting to curry favor with the various settlements along a new trade route.

Once a route has been established, merchant caravans require skilled guides and adepts to protect them from the various hazards of the road. Eventually, player characters can even establish their own merchant companies to seek profits and adventure in the far reaches of Barsaive. Establishing a company exposes characters to the machinations of treacherous competitors as well as all the other dangers of shepherding caravans through the wilds.

DELVING CAMPAIGN

Gamemasters can use Barsaive's unique history to flavor campaigns based on exploring ruined kaers and other underground tunnels and caves. In addition to seeking treasure, adepts and explorers might investigate ruined kaers in search of information, artifacts and stories thought lost during the Scourge. Adepts can aid scholars and historians, such as those of the Great Library of Throal, in digging up these lost secrets. Ruined kaers might also hold valuable magical knowledge, such as spells created by long-dead magicians or Key Knowledges of various thread items and magical treasures that characters discovered in previous adventures.

Areas thick with ruins, such as the Forgotten City of Parlainth or the Wastes, might even spawn "delvers' guilds"—alliances of explorers and adepts who systematically explore, map and loot the local ruins. Such groups might harass adepts who are not members of their organizations. This situation already exists in Parlainth, where the Loyal Order of Delvers and the Association of Unaffiliated Explorers compete with one another to snatch the spoils of the Forgotten City's ruins. Similarly, characters may find themselves competing with other independent groups over the same ruins.

EXPLORATION CAMPAIGN

The Scourge altered much of Barsaive beyond recognition, and many areas of the province remain unknown to most present-day Name-givers. Many kingdoms and factions are interested in learning about these unexplored regions for the secrets and treasures they may contain or simply to expand their own knowledge. His Majesty's

Exploratory Force (p. 80, **Throal: The Dwarf Kingdom**) is one example of an organization that employs adepts to explore Barsaive's distant wilds.

Exploration campaigns give characters the opportunity to travel to places no Name-giver has visited since long before the Scourge. Consequently, characters are likely to discover lost kaers and ancient ruins, potential new trade routes, isolated civilizations—and unfamiliar dangers, of course.

The Kingdom of Throal also uses its explorer troops as special agents. Other parties that hire explorers might do the same, thus providing a convenient way to involve player characters in Barsaive's political intrigues.

KAER CAMPAIGN

The kaer campaign provides an excellent way to introduce new players to the world of **Earthdawn** and give players and player characters a chance to explore a new world at the same time—thus enhancing the players' sense of wonder and discovery. This type of campaign begins inside a kaer still sealed from the outside world. The kaer's residents, including the player characters, are initially unaware that the Scourge is over. After the residents open their kaer, the player characters become the first inhabitants to emerge and explore the world. No doubt they will be in for some surprises—among them the devastation wrought by the Scourge, Barsaive's independence from the Theran Empire, and the various political intrigues between Throal, Thera, Iopos and Barsaive's other great cities and powers.

RESTORATION CAMPAIGN

The Scourge left scars on the face of Barsaive that have yet to be healed. Many different factions of Name-givers, especially questors of Jasprey, seek to restore wholeness to the land and its people and erase the taint of the Horrors forever. Places such as the Badlands, the Wastes and the Poison Forest are all good sites for the work of would-be restorers, such as the colony of questors from the town of Trosk on the edges of the Badlands. Characters in a restoration campaign may have the backing of a patron or a living legend cult but will also face powerful opponents—such as Horrors in the region or other Name-givers who prefer the status quo.

A restoration campaign that focuses on curing the corruption of Barsaive's people rather than the land might involve members of secret societies such as the Seekers of the Heart and the Lightbearers, who might also make good patrons. Player characters in such campaigns are likely to come into conflict with corrupted Name-givers such as the Hand of Corruption and the Elven Court of Blood Wood.





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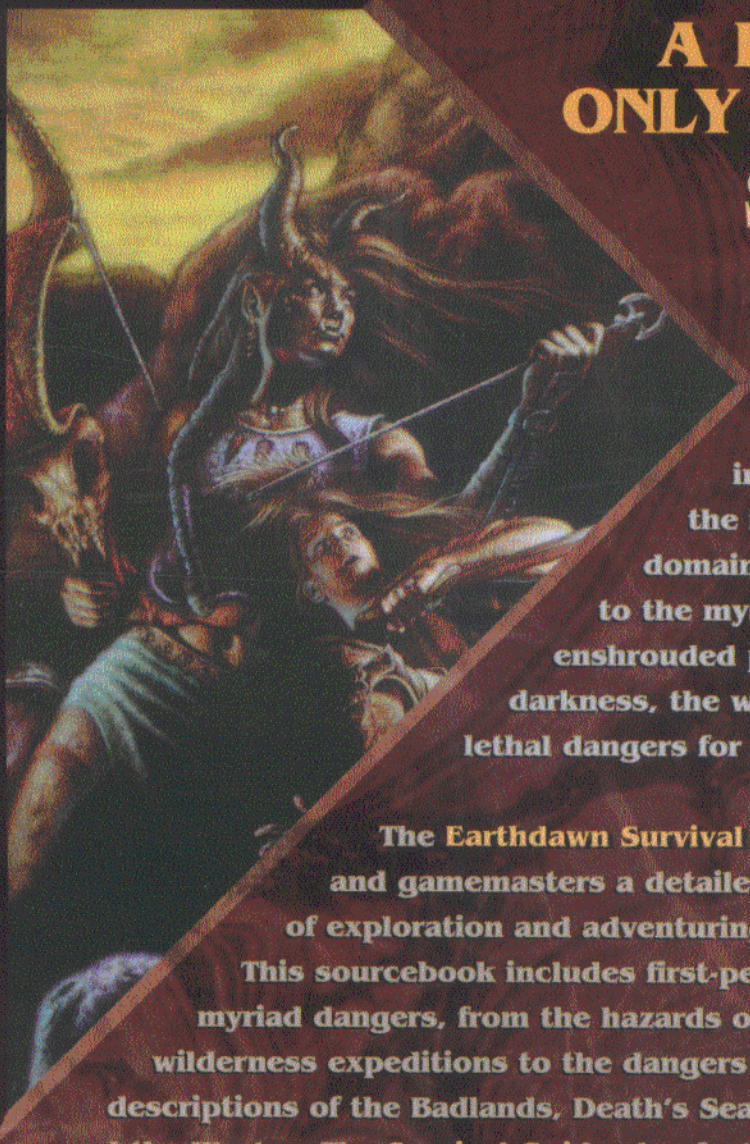
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