

RBL-703

PALE RIVER



AN EARTHDAWN ADVENTURE BY
JENNIFER HARTSHORN AND IAN LEMKE

CONTENTS

Running the Adventure

Adventure Background
Plot Synopsis
On the Grand Bazaar and the Halls of Throal

Night Scavengers

Setting the Stage
Themes and Images
Behind the Scenes
Troubleshooting

The Village of Shining Waters

Setting the Stage
Themes and Images
Behind the Scenes
Troubleshooting

4 The Journey Upriver

4 Setting the Stage
5 Themes and Images
5 Behind the Scenes
6 Troubleshooting

6 At the Source

6 Setting the Stage
6 Themes and Images
7 Behind the Scenes
7 Troubleshooting

8 Aftermath

8 Awarding Legend Points
8 Campaign Ideas

12 SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

13
13
13
13
15
16
16
16
16
20
21
21
21
22

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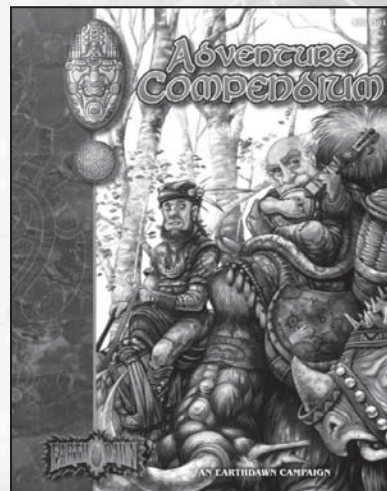
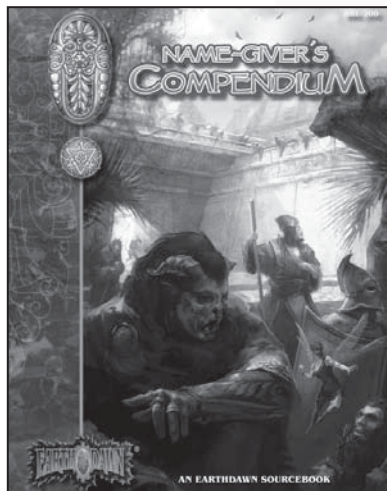
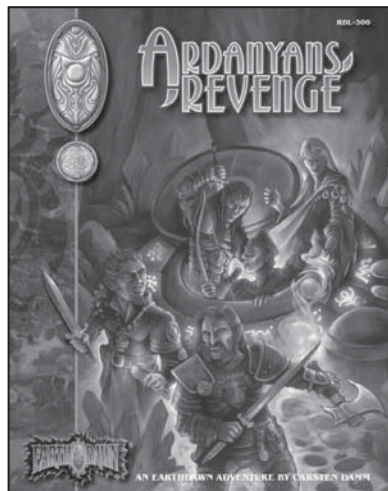
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PALE RIVER

Most think that the Serpent River is the lifeblood of Barsaive. The underground rivers are the true roots of Barsaive, nourishing plants above, societies within, and kaers below even to this day. Countless Name-givers died in kaers not because of Horrors or creatures, but because a well or a riverbed they depended upon dried out. Water is more precious than gold to those who live underground.

• Earthroot •



The domed meeting hall glowed softly in the subterranean gloom. Patterns of light and shadow danced across the intricate bas-reliefs that covered its walls and archways, and played across the pale faces of the t'skrang huddled around the central table. Thin and haggard, the villagers of Shining Waters sat and waited with quiet dignity to hear the word of their *lahala*. Their desperation showed only in their silence; fear had banished the usual lively talk and laughter. No one had much heart to eat, despite the hunger that cramped their bellies. V'liskra, *lahala* of Shining Waters, looked around the table and fought back tears. She must not give way; her people must see her strong, confident, unafraid. V'liskra forced herself to take a spoonful of porridge, but could not bring herself to eat it. Carefully, she lowered the spoon and rested its handle against the side of her bowl.

The silence grew heavier, until someone broke it—old K'vrana, the first to speak as always. Folding her hands in a sign of respect, she said, “Is there any news of L'anelh, *lahala*?”

V'liskra bowed her head. “None. But we must not despair. Somehow we will find a way to bring the river back—”

“How?!” cried Dunkach'k the Raftsman, slapping his bowl of thin porridge off the table. It crashed into the wall, spilling its contents across the floor. Two children rushed to scoop up the remaining porridge, licking it greedily from their claws.

The others looked away in mingled sorrow and disgust. That their children should scabble on the ground for scraps of food like rats... it was shameful. Yet what else could be expected? They were starving. Dunkach'k clenched his hands and continued more softly, his voice

harsh with anguish. “L'anelh led our best warriors upriver days ago, and they have vanished—who is left now to find the cause of our misfortune? Who can take back our river from whatever evil spirit or monster or force has stolen it? Old men like me? Or the little ones?”

V'liskra turned to Dunkach'k. “L'anelh and the others went at my bidding, and whatever has befallen them will remain on my conscience for eternity. What would you have me do? Send more warriors into unknown danger, in the hope that they will miraculously succeed where our best have not? Shall I pound the walls and cry, hoping that the Universe will give me some answer out of pity?” The *lahala* closed her eyes and breathed deeply, struggling for composure. After a moment's silence, she spoke again. “I have failed my people,” she said, quietly and without emotion, as if pronouncing a great truth. The villagers stared mutely at the ground.

“No,” said a voice from the archway. “There is still something we can do.” The villagers turned and watched as K'skirla, a young Warrior much favored by the *lahala*, strode into the meeting hall. Never before had K'skirla challenged the word of the *lahala*; so great was her respect for V'liskra that she rarely spoke in the *lahala*'s presence. Now she stopped a few feet from the *lahala*'s chair, bowed deeply and said, “We must live somehow until we can find out what happened to the scouting parties we sent upriver. I... I think I know a way.”

V'liskra extended one hand, palm up, in the traditional gesture granting permission to speak. K'skirla bowed in acknowledgment, then looked around at her fellow villagers. “Throal has more food than they know what to do with. Much of it spoils before it can be properly stored away.”

“But we have nothing to trade!” Dunkach'k interrupted.



"Will you barter your wisdom in exchange for a few salt fish-cakes? The merchants of Throal value nothing unless they can hold it in their hands. They will laugh at you, sister."

K'skirla shook her head. "No. I... it pains me to suggest it, but... we could enter the Grand Bazaar at night. We could... take—"

V'liskra stood up, her eyes flashing pale fire. "You would make thieves of us? Have you no honor?!"

With downcast eyes, K'skirla whispered, "I want us to live. However we must."

V'liskra stared at the young t'skrang for a long moment. Then her shoulders sagged, her outraged pride draining away like water and leaving dull acceptance in its wake. "Who will go on this... expedition? Our best warriors have gone, and who is to say they will return?"

K'skirla hesitated, then looked up. "If it becomes a matter for warriors, then we have failed. I know the bazaar. I and a few others can get in and out quickly, quietly..." She trailed off, looking for some sign of encouragement. The villagers and the *lahala* stood silent, not meeting her eyes. "I'm sorry," K'skirla stammered. "But I don't see what else we can do."

After a long moment, V'liskra sighed. "Choose whom you will, K'skirla. Meet with me before you leave." The villagers stared at her, startled; V'liskra threw up her hands. "We must steal or starve. If we live, we may find a way to restore our honor. Otherwise, we have no hope." Without another word, she turned and strode out of the meeting hall.

After a moment, K'skirla followed.

Pale River is an adventure scenario designed for three to five Journeyman adepts of any Discipline, and intends to show players the dangers of entering the wilds of Barsaive.

The adventure begins in the Grand Bazaar of Throal and eventually leads the characters far below the kingdom to the underground rivers and caverns inhabited by the Pale Ones. This adventure assumes that the characters have been hired to guard a merchant's wares against thieves who have so far avoided all efforts at detection. The gamemaster may wish to run a mini-adventure that leads to the characters taking this job.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Pale River is presented as a series of events. Each is described for the gamemaster, who should use the information given to run each section. There is little text to be read aloud to the players, meaning the gamemaster will have to describe many of the scenes to the characters as he sees fit. Where possible the text describes the terrain and areas the characters will encounter, but much of the detail is left to the gamemaster to devise.

Each encounter contains four sections: **Setting the Stage** contains a narrative description that the gamemaster reads aloud to the players, **Themes and Images** helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter, and **Behind the Scenes** explains what is really going on in each encounter. The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Far beneath the kingdom of Throal flow several small underground tributaries of the Serpent River. These rivers and the natural caverns around them are home to the t'skrang known as the Pale Ones (p. 138, **Name-giver's Compendium**).

Six months ago, one of these tributaries dried to little more than a trickle, depriving a Pale Ones village of its primary source of sustenance. Though enough water still flowed through the riverbed to provide the t'skrang villagers with drinking water, it no longer supported the fish and plant life that had been their primary source of food. The virtual disappearance of the river has also left the villagers without supplies of True water, their primary trade good, in which this particular tributary was especially rich. The Pale Ones sent several scouting parties to seek the river's source and learn why the water had stopped flowing, but none returned. With its food supplies gone and no more True water to trade for food from elsewhere, the village faced a harsh choice: relocate or die out.

While seeking a new cavern in which to rebuild, one of the village's scouting parties discovered a small natural tunnel that had been filled in during the construction of the dwarf kingdom more than a thousand years earlier. Upon excavating the tunnel, the scouts discovered that it opened into an infrequently used side tunnel in the *dahnat* section of the Hall of Tav, very close to the entrance of Throal's Grand Bazaar. Because the scouts opened the tunnel during the night, the disturbance went unnoticed. The scouts made a quick foray into the Grand Bazaar and made off with sacks of provisions. Their fellow villagers hailed them as heroes upon their return; now that the village could take food from the Bazaar; they no longer



ON THE GRAND BAZAAR AND THE HALLS OF THROAL

The Grand Bazaar is the bustling, welcoming face of the Kingdom of Throal. Many who come to Throal go no further into the kingdom than the Bazaar, paying for lodging in Bartertown rather than venturing into the Halls. During business hours, the Bazaar is a riot of colors, smells, and sounds. At night it is ghostly and quiet, inhabited only by patrolling guards and travelers heading into the Halls of Throal.

The term “the Halls of Throal” refers to the part of the kingdom built before Throal was sealed. Its construction differs considerably from those parts of Throal built since the kingdom’s reopening. The Halls of Throal were constructed according to the architectural tastes of dwarfs, while the Inner Cities are designed to appeal to other Name-givers as well.

The nine Halls of Throal radiate out like wheel spokes from the Grand Bazaar, the mammoth foyer at the entrance to the kingdom. Three of the Halls are named after past monarchs of Throal, three after heroic founders of the kingdom, two after great playwrights, and one for Upandal, the Passion of building and construction. In order from left to right as they branch off the Grand Bazaar, the nine Halls are Tav, Thandos, Ulutur, Jothan, Donalicus, Bazrata, Bodal, Garaham and Upandal.

The Halls of Throal are not literally halls, but specific networks of tunnels and chambers in the kingdom. Between each of these vast areas are several cross tunnels that connect the passageways of each Hall to another. Consisting of little more than glorified tunnels, the Halls

alternately narrow and widen as they twist their way through the mountain. The average width of a passageway is ten yards, the average height five yards. The walls, which are also the outer walls of dwellings and businesses, are often decorated with colorful mosaics—or paint, in the case of poorer Throalites.

Light crystals illuminate the entire length of the Halls of Throal, glowing in sconces every six yards or so. The floors are tiled with granite slabs. In front of wealthy homes, the granite gives way to marble tiles purchased by the inhabitants of the wealthy estates. Some ostentatious-minded people have paid for floor mosaics as well.

The poorest, most run-down areas of the Halls are the first thing the visitor sees after leaving the Grand Bazaar. These southerly areas of the kingdom, known as the *dahnat*, are a haven for beggars and others who have fallen on hard times. Though the poorest citizen of Throal is better off than many in Barsaive’s other large cities, everyone in Throal agrees that the *dahnat* are a shameful blight. The average dwelling in this area is a five-by-thirteen-yard rectangle adjoined to one of the Halls at a narrow end. These one-room dwellings may house twenty or more members of an extended family.

Businesses also operate in the *dahnat*, many of them threadbare shops where local people spend their hard-earned coppers. Others are larger enterprises dependent on cheap labor, such as weavers’ workshops, tanneries and the like. Most employees of such establishments are women; men from the *dahnat* leave the neighborhood each morning to work elsewhere in Throal as builders or miners.

needed to leave their beloved cavern.

The scouts covered the tunnel entrance when they left the Hall of Tav, but left most of the tunnel clear so they could use it again. The Pale Ones have continued periodic raiding over the past several weeks, becoming increasingly stealthy as the merchants of the Bazaar have begun to set more guards on their wares. The t’skrang have been extremely careful to cover up any trail leading to the tunnel entrance, hoping to keep pilfering supplies until they can discover and correct whatever happened to their river.

The first few thefts provoked little reaction, but the merchants were eventually forced to take more extreme measures.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The player characters are hired by a group of merchants to protect their wares from the mysterious midnight thieves. The first three nights pass quietly; on the fourth night, the thieves return. Responding to cries and sounds of battle, the characters discover a pair of guards—one dead, the other barely conscious—as well as the body of a strange, pale t’skrang. The surviving guard tells the characters that two more pale t’skrang fled toward the Hall of Tav. The characters set off in pursuit, but cannot catch the t’skrang. In their headlong flight, however, the t’skrang were unable to conceal the entrance to their tunnel, and so the characters easily find it.

The player characters follow the tunnel and the fleeing Pale Ones until they reach the Village of Shining Waters.

The *lahala* of the village explains her people's current predicament and apologizes for the thieves' actions, then asks the characters to help the villagers discover why the river has stopped flowing. The *lahala* also wants to find out what happened to the two scouting parties who did not return from upriver.

The adventurers make the dangerous trek toward the dried-up river's source, facing attacks along the way by a pack of trained shadowmants as well as various other creatures. At the riverhead, they find a group of cave trolls who have summoned a river spirit to divert the river down a side tunnel that runs past their village. The adventurers must defeat the trolls and destroy the river spirit in fierce battle in order to return the river to its former course.

NIGHT SCAVENGERS

In this encounter, the characters are keeping watch in the Grand Bazaar when they hear the sounds of a struggle. Upon arriving at the scene of the fight, the characters find two Royal Guardsmen—one dead, the other seriously injured—and the dead body of a Pale One.

SETTING THE STAGE

During the fourth night of the character's watch, read the following aloud:

For more than two weeks now, the mysterious midnight thieves have been the talk of the Grand Bazaar. No one has spotted them entering or leaving, or has any idea what they look like. Rumors are flying thick and fast, with guesses as to the identity of the thieves ranging from spoiled rich brats in disguise to the ghosts of long-departed dwarfs who bear grudges against the thieves' victims. The Royal Guards, charged with keeping watch over the Bazaar during the evening, are too embarrassed by their failure to apprehend the lawbreakers to add much to the debate.

Still, there's no misfortune without some small profit to be had. In this case, the profit is yours—several merchants have pooled their resources to pay you to help keep watch over their goods during the long night hours. You've been at your post for three nights now ... three quiet, slow, boring nights. You've rarely earned silver this easily. Trouble is, it's getting dull. A little quiet is welcome ... but this much quiet doesn't suit a band of skilled adepts. On your fourth night of duty, you're beginning to wonder if the thieves will ever return.

Suddenly a hoarse shout and the clash of steel ring in the hushed night air. The quiet Bazaar is quiet no longer...

THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter is full of contrasts and conflicting choices. Emphasize the difference between the Grand Bazaar's daytime bustle and the way it feels at night, with

all the stalls closed down and the normal cacophony of trading, music and chatter stilled. When the player characters first catch sight of the dead Pale One, emphasize the differences between the Pale Ones and any t'skrang in the adventuring party; call attention to the corpse's faintly luminous skin, crude weapons, and rough clothing.

BEHIND THE SCENES

As noted in the introduction, the adventure begins with the characters serving as guards in the Grand Bazaar following a series of mysterious thefts. Initial investigations have proven largely inconclusive; the raiding parties were careful to take things from a variety of stalls, sometimes even taking things they did not want in order to foil authorities attempting to establish a pattern for the thefts. If the adepts take it upon themselves to investigate further, they may discover the only pattern there is: though the thieves have taken a wide variety of foodstuffs, fishmongers seem to be the most frequent targets.

The characters are near a merchant's stall when they hear a shout and the clash of weapons splits the still night



air. Upon reaching the source of the disturbance, the characters discover the bodies of two Royal Guardsmen near a fishmonger's stall, and also the body of a strange, pale t'skrang.

When the characters investigate the scene of the fight, read the following aloud:

Two guards—Royal Guardsmen, by their uniforms—lie in pools of blood scant feet from a fishmonger's stall. A few feet beyond them lies the body of a t'skrang with oddly pale skin. A basket of salt fish lies overturned near the t'skrang corpse, its contents scattered across the ground. Next to the basket lie a pair of crudely made sacks, half filled with fish.

You run to the fallen guards to see how badly they are hurt. One is beyond help. The other is bleeding profusely from a nasty gash down one leg, but is still breathing. If you work fast, you may be able to save him. You snatch up the nearest thing that might serve as a tourniquet—a leather thong likely intended to tie up one of the sacks of fish—and slip it under the injured guard's leg. As you pull the leather taut, the guard stirs, moans and opens his eyes.

"They ran that way," he gasps and points weakly, "toward Tav. Catch them—hurry!"

The two guardsmen surprised the raiders in the act of emptying a basket of salt fish into their sacks. They dropped the fish and tried to run, but the guards gave chase and killed one of the raiding party. The t'skrang then decided to stand their ground; as the Pale Ones outnumbered the guards, the fight was soon over. After killing the guards, the Pale Ones fled toward their tunnel, getting a good head start on the player characters.

Pursuing the Raiders

Try as they might, the characters cannot catch the t'skrang before they reach the tunnel. Once in the tunnel, the raiders quickly make their way back to their village. In their haste to escape, however, they failed to adequately conceal the entrance to the tunnel.

As the characters head toward the Hall of Tav in pursuit, allow each to make a Perception (9) Test. One success allows the character to hear a faint sound coming from a small, little-used side tunnel (about 20 yards long). If the characters investigate the sound, at the end of this tunnel they find a pile of debris scattered around what looks like another small tunnel leading downward. The t'skrang have been using this second tunnel to enter the dwarf kingdom from below. As the characters approach the second tunnel, they hear the sound of the raiders' weapons banging against the rocks as they scramble toward safety.

If the characters choose to enter the tunnel in pursuit of the escaping t'skrang, go to **The Village of Shining Waters**, below. If not, the characters will likely go back to the site of the fight to learn more about what happened.

If all the characters fail their Perception Tests, they will pass by the side tunnel without noticing it, and will find no trace of the fleeing t'skrang. However, the gamemaster

can allow them to follow a trail of blood droplets or some similar type of evidence. When the characters enter the Hall of Tav, one or more of them may make a Perception (9) Test. If the test succeeds, the characters notice footprints in the dust on the floor near the entrance to the disused side tunnel.

Once the characters find the tunnels and decide to investigate them, go to **The Village of Shining Waters**, below.

Investigations

If and when the characters go back to the stall where the fight took place, they will find that a number of other guards have since arrived, along with several of the merchants who originally hired the characters. As soon as the characters return, the merchants ask about the raiders. Because the characters obviously have not caught the thieves, the merchants will ask the characters to track the raiders down.

If the characters resist this idea, one of the merchants will remind them that tracking down the thieves is part of their job, perhaps saying, "We're not just paying you to stand around and watch that our wares don't walk off by themselves. We want those thieves caught and the matter settled." If the characters still resist, the merchants reluctantly offer to pay them an additional 200 silver pieces each if they return with the thieves.

The Dead Pale One

Unless the characters are already familiar with the Pale Ones, it is very unlikely that they have met a Pale One prior to this adventure. T'skrang characters or others with an appropriate Knowledge skill can make a test against a Difficulty Number of 7. If the test succeeds, the character can identify the dead t'skrang as a Pale One.

A character who recognizes that the t'skrang is a Pale One also knows that the Pale Ones live in villages along portions of the Serpent River that run beneath many mountain ranges in Barsaive, including the Throal Mountains. This knowledge should tell the characters where to go next in order to find the raiders.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The only real problem arises in this encounter if the characters refuse to track down the t'skrang. Because the merchants currently employ the characters, they should agree to track the t'skrang without much argument.

THE VILLAGE OF SHINING WATERS

In this encounter the characters descend through the tunnel to the afflicted Pale Ones village, where they see the dried-up riverbed and meet the weakened, half-starved villagers. The *lahala* of the Village of Shining Waters, V'liskra, beseeches the characters to help her people discover why their life-giving river has dried to a trickle.

SETTING THE STAGE

Once the characters reach the village, read the following aloud:

After what seems like an eternity of climbing and sliding down the sloping, rocky tunnel, you end up in a cavern on the banks of what was once a sizable underground river. A short distance away along the sandy bottom, you can see a cluster of polished stone domes huddled together like lost children in the middle of the large riverbed. A trickle of water winds slowly through the center of the cluster. Each dome looks slightly different, with bas-relief carvings covering nearly every exposed surface. Some are surrounded with ornamental spires; others have inset windows looking out over the river. A decorated stone pier juts out into the dry riverbed, surrounded by several unusual-looking rafts half-buried in the sand. The rafts are made of what looks like a bone framework, with dark leather stretched over them. Nets lie unused in heaps on the shore.

Two large domes dominate the village—one in the center of the cluster near the riverbank, the other some distance away near the far wall of the cavern. The first dome seems to be a meeting hall of some sort. Unlike many of the smaller dwellings, this large dome has no door, only an ornate archway at one end. A large open courtyard lies just outside the archway; in it and passing through it are groups of pale t'skrang, talking or going slowly about their daily business.

The second large dome is smaller than the first, but seems as much a focal point as the meeting hall. A pathway of crushed crystal leads to this dome from the center of the village. A low wall surrounds the dome, apparently more for aesthetic value than for defense. The walls of the dome are inlaid with silver, highlighting carvings far more ornate than those elsewhere in the village. A garden graces the dome's entrance, full of lichens and ornamental mosses intermingled with quartz and other crystals. Two pale t'skrang stand at attention just outside the low wall, spears in hand.

As you approach the village, a single t'skrang comes to meet you.

"I am Named K'skirla," she says, bowing in greeting. "The lahala bids you welcome; she is expecting you. Please come with me."

You follow K'skirla to the meeting hall, where several families have gathered for a communal meal. They invite you to sit and place wooden bowls in front of you. You notice that the amount of food seems barely adequate for such a large group—a cauldron of fish stew and a single plate of flatbread.

The stew is thin but savory. K'skirla tells you it is made from salt fish and a type of lichen that grows on the riverbanks. The taste is unusual, somewhere between cloves and pepper. The flat-

bread is unfortunately stale, but the t'skrang tear off a small piece each and eat it with great gusto. You wonder if the bread was stolen from the Grand Bazaar. The portions are small enough to leave you hungry after the meal is finished.

As you swallow the last spoonfuls of stew, a young t'skrang with pale blue scales enters the room and speaks briefly to K'skirla in hushed tones. K'skirla nods solemnly and turns toward you, saying, "The lahala will see you now."

THEMES AND IMAGES

A great sorrow has fallen upon this village, and its people are hungry and disheartened. Even in the depths of despair, however, the Name-givers of Shining Waters retain a strong sense of community and purpose.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Pursuing the t'skrang thieves leads the characters down a steep, rocky tunnel from the Grand Bazaar. In places the tunnel becomes an almost-vertical corkscrew, and the characters will doubtless have a few scrapes by the time they reach the village of Shining Waters.

The village of Shining Waters is composed of a single *niall*, or extended family group, of seventy Pale Ones. For untold generations they have lived by harvesting the plentiful fish and True water from their river, trading both to outsiders for all the supplies they needed. The True water gathers in pools at the river's edge, where the villagers separate it from the stream with orichalcum-laced nets and then store the element in orichalcum jugs.

The Villagers

The t'skrang of Shining Waters are a peaceful people fallen on hard times. The drying of the river has deprived them of their only means of trade and their primary food supply, and the villagers have staved off starvation by living hand-to-mouth on stolen provisions from Throal plus what few lichens and plants they could scrounge. At first suspicious of the characters (who have effectively cut off the supply of purloined food from the Bazaar), they quickly come to see them as potential saviors.

V'liskra, the village's *lahala*, has seen her home go from a relatively prosperous fishing village to a desolate outpost haunted by starvation and despair. Her people are not fighters, and the fear that whatever has taken their river may soon claim them as well has caused many villagers to give up hope. The player characters appear to be a chance at renewed hope, and V'liskra will do anything within her power to persuade them to save her village.

Talking With the Villagers

If the characters ask about the thefts, K'skirla admits that the raiders came from the village, but says that the *lahala* will explain everything when they meet her. If the characters wish to find the thieves and return with them to Throal as quickly as possible, K'skirla will plead for their patience and ask them to meet with the *lahala* before leaving.

The t'skrang raiders are in hiding, and will only come out if asked by the *lahala* to reveal themselves. V'liskra hopes to persuade the characters to aid her village, and will give up the two remaining thieves only if she has no other choice.

Meeting V'liskra

K'skirla escorts the characters into a brightly lit dome made of white marble. The interior is polished to satiny smoothness; small globes of phosphorescent fungus hang from the ceiling, bathing the interior in a pale but cozy glow. The characters seat themselves around a circular table, with V'liskra sitting opposite the door. A pair of guards stands behind the *lahala*, with a second pair at the door and a third pair outside to ensure that nothing interrupts the discussion.

Once the characters sit down, read the following aloud:

A guard unlocks a cupboard on one side of the room, brings out an orichalcum bowl, and places it in front of V'liskra. The bowl contains water that shimmers in the light. V'liskra dips her fingers into the bowl and splashes a little water on her face, then passes the bowl to her left, saying, "It is tra-

dition among my people to cleanse ourselves of ill thoughts before conducting important business, so that we may discuss things plainly and honestly. The future of my people is at stake, so this cleansing shall be done with True water. Will you join me?"

The ritual cleansing requires each character to splash a token amount of water from the bowl on his or her face, as the *lahala* did. The True water has no harmful side effects—in fact, the characters will feel refreshed for a few minutes after bathing their faces. If the characters decline to join in the ritual, the *lahala* will be disappointed but not especially upset.

After the characters complete the ritual cleansing, read the following aloud:

As the guard returns the orichalcum bowl to its cupboard, V'liskra speaks.

"I know you have come to our village in search of those who stole from you. I make no excuses for this act. I tell you only that we resorted to theft out of desperation.

"Our village once stood in a great river that ran swift and pure. This branch of mighty Shivoam was our lifeblood. Then, many days ago, the river dwindled to a trickle scarcely large enough to let us drink of it. We do not know why the river ceased to flow. At first we feared a cave-in might have diverted it, so we sent a scouting party to investigate. When they did not return, we sent another; this one led by a dear friend whose advice I trust. They, too, did not return.

"With no other recourse, we set out to find a new home for our village. Then our scouts found the tunnel leading up into the dwarf kingdom. When they came into the Grand Bazaar and saw so much food, more food than thousands upon thousands of dwarfs could eat, their hunger and their love for our village overcame their sense of justice. They took what they could so that our people could survive—we had no other choice. We have since lived on what meager food they could steal while we searched for a new home.

"Now that you have come, we may have another choice. If we can find the cause of our river's death and bring it back to life again, we will no longer have to steal to live... nor will we have to leave this place that we love so much. We have tried and failed to do this task ourselves. My people are starving, and now they fear to go to the unknown place that has swallowed up our best warriors. You are our only hope. Will you help us?"



The characters should realize that these people are in dire straits and have resorted to theft in order to survive. If they seem hesitant to help the villagers, the *lahala* makes them the following offer:

"You do not wish to betray your employers by aiding those who stole from them. I understand. Well, then, can I hire you just as the merchants of Throal have done? Perhaps we might arrange a trade—your help for a few kernels of True water?"

Though hesitant to trade away her only resource, the *lahala* is desperate. She will offer one kernel of True water to each character—which should be all the True water she has available—if they agree to help the village. If the characters still refuse, see **Troubleshooting**, below.

If the characters agree to help, V'liskra calls for tea to be brewed. The t'skrang and the characters share tales over cups of strong tea flavored with one of the spices used in the stew, and the adepts have a little time to rest and prepare for their journey upriver. The villagers will give the characters what little supplies they can, mainly dried fish and fruits stolen from Throal. Even in the midst of hardship they are generous, keeping only the bare minimum of food for themselves. They can also provide rope, grappling hooks, nets and the like should the characters request these items.

After the characters have what they need, the Pale Ones wish them a safe journey. Go to **The Journey Upriver**, p. 13.

K'SKIRLA

Attributes

Dexterity (19): 8/2D6
Strength (11): 5/D8
Toughness (15): 6/D10

Perception (20): 8/2D6
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 7

Initiative: 7/D12
Physical Armor: 6
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 38 (56)
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 30 (45)

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 5/D8

Combat Movement: 38

Full Movement: 76

Karma Points: 11

Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Astral Sight^D (3): 11/D10+D8
Avoid Blow^D (5): 13/D12+D10
Climbing^D (4): 12/2D10
Durability (6/5) (3): 3
Karma Ritual (3): 3
Maneuver (4): 12/2D10
Melee Weapons (5): 13/D12+D10
Read and Write Language (3): 11/D10+D8
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Troll



Silent Walk^D (6): 14/D20+D4 (Shadow Hide)

Tracking^D (2): 10/D10+D6

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:

Basket Weaving (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:

Creature Lore (1): 9/D8+D6
Pale Ones Racial Lore (2): 10/D10+D6

General:

Fishing (2): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 9/D8+D6
—T'skrang (Pale Ones)
Speak Language (2): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), T'skrang (Pale Ones)
Swimming (2): 7/D12
Trading (6): 12/2D10

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Leather Armor (Phys 3)

Broadsword (Damage 10/D10+D6; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Tail Damage 6/D10;
Range 9–15–18; w/sheath)
Spear (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 18–30–36)

Adventurer's Kit
Basket Weaving Tools
Climbing Kit

Fishing Kit
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

None

Legend Award

205 Legend Points

Notes

K'skirla possesses the t'skrang racial ability of Tail Attack (Damage 5/D8).

Commentary

A Third Circle Scout, K'skirla has often accompanied village traders to Bartertown and other nearby settlements. She was among the t'skrang who first found the tunnel leading into the Grand Bazaar. Stealing does not appeal to her, but she sees it as a necessary stopgap measure to sustain the village until the dried-up river can be diverted back to its natural course. Though she does not quickly trust people, she will remain a loyal friend and ally to anyone who earns her respect. K'skirla may accompany the characters upriver if asked, or if the party seems too small



to handle the adventure that awaits them. Once the river has been restored to her village, she may consider leaving for a short while to adventure with the characters.

V'LSKRA, LAHALA OF SHINING WATERS

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (12): 5/D8

Perception (21): 8/2D6
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (19): 8/2D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 11
Social Defense: 10

Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 5

Death Rating: 34 (70)
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 26 (56)

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 6/D10

Combat Movement: 30

Full Movement: 60

Karma Points: 25

Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Disguise Self^D (2): 10/D10+D6
Durability (6/5) (6): 6
Emotion Song^D (7): 15/D20+D6 (Telling the Tale)
Engaging Banter^D (6): 14/D20+D4
First Impression (7): 15/D20+D6
Haggle (6): 14/D20+D4
Item History (4): 12/2D10
Karma Ritual (6): 6
Melee Weapons (6): 12/2D10
Mimic Voice^D (2): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language^D (4): 12/2D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Resist Taunt^D (6): 12/2D10
Speak Language^D (4): 12/2D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Taunt (6): 14/D20+D4
Thread Weaving (Story Weaving)^D (4): 12/2D10
Throwing Weapons (6): 12/2D10

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:

Storytelling (6): 14/D20+D4

Knowledge:

Element Gathering and Mining (5): 13/D12+D10
Pale Ones History (6): 14/D20+D4
Pale Ones Rituals (6): 14/D20+D4

General:

Read and Write Language (1): 9/D8+D6
—T'skrang (Pale Ones)
Speak Language (1): 9/D8+D6
—T'skrang (Pale Ones)
Trading (6): 14/D20+D4

Equipment

Thread Leather Armor (Rank 4; Phys 5; Myst 3)

Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Tail Damage 7/D12;
Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit

Wealthy Traveler's Garb (w/embroidered robe)

Loot

Orichalcum-lined Jar (w/5 True water kernels). The orichalcum jar is worth 5,000 silver pieces and each True water kernel is worth 5–10 silver pieces.

Legend Award

545 Legend Points

Notes

V'liskra possesses the t'skrang racial ability of Tail Attack (Damage 6/D10).

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

Fifth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests

Sixth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Commentary

V'liskra is a Sixth Circle Troubadour. A commanding and compassionate leader, V'liskra will do anything within her power to restore her village's vanished prosperity. It shames her deeply for outsiders to see her people weak and starving, but she does not allow this to shake her dignity or composure. She finds comfort in the rituals of her people, and will respect anyone with a similar reverence for the past.

WARRIORS OF THE PALE ONES

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10

Strength (14): 6/D10

Toughness (11): 5/D8

Perception (11): 5/D8

Willpower (13): 6/D10

Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 7

Initiative: 5/D8

Physical Armor: 6

Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 32

Wound Threshold: 8

Unconsciousness Rating: 24

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 6/D10

Combat Movement: 30 **Full Movement:** 60

Skills

Artisan:

Wood Carving (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:

Creature Lore (1): 6/D10

Pale Ones Racial Lore (1): 6/D10

General:

Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6

Missile Weapons (2): 8/2D6

Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10

—T'skrang (Pale Ones)

Speak Language (2): 7/D12

—Dwarf (Throalic), T'skrang (Pale Ones)

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)

Leather Armor (Phys 3)

Spear (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 18–30–36)

Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Tail Damage 7/D12;

Range 9–15–18)

Short Bow (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 30–60–120)

Quiver (w/20 shortbow arrows)

Adventurer's Kit

Wood Carving Tools

Trail Rations (1 week)

Traveler's Garb

Loot

None

Legend Award

55 Legend Points

Notes

Warriors of the Pale Ones possess the t'skrang racial ability of Tail Attack (Damage 6/D10).

Commentary

Gamemasters may use these statistics for the non-adept t'skrang guards at the characters' meeting with V'liskra. In addition, two or three guards might accompany the characters on their journey upriver.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest potential problem in this encounter is if the characters refuse to help the village. As heroes, they shouldn't hesitate; however, the characters may feel obligated to finish their current assignment before helping the village. If this happens, the *lahala* refuses to surrender the two thieves unless the characters help the village first.

If the adventurers flatly refuse to help no matter what, V'liskra orders them apprehended. She tells them that unless they agree to follow the river to its source and attempt to revive it, she will offer them as sacrifices to Earthroot, the Dragon King of the Pale Ones. Perhaps, after such a meal, Earthroot might agree to help. (V'liskra doubts that the Dragon King can do much, but the characters most likely know so little about Earthroot that it makes an effective threat.)

Captured characters may be able to fight their way to freedom, but will end up killing several of the villagers in the process. If this happens, the characters have failed to achieve the adventure goal and so should be awarded no Legend Points for the adventure.

THE JOURNEY UPRIVER

In this encounter the characters head upriver to the river's source to try to discover why it dried up. Along the way the characters find the dead bodies of one scouting party and fall afoul of a swarm of subterranean creatures sent by the cave trolls who have diverted the river.

SETTING THE STAGE

Equipped and provisioned, you begin the long journey upriver. The first few hours pass quietly; you walk along the sandy riverbed, moving swiftly and easily. Moderately steep banks rise up on either side of the riverbed, and so the going is easier if you stay toward the middle near the small trickle of water. This part of the cavern looks deserted, the only sign of life the occasional chittering of bats high overhead.

During the second day of the journey, the riverbed suddenly changes from flat, dry sand to craggy, broken ground. Sometime in the past century or so there must have been a cave-in, to account for all the debris. As the terrain becomes more and more uneven, the going gets harder, and you start to wonder what other surprises these underground grottoes may have in store.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Fending off stingers and shadowmants while clinging to a narrow cliff face should make the combat in this encounter considerably more interesting than the average fight. The shadowmants' ability to fly gives them a distinct advantage, especially given the player characters' precarious position. Play up the panicky feeling of fighting fast-moving shadows that the characters barely have time to glimpse before the creatures are upon them.

BEHIND THE SCENES

As the characters travel upriver they face several challenges and dangers, each of which is described below.

The Riverbed

After slowly crawling over broken shards of rock for a while, one of the characters may notice a small ledge running parallel with the river. The characters may climb up a gentle slope to this ledge, where the going is easier, or may continue struggling along the rocky riverbed. Climbing up to the ledge at this point is simple enough not to require any tests.

If the characters stay in the riverbed, it quickly becomes impossible to navigate. The bed is littered with boulders, loose gravel and jagged rocks, making travel painstakingly slow and extremely dangerous. Eventually the characters will encounter sheer cliffs and drop-offs that will force them to either turn back or attempt to reach the ledge. At this point in the journey, the slope up to the ledge has become a steep wall, which the characters must attempt to

scale. The ledge is approximately 30 yards above the riverbed, making the climb a difficult one.

Characters who attempt to reach the ledge via this wall must make two successful Climbing (12) Tests. A character who fails one of these tests slides down the rock face and lands on the riverbed, suffering normal Falling damage (see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 107 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

The ledge is barely wide enough to accommodate a troll, and so the characters must march in single file once they reach it.

Stingers

Shortly after the characters climb up to the ledge, they will notice a row of five small holes in the cavern wall near the ground. The holes, all roughly one yard in diameter, lead to a nest of stingers. A character with the Creature Lore Knowledge skill can identify the holes by making a successful Skill Test against a Difficulty Number of 7 (Beastmaster characters may make a Perception-based Half-Magic Test instead).

After the characters have passed two or three holes, ten stingers (in two groups of five) will emerge and attack the characters, one group from the first hole and one from the hole just passed. Because the ledge is so narrow, a character Knocked Down in combat may fall off the ledge and plummet to the riverbed far below. To reflect this, any character who fails a Knockdown Test with a Pathetic result topples off the ledge.

The character may make a Strength (9) Test to attempt to grab the lip of the ledge and hold on. If this test fails, however, the character falls to the riverbed and takes normal Falling damage (see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 107 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

STINGERS (10)

DEX: 9

STR: 7

TOU: 4

PER: 4

WIL: 4

CHA: 5

Initiative: 10

Number of Actions: 3

Attack (3): 12

Damage:

2 × Claws (1): 8

Head Stinger (2): 9

Tail Stinger (3): 10

Death Rating: 27 (33)

Wound Threshold: 6

Unconsciousness Rating: 18 (23)

Combat Movement: 70/30⁺

Full Movement: 140/60⁺

⁺ The second value is the creature's burrowing Movement rate.

Powers: Climbing^S (3): 12, Durability (1), Enhanced Senses (Smell) (2): 6, Poison (Head) (SD 10; Damage 10), Poison (Tail) (SD 12; Damage 12)

Legend Points: 375

Equipment: None

Physical Defense: 11

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 6

Physical Armor: 2

Mystic Armor: 2

Recovery Tests: 1

Knockdown: 8



Loot: Stingers and poison sacs worth $2D10 \times 10$ silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

Small and rodent-like, the stinger stands a mere 4 feet tall, with much of its body drooping over its short hind legs. Its upper half tapers into a narrow head, flanked on either side by vicious barbs. The beast has two even shorter front legs, which it uses to dig tunnels, climb walls (though rarely), and attack prey. These limbs end in long, sharp claws that can swiftly make a bloody mess of most Name-givers. The creature's lower half tapers into a sturdy tail, also tipped with a sharp barb. Its back legs, slightly longer than the front ones, give it an amazingly fast running speed.

Stingers attack in groups from several directions at once, dashing by their prey and raking it with their curved front claws. As the creature passes by, it also strikes with its tail stinger, injecting the victim with venom that eats away at the prey's flesh. This poison can burn through flesh and bone as easily as fire burns human hair. Alchemists and magicians prize stinger venom greatly, but many an adventurer has met death attempting to harvest it from a stinger swarm. For more information on this creature, see p. 346 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Rules

Stingers usually attack with their claws, raking an opponent with both forepaws, but when fighting a creature its own size may grapple its victim (see the **Combat** chapter of the **Player's Compendium**) and attempt to use its head stingers. When attacking Name-givers, stingers rely on their claws and tail stingers. Any time a victim attacked by a stinger's tail suffers a Wound, the stinger has injected the victim with its poison.

Poison: The acidic tail venom does damage for 3 rounds before it wears off. In addition to this damage, the venom also burns away the victim's flesh (and possibly bones). If this burning damage causes a Wound, treat it as described under the optional **Damage To A Limb** rules in the

Combat chapter on p. 401 of the **Player's Compendium**. The poison in the head stingers is slightly less potent than the poison in its tail, and causes only Step 10 damage.

Swift Attacks: Stingers are extremely swift. They may use the Split Movement combat option (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 406 of the **Player's Compendium**), leaping forward from behind rocks or from crevices to slash at or sting their opponents, then ducking back into cover.

Dead Bodies

Roughly an hour after dealing with the stingers, have each of the characters make a Perception (12) Test. Characters whose tests are successful notice several t'skrang bodies lying on a small ledge just below the ledge on which the characters are walking. The dead t'skrang are members of the second scouting party sent by the village to the riverhead. The first party made it all the way to the river's source, where the cave trolls who have diverted the river from its course captured them. They now serve as slaves, mining True water from the river. The second party of scouts was killed by a pack of shadowmants under the control of Gardak, a cave troll Beastmaster (see **Shadowmant Attack**, p. 15).

If the characters climb down to check out the bodies, they will find it difficult to determine the cause of death. The bodies have been dead for almost two weeks and have decayed considerably. The shadowmants also fed on the bodies for the first two days after killing them, and have eaten away significant parts of each corpse. One of the bodies has a large wound in the center of the chest, with a large crystalline shard stuck in the wound.

The crystal shard is a shadowmant's stinger. Characters with the Creature Lore Knowledge skill may make a successful Skill Test against a Difficulty Number of 8 to correctly identify the shard. Beastmaster characters may use Half-Magic for the test.

Shadowmant Attack

Soon after passing the corpses, the characters are attacked by the pack of shadowmants that killed the t'skrang scouting party.

When the shadowmants attack the characters, read the following aloud:

Dark shapes suddenly descend on you from the gloom. They look like giant shadow-kites, with long tails whipping behind them. Each tail ends in a jagged crystal point sharp enough to draw blood.

The three shadowmants are trained beasts under the control of a cave troll Beastmaster Named Gardak (see **At the Source**, p. 17). Gardak has taught the shadowmants to patrol the riverbed and kill any living thing they encounter. Statistics for the shadowmants appear below.

SHADOWMANTS (3)

DEX: 7 **STR:** 9 **TOU:** 8
PER: 4 **WIL:** 7 **CHA:** 4

Initiative: 9 **Physical Defense:** 9
Number of Actions: 1 **Spell Defense:** 6
Attack (7): 14 **Social Defense:** 7
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 6
Stinger (3): 12 **Mystic Armor:** 2

Death Rating: 43 (73) **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown:** 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 35 (60)

Combat Movement: 46⁺ **Full Movement:** 92⁺

⁺ This value is the creature's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Durability (5), Low-Light Vision, Poison (SD 8; Damaging)

Legend Points: 310

Equipment: Collars (see **Commentary**, below)

Loot: Stinger worth D12 × 10 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

Shadowmants resemble large, flying stingrays. Gardak's shadowmants are even bigger than normal, measuring 10 feet wide with a 6-foot-long tail. A shadowmant's outer side is black, its underside dark gray, and its tail ends in a crystalline stinger. A shadowmant has two eyes and a small mouth lined with rows of tiny, needle-sharp teeth. Nocturnal creatures, shadowmants roam at night, spending daylight hours underground. Alchemists prize shadowmant stingers, using them to brew magical potions.

These shadowmants are so well trained that they will continue to fight until at least two of them are dead. If two shadowmants die, the third will flee upriver to its master.

The bodies of any shadowmants killed will fall either to the floor of the chasm or on the ledge. Enterprising player characters may decide to climb to the bottom to check the dead creatures for clues or valuable body parts. If the characters investigate the bodies, they notice that each shadowmant has a length of rope hung with carved pieces of bone attached to the base of its tail. Gardak used these ropes to tell the shadowmants apart. Careful examination of the bones reveals them to be unexpectedly lightweight and carved with runes and ornamental patterns. Characters who can read and write the troll language may make a Read and Write Language (7) Test; if successful, they notice that the runes appear to be written in an offshoot of the most common troll tongue. Characters who achieve a Good or better result on this test can make out the Names on the collars "Spike," "Death" and "Crusher."

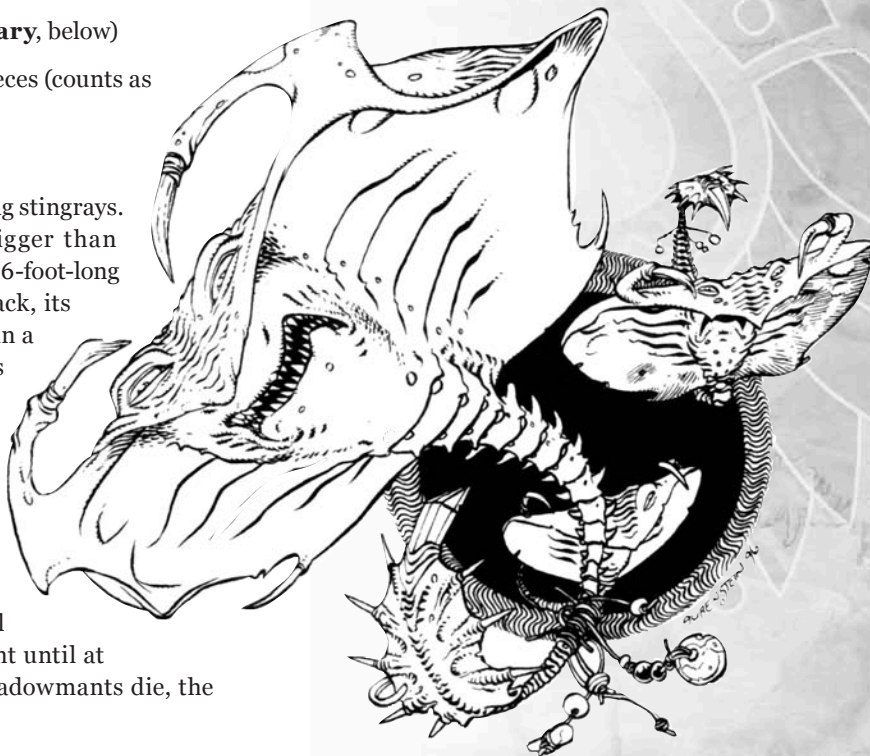
Rules

A shadowmant uses its tail to sting its victims. The stinger contains a poison powerful enough to kill a troll within 10 rounds. Once the poison has killed its prey, the shadowmant eats its victim.

Poison: The shadowmant's virulent poison resists the healing effects of talents or healing aids with a Spell Defense of 8.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The gamemaster should take whatever steps seem appropriate to keep the shadowmants from killing the characters. If the characters seem overwhelmed by the shadowmants' attack, have the shadowmants retreat after just one of them dies, or after they take a relatively small amount of damage. If the characters suffer heavy damage



in the shadowmant attack, you may wish to adjust the final encounter as necessary to improve the player characters' chances of surviving it.

AT THE SOURCE

In this encounter, the characters discover that a cave troll Shaman has summoned a river spirit and commanded it to divert the flow of the river. To return the river to its former path and save the Village of Shining Waters, the characters must battle the cave trolls and destroy or banish the river spirit.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the characters move on towards the river's source, read the following aloud:

Leaving the shadowmants behind, you continue following the riverbed. The narrow pathway widens, sloping downward toward the riverbed and making it much easier to move quickly. The riverbed seems to have leveled out, the broken terrain once again turning smooth and sandy.

After about two hours of walking, you hear a faint, low rumbling. Keeping alert for another attack or a cave-in, you keep moving cautiously forward. The sound gets louder as you continue on your way, and you soon recognize it as the sound of rushing water. You must be getting close to the source of the river.

The air is turning moist and clammy. The noise of the water grows to a deafening roar, as if the river is rushing straight at you. As you round a bend in the cavern, you finally see the source of the sound: a massive wall of water, towering nearly twenty feet above the riverbed right across your path. The river ought to be running toward you, but the wall of water has turned it down a side passage. The cataract swirls dizzily; as you look at it, the light from your lanterns plays off the surface and dazzles your eyes. In the sparkling water you can almost see faces peering back at you.

You hear a shout, and when you turn to look you see a group of trolls emerging from a small tunnel running parallel to the water-filled side passage. The trolls are larger than most, armed and angry. With a bloodcurdling yell they rush toward you, brandishing their weapons.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The sight of the towering wall of water (created by the river spirit) should be awe-inspiring. The immense power of the river spirit, combined with the sudden attack of the cave trolls, should initially seem overwhelming. The characters must make a real effort to gather their wits and face these formidable foes.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The characters have finally reached their destination, only to find strange enchantment and an unexpected enemy—a band of powerful cave trolls who have claimed the river as their own.

The Wall of Water

Many centuries ago, this underground river flowed along a different path than the one familiar to the villagers in Shining Waters. An underground earthquake changed the river's course, and over hundreds of years the river carved a new bed for itself. A Shaman from a village of cave trolls living deep beneath the Throal Mountains recently discovered that the river contained rich deposits of True water, but that its current course took it too far from the cave troll settlement to make harvesting the True water practical. The river's original route, however, passed right by the cave troll village. The Shaman decided to try diverting the river back to its old bed, and summoned a river spirit to do the job. The river spirit created a wall of water that blocked the river from flowing toward Shining Waters and turned it in the direction of the cave troll settlement. Under normal circumstances, a water spirit only remains where it is summoned for a few minutes; however, the Shaman has used blood magic to extend his control over the river spirit for much longer.

The Cave Trolls

Gardak, the cave troll Beastmaster, expected his shadowmants to return several hours before the player characters show up. Fearing the worst, he has assembled four of his tribe's warriors and the Shaman to find the shadowmants or learn what happened to them. When the characters arrive, Gardak assumes (probably correctly) that they have killed his beloved pets. Enraged, he will attack the characters immediately. If one or more of the shadowmants escaped in the previous encounter, they are with the Beastmaster and are fully healed of any damage they may have taken.

Gardak will make a point of going after characters whom he sees carrying any remains of the shadowmants. If the battle goes badly, he flees back up the tunnel from which the trolls initially emerged, leaving the other trolls and the river spirit to press the attack.

Elark, the Shaman, discovered the underground river and its treasure trove of True water just two months ago, and has used blood magic to extend his power over the river spirit ever since. He will command the river spirit to attack any characters who threaten the trolls, and it will continue to attack the characters even if all of the trolls are killed. It will also continue to divert the river during the fight—the diversion of the river is its primary task, and it will carry out that order until it is destroyed or banished. Elark will fight to protect his fellow trolls, and especially to protect the river spirit.

The cave trolls in this adventure are slightly tougher than the average cave trolls described in the **Creatures** chapter on p. 286 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**. Statistics for the Beastmaster and Shaman are listed separately below.

CAVE TROLLS (4)

DEX: 8
PER: 4

STR: 13
WIL: 8

TOU: 10
CHA: 5

Initiative: 5

Number of Actions: 1

Attack (7): 15

Damage:

Cave Axe (7): 20

Physical Defense: 10

Spell Defense: 6

Social Defense: 8

Physical Armor: 7 (armor)

Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 51 (81)

Wound Threshold: 15

Unconsciousness Rating: 44 (69)

Recovery Tests: 4

Knockdown: 13

Combat Movement: 40 Full Movement: 80

Powers: Durability (5), Enhanced Senses (Smell) (4): 8

Legend Points: 410

Equipment: Cave axe, chain mail

Loot: D4 silver pieces

Commentary

Cave trolls descended from tribes of trolls who took to the deep places of the Earth when the Horrors came. Their isolation from the rest of the world led to cultural stagnation, and in some cases, degeneration among these tribes. Elemental magic has raised the strength of these cave trolls beyond that of civilized trolls, however, and in recent years they have emerged from their tunnels to explore the world above. Rude and often violent, the cave trolls' habit of mixing trade with raiding has made them unwelcome visitors in most of Barsaive.

Rules

Cave trolls use large stone weapons called cave axes, little more than crude stone axes bolstered with elemental magic.

Cave Axe: Wielding a cave axe requires a minimum Strength value of 16. Cave axes add +7 to the troll's Strength step when making Damage Tests. Cave trolls take offense at anyone other than a fellow cave troll using one of their axes and will react accordingly; worsen the Attitude toward the wielder (and his obvious companions) for Interaction Tests by one level.

GARDAK, THIRD CIRCLE

CAVE TROLL BEASTMASTER

Attributes

Dexterity (20): 8/2D6

Perception (15): 6/D10

Strength (34): 13/D12+D10

Willpower (19): 8/2D6

Toughness (25): 10/D10+D6

Charisma (17): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10

Spell Defense: 9

Social Defense: 10

Initiative: 7/D12

Physical Armor: 5

Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 51 (79)

Wound Threshold: 15

Unconsciousness Rating: 44 (68)

Recovery Tests: 4

Knockdown: 13/D12+D10

Combat Movement: 40

Full Movement: 80

Karma Points: 10

Karma Step: 3/D4



Talents

Animal Bond ^D (4): 11/D10+D8
 Animal Training ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Cat's Paw ^D (4): 12/2D10
 Claw Shape ^D (4): 17/D20+D10
 Creature Analysis ^D (3): 9/D8+D6
 Dominate Beast ^D (5): 13/D12+D10
 Durability (7/6) (4): 4
 Karma Ritual (3): 3
 Lizard Leap ^D (3): 16/D20+D8
 Tracking (5): 11/D10+D8
 Unarmed Combat (6): 14/D20+D4

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Powers

Enhanced Senses (Smell) (2): 8/2D6

Skills

Artisan:

Bone Carving (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Cave Troll Racial Lore (2): 8/2D6

General:

Melee Weapons (5): 13/D12+D10
 Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
 —Troll
 Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), Troll

Equipment

Hardened Leather Armor (Phys 5; Init 1)

Whip (Damage 16/D20+D8)

Adventurer's Kit

Bone Carving Tools

Peasant's Garb

Rope (6-yard length)

Trail Rations (1 week)

Loot

9 silver pieces

Legend Award

365 Legend Points

Notes

Gardak possesses the troll racial ability of Heat Sight.

ELARK, SIXTH CIRCLE CAVE TROLL SHAMAN

Attributes

Dexterity (20): 8/2D6 **Perception** (17): 7/D12
Strength (34): 13/D12+D10 **Willpower** (19): 8/2D6
Toughness (25): 10/D10+D6 **Charisma** (17): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10

Spell Defense: 10

Social Defense: 10

Initiative: 7/D12

Physical Armor: 5

Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 50 (74)*

Wound Threshold: 15

Unconsciousness Rating: 43 (61)*

Recovery Tests: 4

Knockdown: 13/D12+D10

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 40

Full Movement: 80

Karma Points: 20

Karma Step: 3/D4

Talents

Astral Sight ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Create Fetish ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Durability (4/3) (6): 6
 Fire Heal ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Karma Ritual (6): 6
 Spellcasting ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Spell Fetish (6): 6
 Spell Fetish (6): 6
 Spell Fetish (6): 6
 Spell Fetish (6): 6
 Spirit Hold ^D (6): 14/D20+D4
 Spirit Talk ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Summon (Nature Spirits) ^D (6): 14/D20+D4
 Thread Weaving (Shamanism) ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Wilderness Survival ^D (6): 13/D12+D10
 Willforce (6): 14/D20+D4

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Powers

Enhanced Senses (Smell) (2): 9/D8+D6

Skills

Artisan:

Stone Carving (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Subterranean Geography (2): 9/D8+D6

General:

Climbing (1): 9/D8+D6
 Melee Weapons (5): 13/D12+D10
 Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
 —Troll
 Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), Troll
 Swimming (1): 14/D20+D4

Equipment

Hardened Leather Armor (Phys 5; Init 1)

Quarterstaff (Damage 15/D20+D6)

Adventurer's Kit

Stone Carving Tools

Peasant's Garb

22 × Spell Fetishes

Trail Rations (1 week)



Spells

Blizzard Sphere^F, Buoyancy, Crunch Climb, Detect Shamanism Magic, Dispel Shamanism Magic, Earth Blend, Earth Darts^F, Gills, Hunter's Sense, Icy Surface, Ironwood, Moonglow, Puddle Deep, Purify Earth, Purify Water, Resist Cold, Resist Poison, Small Slayer, Soothe the Savage Beast, Stench, Tossing Earth^F, Uneven Ground^F

^F Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Fetish.

Loot

18 silver pieces

Legend Award

1,370 Legend Points

Notes

Elark possesses the troll racial ability of Heat Sight. Elark currently has a Blood Wound from increasing the duration of the river spirit's summoning.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests

Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests

Sixth Circle: Land and Sea (1 Damage Point)

RIVER SPIRIT

DEX: 5

STR: 5

TOU: 5

PER: 5

WIL: 5

CHA: 5

Initiative: 6

Physical Defense: 7

Number of Actions: 1

Spell Defense: 8

Attack (3): 8

Damage:

Unarmed: 5

Death Rating: 32 (53)

Wound Threshold: 8

Unconsciousness Rating: 24 (42)

Combat Movement: 26

Social Defense: 8

Physical Armor: 5

Mystic Armor: 3

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 5

Full Movement: 52

Karma Points: 6

Karma Step: 6

Powers:

Aid Summoner (3)

Confusion (3): 8/2D6

Manifest (3)

Soothe (3): 8/2D6

Astral Sight^T (3): 8/2D6

Durability (3)

Share Knowledge (3)

Spellcasting (3): 8/2D6

Legend Points: 115

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

The river spirit is a Strength 3 Spirit of the Seas, assigned by Elark to do three things in the following order of importance: divert the river, keep anyone from entering the side tunnels leading to the cave troll village and protect the cave trolls from harm. The spirit will perform all of these tasks to the best of its ability, though it will always devote the most effort to diverting the river.

Rules

For rules concerning the spirit's powers, see the **Spirits** chapter on p. 375 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**. When attacking the characters, the river spirit will primarily use its Confusion power, attempt to grapple and drown them at close range, or direct the river to attack them at a distance.

Water Blast: Under the river spirit's influence, streams of water will erupt from the water wall, which the river spirit can bend to its will. The river spirit can direct a stream of water to attempt an Attack to Knockdown (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 403 of the **Player's Compendium**) a character within 30 yards of the spirit using the river spirit's Attack step with a Damage step of 8/2D6.

Drowning: A spirit of the sea can drown a target causing the victim to take damage every round. The spirit must be physically manifested and must make a successful Grappling attack against the target in order to drown it (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 411 of the **Player's Compendium**). Once the victim is grappled, it immediately starts drowning and takes a number of Damage Points each round equal to the spirit's Strength Rating. Each round, after taking damage, the drowning target may make an Unarmed Combat Test against the spirit's Attack Test result. If the test succeeds, the target breaks free of the spirit and stops taking drowning damage.

If the characters banish or destroy the river spirit, read the following aloud:

The river spirit shudders, its surface rippling from your attacks. Finally it falls, the great wall of water rushing like a tidal wave over the cavern floor. A thunderous roar echoes off the walls as the water crashes to the ground. In seconds the river resumes its natural course, filling the sandy riverbed to the tops of its banks.

The Return of the River

Characters who do not think things through before banishing or destroying the river spirit may find their victory celebration quickly cut short. Once the river spirit is no longer present to divert the river, the water will quickly revert to its natural course, surging over any characters who remain in the riverbed. Characters who climb up to the higher banks along the sides of the cavern before defeating the river spirit will avoid the worst of the initial cascade and be perfectly safe once the river subsides to its normal level.

Characters remaining in the riverbed when the river spirit collapses must make a successful Strength (12) Test or be swept under by the fierce current. Characters who manage to remain standing must make a second successful Strength (8) Test in order to make it to one of the banks. Characters who fail the first Strength Test must make two Step 15/D20+D6 Damage Tests to reflect the battering they receive from the force of the water. Physical Armor protects against this damage. In order for a character to break the surface and make it to shore, he must make two successful Strength (8) Tests.

In each round thereafter a character may attempt to reach the shore, but the Difficulty Number for doing so increases by +1 with each failure after the first attempt. Characters who cannot break the surface and reach the shore will begin to drown. The character can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Toughness value, but the character begins to take damage from drowning as soon as he runs out of breath (see **Drowning** in the **Skills** chapter on p. 248 of the **Player's Compendium**). At this point, the gamemaster makes Damage Tests each round until the character dies, is rescued, or somehow reaches the riverbank.

Characters standing on the riverbank when the river spirit collapses are much more fortunate; to avoid being swept away; they must make a successful Strength

(4) Test. If a character fails to make a successful test, that character is swept into the river, and is subject to all the consequences described above.

The death or disappearance of the river spirit and the resulting shock wave caused by the collapse of the water wall will also cause the cave-in of the side tunnel into which the river had been diverted. The characters need only worry about this if they ventured into this tunnel during the battle. The cave-in effectively cuts off the cave trolls from this section of the underground caverns until they find another entrance (if ever).

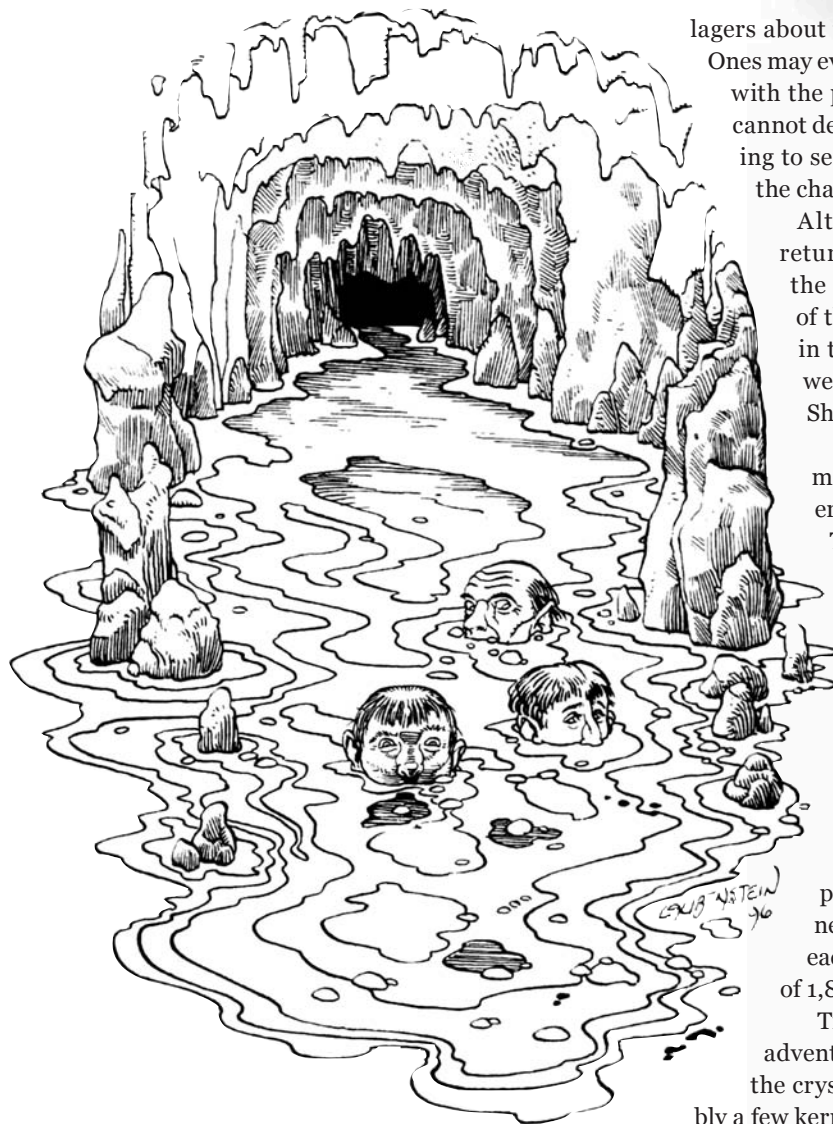
TROUBLESHOOTING

If Gardak and the cave trolls seem likely to defeat the player characters, the gamemaster can adjust the odds in the characters' favor so that their opponents pose a significant threat without overwhelming them by decreasing the number of cave trolls, for example, or lowering Gardak's Circle. He should remain at least Second Circle, and his Circle may be increased for more powerful adventuring groups.

If the characters choose to explore the tunnels leading to the cave troll settlement rather than dealing with the river spirit directly, the river spirit will do its best to keep the characters from doing so.

Gamemasters may fudge rolls to make certain the characters cannot gain entrance to the tunnels leading to the troll village. The gamemaster can, of course, allow the characters to explore the tunnels and improvise any encounters the characters might experience. If the characters decide to attack the troll settlement; however, they are in for one tough fight.





lagers about the cave trolls and the river spirit, the Pale Ones may even insist that the characters go back and deal with the problem. If the characters confess that they cannot defeat the river spirit, the villagers may be willing to send several of their remaining warriors with the characters.

Alternatively, they may let the characters return to Throal and then settle the score with the cave trolls themselves. In this event, most of the half-starved Pale Ones will be wiped out in the fighting. The surviving villagers will not welcome the characters if they ever return to Shining Waters.

When the characters return to Throal, they may insist upon taking the two t'skrang raiders with them in order to bring them to justice. The *lahala* will reluctantly agree to this, but will also send along three of her warriors with a bounty of True water to compensate the merchants for the value of the stolen goods—with money to spare.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

The creatures and gamemaster characters presented in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating the opponents. By successfully completing the adventure each character should earn an approximate total of 1,800 Legend Points.

Treasure available to the characters in this adventure includes poison sacs from the stingers, the crystalline tails of the shadowmants, and possibly a few kernels of True water from the Pale Ones.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

Several different adventures may result from the aftermath of **Pale River**. If the characters choose to explore the cave trolls' tunnels rather than immediately destroying the river spirit, they will certainly have their hands full, though in the end they could become even greater heroes in the eyes of the Pale Ones (assuming they survive). If the characters insist on taking the fight to the cave trolls, they will encounter at least twenty more warriors like those they have already met. In addition, the cave troll village likely includes other adepts—another Beastmaster, or perhaps even a Warrior or two. The characters will also find the members of the first t'skrang scouting party, who were captured and forced to mine True water from the diverted river.

The friendship of the Pale Ones of Shining Waters may lead to other adventures as well. For example, V'liskra might ask the characters to help find the lost scouts, leading to a final confrontation with the cave trolls.

AFTERMATH

If the characters defeat the cave trolls and destroy or dispel the river spirit, the villagers will greet them with a joyous celebration upon their return to Shining Waters. The Pale Ones will shower them with small handmade gifts in addition to any reward offered by V'liskra. The villagers will hold a feast in their honor, with fish from the newly returned river as the main dish. Afterward the characters will probably want to return to Throal as quickly as possible, though they will always be welcome guests in Shining Waters.

If any of the characters wandered down the side passages and became trapped in the cave-in, it may be some time (if ever) before they manage to find their way back to the surface. Seeking an exit from the underground caverns offers the gamemaster an opportunity to create an entire new adventure.

If the characters survive the final battle but fail to destroy or banish the river spirit, they face a difficult situation. The Pale Ones will not be pleased if they return without restoring the river. If the characters tell the vil-

EARTHDAWN SHARDS: SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The **Shards** series is a collection of adventures and encounters for the **Earthdawn** game. Intended as an inexpensive adventure resource for **Earthdawn** gamemasters, they are also a springboard for aspiring writers. The **Shards** series is published and available for purchase online from *OneBookshelf.com*—it is possible that a collection might see print at a later stage. Please read the following guidelines carefully before submitting your idea for a Shard. Submissions that do not conform to the guidelines may not be accepted.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

Short adventures and encounters (including appropriate setting descriptions) for **Earthdawn**, written to be used with the rules contained in the **Earthdawn Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**. A Shard can also contain new creatures and gamemaster characters. The tone and style of the text should fit the **Earthdawn** setting (refer to previously published adventures to get an idea of what we are talking about here).

As mentioned above, the **Shards** series also serves as a hunting ground to find potential new writers we can send outlines to and ask to participate in bigger projects, so succeeding here may result in future agreements.

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Your manuscript, formatted as outlined below, attached to an email sent to *submissions@earthdawn.com*. The email must contain a standard disclosure agreement (you can copy and paste the boxed text unaltered into the body of your email). Please note that these guidelines are subject to change, so check our web site at *www.earthdawn.com* for updates and an FAQ).

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We accept electronic submissions only. Each entry should come as a separate file (please use any of the following formats for your entries: DOC, RTF, TXT, or PDF). Your full name and email address should be provided clearly on the first page of the entry and/or in the header/footer. All pages should be plain white Letter- or A4-sized paper with one-inch margins all around, and set in a Times Roman type no smaller than 10 point). Using the default settings of your word processor is usually a good idea. Please pay close attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation—use our **Submission Handbook** for **Earthdawn** as a guide.

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This volume contains the adventure **Pale River**, designed for Journeyman characters of any Discipline. In this adventure, the search for the culprits behind a rash of thefts in Throal's Grand Bazaar leads to an isolated village of subterranean t'skrang on the shore of a river that has mysteriously run dry... Requires use of the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**.



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