

BURNING DESIRES



AN EARTHDAWN ADVENTURE
BY ANDREW RAGLAND



**BURNING
DESIRES**

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BURNING DESIRES

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I am not amused. Is this how you handle things back in Oshane? By the Passions, you are indeed a long way from home. I fear I will have to teach you a lesson personally. Just look at this mess!

• Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records •



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PRUNE DUFF

*You ask me, what Oshane needs is a good mopping up.
Those orks smell, and they're stinking up the city.*

• Yvgeny Rostovich, Captain of the Oshane City Watch •



Urticaria winced as her left hip popped going down the two steps to the street. Twenty years of climbing down from wagons came to her rescue, and she regained her balance in the next step with neither a limp nor a stagger. Passions bless, her family was behind her in the house and couldn't see her face. Two of her daughters had given her a week's worth of *quaalz* over going to the market by herself. Didn't she know the dectant had gotten more dangerous lately? How did she think she was going to carry her purchases back at her age?

Well, she may have turned forty last month, but it would be a cold day on Death's Sea before she let her own children treat her like an invalid. Morvenda'd jumped back just in time to keep her nose from getting clipped as Urticaria had swung her shopping bag up and onto her shoulder with a flourish. She'd be paying for that tomorrow—her shoulder was already complaining like an ungreased wheel—but it had been worth it for the expression on her daughter's face.

"The day I can't go down the market and haul back the makings for a batch of prune duff is the day you bury me," she'd told them, Morvenda and Gallateal, both of them with kids of their own they ought to be worrying about instead of their mother, who'd been a wagon driver most of her life and could take care of herself just fine, thank you very much. And out the door she went, the back of her head itching, a little prickle under her scalp, not the fine hot burn that she felt so rarely these days, but it would do, it would do.

She stopped around the corner to cough, wiping her smarting eyes with her sleeve. A couple of passersby nodded to her in recognition, but none of them were close enough friends to step over and say hello. Rot those girls, they were right about one thing: Oshane had seen better days. Not just the dectant, but the whole city. The problem with building in a giant cave was the air stayed put. Everything that went up eventually came back down, smoke and sweat and

all. Raggok-loving Chancellery didn't spend enough on air sponges, magic to clean up the air; kept saying there wasn't enough coin for it. Several thousand people just breathing was enough to bring an occasional glob of roof mud down, nasty stuff that collected on the cave ceiling and dripped in semi-solid chunks the size of an apple. Throw in the cookfires, the smoke from the forges and kilns and such, and the rest of the gunk that went into the air on a daily basis, and what came down wasn't anything anybody wanted to have to clean up. There was enough to build awnings over the streets in the rich end of the city, oh, yes, but not enough to do anything for the parts where the dwarfs didn't live. That would be a good revenge on her daughters, Urticaria decided, with a twisted grin that dug the point of her left tusk into her cheek. She'd send a couple of their kids to clean off the house roof. They'd come back down in a foul mess and a fouler mood, and make life rough for their mothers. Roof needed cleaning, too. There'd been a couple of fires lately, buildings burning. Not that you could burn the outside walls, made of stone as they were, but the insides burned, wood and cloth and people's possessions. Some of her family had been talking about it being arson when they thought she couldn't hear. She was old, yeah, but she wasn't deaf, just stiff and creaky.

Speaking of which, if she didn't get moving again, her muscles were going to set like cement. With a sigh, Urticaria started off toward the market again, picking her way carefully. The street was bare stone out here in the outer part of the dectant, not paved like in the rich, mostly dwarf sections, so she hadn't to worry about loose cobbles. There was always gravel in the middle of the street, though, and loose stones here and there, and other things that careless people had discarded instead of finding a proper way of disposing of them. Wouldn't do to trip and end up with Morvenda and Gallateal standing over her at the healer's saying that they'd told her so.

Three blocks later, feeling a bit winded but much better for the exercise, she came out of the residential area and onto the main street, into the noise and smells of a thriving orkish neighborhood. Shouts of people bargaining, arguing, or just talking; the creak of wagons; the shuffling steps of the animals hauling them; the snap and jingle of their harnesses, bringing back so many memories of when she drove them. Spicy smells of cooking, musky smells of people, bursts of flowers and oils from the occasional heavy splash of perfume. And people, her own people, tall, broad, burly, dressed in bright colors, dark or olive of skin, tusks gleaming proudly, hair blowing loose, going about their business.

Down the block, a patrol of the city watch stood in front of a tavern, waiting threateningly as their sergeant spoke with the owner, a dozen dwarfs in heavy armor all lined up like ninepins. The urge to roll something heavy seized her, and for a moment, she thought she was going to have to carry it through. Her gut wasn't up to choking down her *gahad* today. But then the sergeant finished being officious and marched his patrol away, and the feeling passed. Rotten dwarfs, always poking their noses in orkish business.

Oshane was run by a dwarf, sure, and was one of the Inner Cities of Throal, a dwarf kingdom. But Raggok's horns, the city was a third orkish, and that was growing every day. She'd put a lot of effort into that herself, eleven children by three husbands, and a host of grandkids, some from matches she'd made. Why the dwarfs didn't wise up and bring some orks into the city watch, and put orks in charge of maintaining order in the orkish neighborhoods, she didn't understand. It worked in Bethabal, but then Bethabal had an ork in charge, not a bunch of stupid *ujnort*. The dwarfs sure didn't understand the orks, them and their laws that might make sense to a dwarf but just brought up an ork's *gahad*.

That whole nonsense with the windows, you take that now. Dwarfs insisted the windowsills of public buildings couldn't be more than two feet off the ground from the outside. Taverns looked more like shrines to the Passions, with windows that tall and skinny; tall enough for an ork to see out the top from the inside and a dwarf to see in from the outside, and narrow enough that the glass didn't crack under its own weight. Cost a fortune, that size of a

window, all that glass. Passion shrines were built by lots of people, or the rich, and there was enough coin to pay for tall windows, to show off how much had been invested in worship. Shrines to Chorrolis especially, those even had stained glass. Tavernkeepers had to mortgage their inns to put windows in under the dwarf laws. Hard enough to turn honest coin as it was, without the rotten dwarfs.

She stopped at a pushcart and rummaged briefly through the produce. The prunes were dusty, and looked a little gray, a sure sign they'd not been stored properly. She turned away before she had to talk with the merchant. Just as she did, though, a small girl raced by, running like the wind, pelting along like a Horror was right behind her, tears streaming back and blowing off in her wake. Urticaria caught her balance and glanced about, just in time to see one of the boys chasing the girl hurl a stone. It whizzed past Urticaria, narrowly missing her, and missed the girl too, although not by much there either. A half dozen of them there were, rascals in the ragged and dirty clothes of the outermost part of the dectant, yelling and pounding along the trail of their quarry. "Unlucky!" one of them shouted, and "singleton!" yelled another.

Heat sizzled up Urticaria's spine, lifting the hair on the back of her neck, setting her scalp ablaze. Her breath came deeper, her shoulders squared, and the pain in her joints fled. As the boys came abreast of her, she lashed out with the strength and speed that still came to her at moments like these, striking one of the pursuers in the shoulder, knocking him into the path of another. The next instant, three-quarters of the pursuing mob was a tangle of arms, legs, and bruises on the pavement, the rest scattered among the barrows and stalls to save themselves from adult wrath, their quarry vanished.

"What was that all about?" she demanded, fists on her hips, standing over the boy most likely to be the leader.

"Crazy old woman!" he yelled up at her, scrambling to get out from under his cohorts and up to his feet.

Urticaria wrapped a hand in his hair and gave him an assist. He screamed, satisfyingly high pitched, as she pulled him up. She shoved her face so close to his she could only see one of his eyes out of each of her own.

"You'd better have a Passions-blessed good reason for chasing a little girl like she's a murderer, you hear me?"





Behind him, the rest of the boys froze, torn between saving their friend and facing the anger of an ork woman. He blinked tears from his eyes, grabbing at her hand to try and save his hair from being torn out, and stammered, “She’s unlucky!”

Urticaria twisted her hand a bit. The boy inhaled with a loud squeak, trying not to scream again. “You’ll have to do better than that, bucko,” she snarled.

“She’s a single birth!” the boy got out through gritted teeth.

“And that’s her fault? That’s reason enough to try and stone her in the middle of the marketplace?” But her strength began to ebb at that. Unlucky indeed; a single birth, a child born with neither brother nor sister, was an omen of bad things to come. Such orks tended to lead hard lives, for a variety of reasons, some being the way people treated them, and some being, well, bad luck.

“What’s all this then?” a voice at her elbow demanded. Urticaria straightened up, her back creaking as the heat drained out of it, and glanced down to see the dwarf watch sergeant standing there, both thumbs tucked into his sword belt, his dozen bullyboys lined up behind him with pole arms at the ready.

“None of your rotten business,” she almost said, but then got her brain ahead of her *gahad*, “Stopping a little girl from getting beaten. Where were you?”

The sergeant bristled. He was nearly comical as he drew himself up a full inch more. “Right down the block, old woman. Let go of the boy.”

“My Name,” she snapped, “is Urticaria. I’ll spell it for you if you want.” But she let go of the boy. Two of the dwarfs stepped smartly around her and kept him from running off.

“She speaks the truth,” said the pushcart vendor with the bad prunes. Urticaria blinked. She’d forgotten completely about him. She didn’t even know his Name, to her shame. “Those boys came through here after a little girl like hounds on a hare. Throwing stones, they were, in the marketplace yet.”

The sergeant’s eyes glittered, considering the vendor for a breath or two; then he made his decision. “Right, then. Come along with us, Urticaria.” He pronounced the Name with sarcastic care. “You’ll need to give a statement at the watch post. You too.” He pointed to the vendor. The man made hasty arrangements with a neighbor to see to his barrow.

“As for you,” and the sergeant turned to the boy, “you’ll be coming along with us, too, to face charges. Best you start thinking of Names you can give us, if you don’t want to be bearing the responsibility of it all yourself.”

As they all set off down the street, Urticaria grumbled to herself. Just when she’d gotten up a proper hatred of the dwarfs they went and got something halfway right. There just wasn’t any justice in the world.

INTRODUCTION

Clear, correct, complete, concise. Remember those rules in that order when you're writing if you want to earn your silver.

• **Jerriv Forrim, Librarian of the Hall of Records, to an Apprentice** •



The age of **Earthdawn** is an era of magic that existed thousands of years ago in our world's dim past. Magic touched every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Name-giver races: humans, elves, dwarfs, orks, trolls, windlings, t'skrang, and obsidimen. However, as the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic brought Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the peoples of Barsaive hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

Now, the people of Barsaive have emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels, ready to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes step forward to champion their land, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures. Through magic, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge. In so doing, they become Barsaive's living legends.

Burning Desires is a roleplaying adventure set in the world of **Earthdawn**. It takes place in the Kingdom of Throal, a predominantly dwarf realm under the Throal Mountains. From the Grand Bazaar at the entrance to the kingdom, through the Halls of Throal, to the Crystal Greenhouses, and the Mines at the far end, the kingdom stretches for miles, requiring several days to traverse it end to end. Beyond Throal proper lie the Inner Cities, constructed in great caverns so as to more closely resemble the surface world than the twisting halls of the central kingdom. The Inner City of Oshane, home to the larger part of the ork population of Throal, has fallen foul of a number of fires recently. Are they arson or accident? The heroes are called in to assist with the official investigation. Some days it's not good to be a hero.

GAMEMASTERING NOTES

Burning Desires is a linear adventure, meaning that its events follow a particular sequence. The gamemaster should, however, feel free to adapt the adventure to suit his particular group of players. Though the encounters progress logically, the gamemaster need not follow the adventure precisely as written in order to run a successful game.

This adventure is intended for a group of three to five Journeyman (Fifth to Eighth Circle) adepts of any Discipline. Legendary Status Level 1 is required for the player characters to be hired by the *chav'ao'ros* representatives, democratically elected officials from the neighborhood assembly who have come to the Halls of Throal seeking help for their constituents. Much of the adventure depends on social interaction.

Both the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums** are required to use this adventure. **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One** is recommended because it holds extended information on the Kingdom of Throal, but it is not required to use this book. The setting material provided in this book can also be used as the basis for further adventures. The city of Oshane is *not* a static place, and the player characters will play a vital role in its history. It is a place they may come back to in the future.

Though gamemaster characters can play significant roles in this adventure, the gamemaster should not allow them to overshadow the player characters. When the adventurers attempt to overcome a particular obstacle, or try to think of a way out of some dangerous situation, do not use the gamemaster characters to tell the players how to resolve the problem. After all, if players make the right choices all the time, both they and the gamemaster have a lot less fun. Whenever possible let your group of players make their own beds and squirm in them.

MAKING TESTS

During the course of **Burning Desires**, whenever a character attempts to take an action such as casting a spell, swinging a sword at an opponent, tracking a Horror, or flirting with a barmaid, the gamemaster or the player rolls dice against a **Difficulty Number** to determine the action's outcome. These dice rolls are called **Action Tests** (see the **Game Concepts** chapter of the **Player's Compendium**, p. 18).

To make an Action Test, the player or gamemaster rolls the appropriate **Action dice** based on the **step number** of the ability being used. If the dice roll result is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Number, the test succeeds and the character accomplishes his action. If the result is less than the Difficulty Number, the character fails to accomplish his action. In tests that deal with magic, the result often determines the duration of a magical effect.

Frequently, a test result determines not only basic success or failure, but the degree of success. A test may have one of six result levels: Pathetic, Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, or Extraordinary. A **Poor** result usually indicates simple failure at the task. A **Pathetic** result, less than the Difficulty Number listed for a Poor result, is often bad enough to have unpleasant side effects. An **Average** result, equal to or barely exceeding the Difficulty Number, usually means the character only just accomplished his action. A somewhat better roll yields a **Good** result, and a total close to double the Difficulty Number means an **Excellent** result. To achieve an **Extraordinary** result requires an even better roll again.

Any result level greater than Average may give the character some additional gain for his actions, including valuable extra information. The amount of gain for each result level is determined by the gamemaster, unless specifically noted.

In many cases when the player characters must make a test, the required ability is given, followed by the Difficulty Number of the task in parentheses. For example, a Perception (8) Test means that a character must use his Perception step to make a test against a target Difficulty Number of 8. A result of 8 or better succeeds; anything else fails.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aside from the core **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**, this book contains everything required to run **Burning Desires**. The gamemaster should read the adventure carefully to familiarize himself with the background before beginning the game.

The pace of **Burning Desires** will often go very fast, much like a rollercoaster ride. To stay on top of the adventure's rapidly changing events, the gamemaster must know what happens in advance so he can hurl the unwitting characters into the next challenging situation before the players have time to think. The gamemaster should be familiar with the basic outline of the plot and know precisely which developments trigger later events.

As always, the gamemaster should also be prepared to deal with the unexpected.

SETTING INFORMATION

There is one chapter in this book (**Oshane**, p. 14) that provides a complete description of the setting and its background. The **History** section tells the story of what happened and shaped this place in the past. The chapter also provides an overview of the area as well as a complete map for the gamemaster's eyes only. The remaining sections give details and maps of different **Places of Interest** and **Personalities** the area contains.

ENCOUNTERS AND EVENTS

The **Plot Synopsis** in this chapter summarizes the story background and the most probable course of the adventure. The chapters containing encounters (see below) describe the situations and events the characters must deal with during the course of the adventure. Each encounter contains five sections: **Overview**, **Setting the Stage**, **Themes and Images**, **Behind the Scenes**, and **Troubleshooting**.

The **Overview** gives the gamemaster a summary of the action that occurs during the encounter, and also tells him the encounter's objective.

The next section, **Setting the Stage**, contains a description of the encounter's surroundings and includes maps, if applicable. This section may also contain a narrative describing the player characters' location and what is



happening to them as if the players were actually there. Any special instructions for the gamemaster are highlighted.

Themes and Images helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter. It includes hints about imagery to use in the scene, emotions to convey, sounds, sensations, and so on. The information provided varies in form and content from scene to scene, ranging from general themes to specific sensory impressions.

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

The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry. For example, the characters may miss an important clue or lose a fight that they need to win. Most gamemasters will not want the player characters to get discouraged or killed off too easily. This section offers the gamemaster options for keeping the game going over trouble spots. The gamemaster can, of course, ignore these hints and invent his own solutions, or simply let the chips fall where they may. As noted earlier, however, the freeform nature of roleplaying means we can't anticipate everything the player characters might do! The gamemaster is again advised that he should be prepared to improvise if required. Since **Burning Desires** is a linear adventure, the major events are described here in the order that they are most likely to occur.

Into the Fire

When this adventure is tied into a running campaign, this chapter serves as the starting chapter suitable for almost any group of Journeyman adventurers. Gamemasters are encouraged to run the events detailed here as an introduction to the main story.

The Road to Oshane

This chapter covers the beginning of the adventure. The city of Oshane, home to the larger part of the ork population of Throal, has fallen foul of a number of fires recently. The player characters are called in to assist with the official investigation, to find out whether the cause is arson or accident. The group travels from the Halls of Throal to Oshane, and the player characters are introduced to the tensions they will have to deal with in the Inner City, both on a racial and a political level.

Smoke and Ashes

In the first part of this chapter, the group arrives in Oshane to find there's been another fire. This time, a child is dead. The situation is reaching explosive levels. The group must attend an emergency *chav'ao'ros* meeting and help settle the populace. In the second part, the group investi-

gates the scene of the most recent blaze. In the third part, the group finds lodging, either with an ork family or at an inn, and the player characters get an idea of the social situation and racial tensions in Oshane.

Scenes of the Crimes

This chapter presents evidence that the group can discover at the various arson scenes, and encounters at each one. The order doesn't matter; the evidence will be discovered regardless of when the scenes are checked. One important item that the player characters discover from all of their interviews is that the guards haven't been investigating the incidents as thoroughly as they should have been.

Pastimes and Diversions

In the first part of this chapter, a guard unit commander comes to talk with the player characters. She wants to know what they've found. She's less than forthcoming in return, not wanting to give the group any chance to show up the guards. In the second part, the player characters are either bribed or threatened to get them to drop their investigation and leave the city. In the third part, following up on a tangential clue leads the group to a cult of thieves which Raggok has deceived into thinking they're following Chorrolis by stealing large sums.

Collision and Collusion

The first part of this chapter is a collection of further investigations the player characters can pursue. More can be learned about their quarry if they're willing to do the legwork. In the second part, the group meets a disgruntled group of orks coming back from the city Chancellery. The orks are about to take matters into their own hands. If the player characters don't maneuver carefully, they might have to deal with a riot. In the third part, the assembly speaker chairs a *chav'ao'ros* meeting in which the player characters present their findings thus far, giving them a chance to defuse the tension or set off a riot.

The One that Got Away

The player characters investigate a clue that leads them to the edge of the cavern. They spot a little girl playing in the rubble, but she gets away from them, knowing the territory better. They also have their first chance to find out about the Horror which is behind all the trouble.

Alarums and Excursions

Another fire erupts in the middle of the night. Four children are trapped on the third floor of a burning home. The group has an opportunity for heroism in front of an audience. If the player characters succeed in rescuing the children, even partially, they can win serious advantages in dealing with the orks of the quadrant. Of course, the possibility of catastrophic failure is also present.

Takin' It to the Streets

In this chapter, the group chases down further leads regarding the girl who seems to be connected with the

arsons. If the group doesn't move quickly enough, a riot erupts and a mob marches towards the Chancellery. The group has one last chance to try to set things right, but it's going to be an uphill battle.

Down the Chimney

The investigative part of the adventure is over. The group has determined the underlying cause of the problem: a Horror—a weak one, but a Horror nonetheless. Vishquagorch has Horror-marked Linnhail Zerefanck, and has been using her to set fires in the hopes of getting the populace to break open the natural chimneys and let the Horror out into the city. The player characters must go into the cavern wall after Vishquagorch. Either they win the fight with the Horror, or a little girl is irrevocably corrupted and an entire city may be doomed.

Timeline

Burning Desires takes place over a time period of at least two weeks, with the first week being taken up with exposition. The timeline shows the beginning of the adventure. After Day 6, the scenario can take place in as many or as few days as are required for resolution. It is recommended that the major events be spread out so that the progress is realistic. Some of the scenes have prerequisites, events that must happen first in order to set up later action.

The following section lists the order in which scenes must occur.

Something for Nothing (p. 68): After the start of **Scenes of the Crimes**. Requires that at least two arson scenes have been investigated.

Remittance Man (p. 68): After the start of **Scenes of the Crimes**. Requires that three arson scenes have been investigated, and is best done after the player characters have filed some sort of report with Klesh.

Bad Gold (p. 68): After **Something for Nothing**, and after Rozerl gives the group a bad tip.

Stage Fright (p. 78): After **Scenes of the Crimes**, or after at least four arson scenes have been investigated. Ideally, the player characters should have reported some kind of results to Klesh. Can happen before or after **The One that Got Away**, depending on whether or not Linn was captured.

Little Clues (p. 76): The flask investigation can only happen after the Wobotu home or the grain warehouse is investigated, in **Scenes of the Crimes**. The liquor bottles can only be traced after **Alarums and Excursions**, when the Traoken arson scene is investigated.

Alarums and Excursions (p. 81): After the halfway point of **Scenes of the Crimes**, but before **The One that Got Away**. Can come before or after **Something for Nothing**, **Remittance Man**, and **Bad Gold**.

Some People Can't Handle Rejection (p. 78): After **Alarums and Excursions**. Should occur only after the players suspect a Horror.

TIMELINE TABLE

Day	Event
1–4	Recruitment and traveling to Oshane (see The Road to Oshane , p. 41)
5	The <i>chav'ao'ros</i> meeting. Investigation of Daamehok house fire. Lodgings at the Star Sapphire or at Sethra and Moodri's house (see Smoke and Ashes , p. 50)
6	Investigations begin (see Scenes of the Crimes , p. 58)

The One that Got Away (p. 84): After **Scenes of the Crimes**, or at least after the point where the player characters realize that a child is probably at fault, and they have identified the stone and dust as potentially being from the south edge of the cavern.

Legwork (p. 89): After **The One that Got Away**, and only if the player characters failed to capture Linn.

Fire at the Yellow Eye (p. 91): After the liquor bottles from the Traoken home are investigated, thus after both **Alarums and Excursions** and **Little Clues**. Recommended for after **The One that Got Away**, if Linn was not captured.

Panic in the Streets (p. 92): After everything except **Down the Chimney**, as this scene only occurs if the player characters have made a total hash of the adventure.

Down the Chimney (p. 94): Run this whenever the players realize the true situation, and decide to go after the Horror.

GAME INFORMATION

The following chapters provide additional information on the adventure, gamemaster characters, and handouts.

Loose Ends

Following the encounters, this chapter sums up the consequences of the adventure and suggests ways in which the gamemaster might use the adventure's gamemaster characters and settings in future adventures.

The **Awarding Legend Points** section lists the encounters and the appropriate Legend Point Awards in each session for defeating opponents, finding treasures, creative roleplaying and heroics, and so on. In addition to awarding Legend Points to player characters at the end of the adventure, the gamemaster awards Legend Points at the end of each game session, whether or not the entire adventure fits into that session. Each session also has a clear session goal, as outlined in the **Game Sessions** section.

For more information on awarding Legend Points, see the **Gamemastering** chapter of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 94.

Rumors and Research

This chapter provides gamemasters with all the information the characters can obtain from outside sources: rumors, tales and legends, library research, and so on. If he wishes, the gamemaster can adapt much of the information in this section for future adventures. Also, this chapter holds information on the magical treasure contained in this book.

Cast of Characters

This chapter provides game statistics and descriptions for the most significant gamemaster characters.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

It is impossible to create a published adventure that provides the appropriate opposition level for every diverse group of player characters. Some groups are inherently more powerful than others. The gamemaster must adjust game statistics and capabilities of the opposition to provide an appropriate level of difficulty for his group.

If the adventure does not suit the player characters' strengths and weaknesses, the gamemaster may use it as an outline, the bones on which to develop an adventure of his own. Or, if it works well except for a glitch here and there, the gamemaster can change any part of the plot or events to make the adventure a better fit.

Several maps and handouts are included with this adventure. The gamemaster should photocopy any handouts and have them ready to use when needed. In addition to props, gamemasters might want to use background music to help

convey mood. Use the descriptions in the **Themes and Images** sections to find out what kind of props, lighting, music, or other extras might be appropriate for a given encounter.

Keep in mind that you, as the gamemaster, have a unique responsibility to make the adventure exciting, keep the players involved, and hold the story on track. In describing the world of **Earthdawn**, try to answer all the players' questions about what the characters see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Feel free to go beyond the descriptions provided in this book when evoking places and moods.

To keep the players connected to the action, ask them "What do you do?" each time you describe a new scene to them. By having to describe what they want their characters to do, the players help to tell the story and add to their own enjoyment.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

For many years, the Inner City of Oshane has been a source of tension in the kingdom. The city's population is heavily ork, while the government, as is normal for Throal, is primarily dwarf. The two races have lived together uneasily at best. Many dwarfs worry that the orks, with their higher birth rate, will eventually outnumber the dwarfs, and subsequently take over by force of numbers.

The Baron of Oshane, Stann Olowey, better known as Stann the Quaverer, is weak and indecisive, and his Chancellor, Marruth, is corrupt, bleeding the city treasury



into her own pockets. This combination of bad government and racial tensions has sparked race riots in the recent past. Now, a spate of fires has sent the situation from bad to worse. While most of the city's construction is of stone, the interiors of buildings are flammable. The blazes don't spread far, but several families have lost their possessions, and the stock at two shops has been destroyed. Worse, a food warehouse went up, creating a grain shortage. In addition, the smoke does not disperse well. A haze is building in the cavern, making eyes water and people irritable, and threatening the health of the very young and the very old.

Overwhelming requests are coming up through the *chav'ao'ros* assembly (the democratic process by which subjects may send issues from the neighborhood level) for an end to the fires and better ventilation. Sinking new ventilation shafts would be hideously expensive, though, and the Chancellery of Oshane is loath to spend that sort of silver. Opening the natural chimneys and vertical fissures near the cavern boundaries would also be pricey, as teams of adepts would have to clear each one before it could be opened. Action must be taken, however, or rioting will erupt again.

The secret behind the fires is a dark one indeed. One of the chimneys at the edge of a predominantly ork neighborhood has a minor Horror trapped within it. For years, Vishquagorch has tried to free itself and gain access to the city, but its powers are limited in scope and range. It has placed a Thought Worm in a young girl, the only survivor of a difficult birthing and thus that rarity among orks—an only child—who plays frequently in the deserted area by the cavern wall. Vishquagorch has caused her to set the fires, with the goal of precipitating a riot among the ork population in which the chimney would be smashed open without the proper precautions.

The guards have been looking for adults, focusing on the idea of a Raggok cultist or an agent of an unfriendly power such as Thera or Iopos. Baron Olowey is uncertain of the path he should take, and reluctant to take any action for fear of it being wrong. Chancellor Marruth argues that the arsonist will soon be caught, so there's no sense spending more on the guards. The complaints rising through *chav'ao'ros*, up through the city, and finally to the crown,

have reached the Royal Chancellery. Chancellor Wishten didn't want to trouble the king with the complaints, so he asked Officer of the Court Azakis to resolve the matter. Azakis, however, did not want to meddle too deeply in the internal affairs of one of the Inner Cities, especially one as prone to trouble as Oshane.

The local authorities are supposed to take care of local problems; intervention from the Royal Chancellery would weaken the city government in the eyes of the populace. With this in mind, Azakis visited the *chav'ao'ros* assembly in the primarily affected dectant, and suggested that the residents hire an independent team of adepts to look into the problem. The citizens liked this idea, as it allowed them to take action without taking the law into their own hands. They could bring in someone who might be more effective than the local constabulary by relying on the age-old tradition of having adepts deal with a sticky problem.

So the player characters are contacted by the speaker and recorder of one of the wealthier assemblies in the dectant, who explain the situation to them and offer a thousand silver pieces if the group can put a stop to the fires. Naturally, the orks explain, the guards are going to be resistant to the idea of someone usurping their investigation, but as long as the player character stay within the law, they should be able to proceed.

Chancellor Marruth will see this as a direct threat to her empire. If the guards are proven incompetent, she'll have to authorize more funds for them. There could even be an audit of the city books, which would no doubt turn up evidence of her massive embezzling. The player characters are caught between a populace demanding the protection from harm that they are rightly owed by the government, the guards protecting their territory from a group with no legal authority, and a corrupt Chancellor guarding her empire. Along the way they'll have to deal with intimidation and bribery attempts.

Oh, yes, and then there's the small matter of a girl who's been Horror-tainted, and the Horror itself. The player characters must resolve those issues without causing a panic or turning the citizens against them. Investigative, diplomatic, and fighting talents will all be needed to complete this task successfully.

OSHANE

*Getting to Oshane from the Great Gates says a lot about the city.
You just keep getting in deeper and deeper.*

• **Ketrevan Argilos, Merchant of the Grand Bazaar of Throal** •



Constructed in huge caverns, the Inner Cities closely resemble those on the surface, with open streets and buildings instead of halls and rooms carved out of the rock. While thousands of Name-givers have moved into the Inner Cities of Wishon, Bethabal, Tirtaga, Oshane, Yistane, Valvria, and Hustane as a way of becoming Throalic subjects without having to compete for space in the overcrowded Halls of Throal, not all city folk are immigrants from outside the kingdom. (The cities of Raithabal and Thurdane are still under construction.) Thousands of Throalites moved from the Halls of Throal, many of whom had been living in the *dahnat*, the slums, and considered moving to one of the Inner Cities a step up from squalor.

This chapter describes the Inner City of Oshane. It provides background material for the gamemaster to build upon, and a stock of ready locations and gamemaster characters to add depth to the story. Special attention has been paid to the Fifth Dectant, Orktown, where most of the events of **Burning Desires** take place.

HISTORY OF OSHANE

Construction of Oshane began in 1433 TH, after Wishon and Bethabal had been opened for settlement, and partway through the building of Tirtaga. Early in the excavations, plans had to be altered when unstable rock was found at the south end of the cavern. The stone there is riddled with cracks, some big enough for a Name-giver to climb up through. Work halted in that region, leaving huge piles of rubble and a wall badly scarred with toolmarks, far from the polished standard of dwarf construction.

The architects shifted the focus of the cavern northward, but a good deal of rock had already been removed from the cavern floor. As a result, instead of being a proper bowl, the cavern has an elongated focus, with the baronial estate at the northern, deeper end, and a noticeable

trench southward, putting the innermost parts of the southern dectants nearly as deep as the government buildings that are supposed to be at the center. This off-kilter shape contributes visually to the city's peculiarity, and is often blamed for giving symbolic weight to the southern dectants, the source of much of the city's trouble. Oshane opened for settlement in 1447 TH. Khazimir Parvidian, the chief architect for the city, became ill two months before Oshane was opened, and died the day before the first settlers arrived. His tomb is behind the Baron's residence. It's said that his spirit still walks the streets, measuring and calculating and worrying about the schedule.

Oshane's first Baron, a dwarf Named Rydel Lihavrian, was dismissed by the crown after the race riots of 1472–1473 TH. Rydel had stacked the government with dwarfs, and shown little tolerance for the needs of non-dwarfs. Each time the crown put pressure on him, Rydel made a few token concessions, just enough to get the crown representatives to leave Oshane, and then went back to business as usual. After a series of increasingly violent incidents, full-fledged rioting broke out in late 1472 TH, and continued sporadically through the early days of 1473 TH, when assistance from the Arm of Throal arrived to quell the disturbances. Thirty-two people died in the riots. Dozens more were injured, some severely. Massive property destruction was widespread, and the haze of smoke took months to clear, giving a warning of what was to come.

The second baron, Verunts Olowey, a human chosen partially for his race's reputation for getting along with pretty much everybody, took charge in late 1473 TH. He reorganized the Chancellery and the Watch, bringing more non-dwarfs into city office. This move offended the old guard mightily, and gave rise to numerous organizations such as Dwarfs For Oshane, but settled down the city as a whole. While there were still incidents of racial unrest during Verunts' rule, they stayed manageable. Verunts died in 1498 TH, and his son, Stann, was confirmed to the office.



LAYOUT

Oshane, like all the Inner Cities, is laid out in a circular pattern. In the center is the Circle, where people can meet, celebrate holidays, and listen to speakers. In the center of the Circle are the baronial estate and the chancellery. A bazaar extends around the Circle, and a park surrounds the bazaar. Due to the eccentric shape, many of the city's residents refer to the city center as the Oblong. The rest of the city is divided into ten decantants, divided by wide lanes that radiate out from the city center to the edge of the cavern. Another lane runs around the outer perimeter of the city, leading to tunnels that connect Oshane with the rest of Throal. A decantant houses approximately 2,500 residents. The decantants are numbered 1

through 10 going sunwise from the north. Thus, the decantant just east of the northern tip of the city is the First Decantant, with the Second Decantant to its east and the Tenth Decantant to its west. Each decantant also has an unofficial Name, used more often than the official number.

The richest city residents have large estates close to the Circle. The most prosperous businesses ring these estates. The main part of a typical decantant is the *wedshel*, a Throalic term for a middle-class neighborhood. The outermost portion of a decantant is its *dahnat*, a Throalic term referring to the least desirable area where the poor live. Neighborhoods are most likely to be racially segregated in the outermost reaches of a decantant. The barons of the Inner

Cities try to discourage this pattern of segregation because it often leads to trouble. Race riots have erupted repeatedly in Bethabal, Oshane, and Tirtaga over the past forty years, and less serious incidents have occurred in Yistane and Wishon. Despite the objections and efforts of chancery officials and magistrates, however, people of the same culture strongly prefer to live together, and so racial neighborhoods continue to thrive.

GOVERNMENT

A baron and his extended family rule each city, serving for life. Upon the death of the baron, or an incident severe enough to warrant removal, the king may allow an heir to continue in office or may choose a new ruler. When making this decision, the king takes into account the current ruling family's popularity among the people that they govern. Therefore, city rulers have an incentive to govern well. Rulership of the cities is a matter of custom. It is not enshrined in the *Council Compact*, which was drafted long before anyone in Throal even thought of building the Inner Cities. The King of Throal can therefore change governing practices at will.

THE CURRENT BARON OF OSHANE

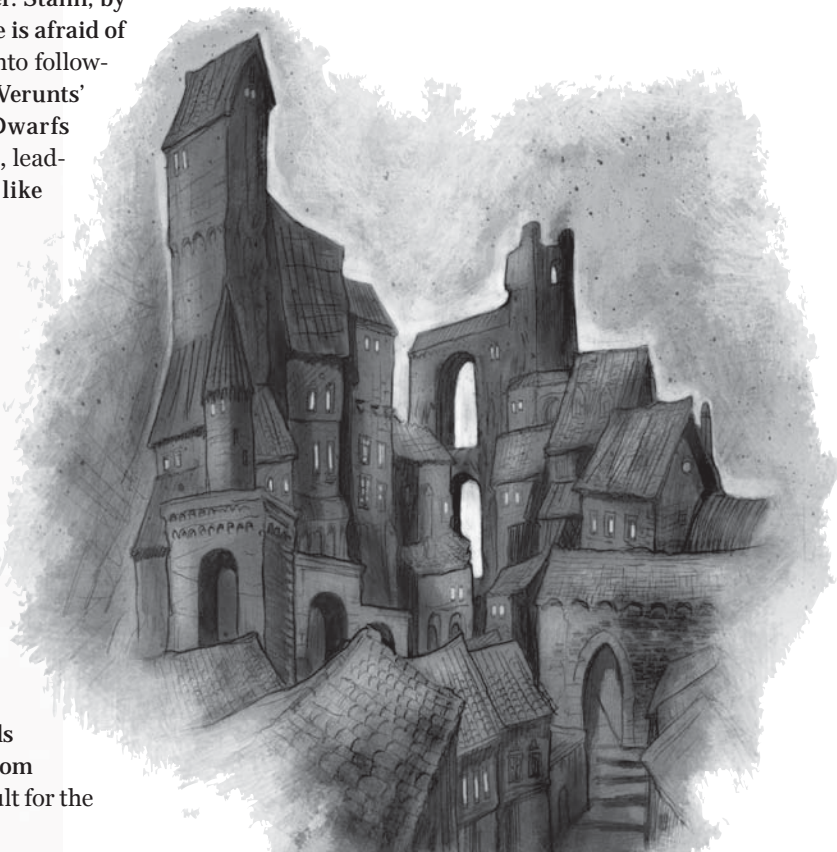
Oshane's current baron is Stann Olowey, known unflatteringly as "Stann the Quaverer". A middle-aged human, Olowey has a speech impediment that gives his vowels a peculiar, shaky quality. He became Baron of Oshane as heir to his father, a popular and dynamic leader. Stann, by contrast, is a timid man ruled by self-doubt. He is afraid of his own officials, who easily manipulate him into following their agendas. Over the past twelve years, Verunts' reforms have mostly fallen by the wayside. Dwarfs have replaced many of the other races in office, leading to a government that looks frighteningly like that of Rydel shortly before the Race Riots.

Oshane's chancellor, Marruth, is a matronly dwarf who bullies Baron Stann shamelessly while enriching her relatives with wasteful government contracts. Marruth is arrogant and venal, but not so much so that she fails to cover her tracks. Though Oshane's public spaces are in poor repair and its guards badly paid and poorly motivated, no one outside the baronial estate has yet guessed that Marruth's family is robbing the city treasury blind. The city's lack of strong law enforcement has allowed the *buundavim*, organized criminals with their origin in Bartertown, to move in and take up their illicit trades. Half the dectants of Oshane now have *buundavim* gangs in them, running brothels and dice halls, demanding protection money from the merchants, and generally making life difficult for the law-abiding subjects.

Olowey's family provides him little support. His wife, Noreta, is a pretentious social butterfly with no concept of political power. His eldest son, Demian, spends his days with the city's minstrels, drinking and writing bad poetry. Olowey's younger son, Vasyl, takes after his grandfather, with an astute grasp of political realities. Unfortunately, he's not in the direct line of power. Aware of Marruth's corruption, Vasyl is frustrated at his inability to do anything without ruining his own family in the process.

Lacking strong local leadership, the orks of Oshane look to the examples of Dajag Treaty-Keeper, Baroness of Bethabal, and Mardek Silkback, Baron of Valvria. Dajag, an ork with a tribal background, was installed by King Varulus III after the race riots, and has settled her city considerably. The orks of Bethabal generally address their problems through *chav'ao'ros*, the Throalic process of democratic assembly, rather than street demonstrations. The old-guard dwarfs, however, are worried that Bethabal will become another Cara Fahd, and are anxious to prevent the orks from gaining the upper hand. They see Bethabal as a worst-case scenario about to happen.

Mardek, on the other hand, is a smooth politician, well-ingrained in the Throalic power structure. His father was the first ork to achieve kingdom office in Throal. Mardek has risen quickly through his ability to cement alliances with all sides of any question. While having the open approval of the Crown, Mardek is also an ally of Selenda and House Chaozun of the old guard. Dajag is seen as more "orkish" than Mardek, but few orks actively dislike Mardek; he's far too good a politician for that. Like Dajag, Mardek has encouraged the orks to assemble in *chav'ao'ros*, and submit



their grievances to his office and to the kingdom government. Thus far, the Throalic process is holding together, and keeping Valvria from experiencing the kind of racial unrest that has torn Bethabal, Tirtaga, and Oshane in the recent past.

A GUIDE TO THE CITY

The fourth of the Inner Cities to be opened, Oshane was swiftly populated, and spent the next several years sorting itself out. At the time of this writing, the various races have migrated into their own neighborhoods, the rich to the center and the poor to the outside, and the political factions are well established and thoroughly entrenched. Visitors to Oshane often describe the city as “cliquish”, with an insular attitude that keeps new residents outside of the social and political circles. Depending on the race of the individual or family involved, and where they settle, it may take anywhere from weeks to years for newcomers to be accepted as proper residents and included in the events and processes of the city. Pre-existing connections, such as family or business relationships, help shorten the time.

As with all of the Inner Cities, there are few obsidimen in residence in Oshane. Most of these are merchants who travel outside the kingdom frequently, to avoid lapsing into hibernation from lack of sunlight. Dwarfs and orks make up the majority of the population, with dwarfs predominating. This balance is slowly shifting as the faster-breeding orks grow to outnumber the more slowly reproducing dwarfs. Elves and humans are the next most prevalent, with trolls and windlings coming in far behind. Only a very few t'skrang live in Oshane, it being much too far from any large body of water for their comfort. Most of these are of the Syrtisian *aropagoi*, and live at the trade mission in the Seventh Dectant (see p. 29). Many of the city's craftspeople have arrangements with the Mines of Throal or the Crystal Greenhouses, or with suppliers outside Throal, for discounts on raw materials, and with cartage companies to bring the materials into the city. Exports include finished goods in metal, pottery, and fabric; jewelry; and household goods. Major imports include food, wood, and other organic materials.

Roof Mud

A perpetual problem in Oshane is roof mud. The Chancellery has not spent enough on the air sponges that, as they do in a kaer, keep the air in the cavern clean. The soot and other pollutants that rise from the city collect on the cavern ceiling, there mingling with the condensation that forms on the cold stone, to form a thick, malodorous mud. This roof mud drips in globules ranging from small drops to chunks the size of a dwarf's fist, more so toward the edge of the cavern than in the center, due to the slope of the cavern ceiling. This contributes to the popularity of the center of the city as a place to live and work.

Not only do the neighborhoods become poorer the further out toward the cavern wall they are, but the worse they smell as well. In a self-perpetuating cycle, the streets

become more slippery out toward the cavern edge, with funds to clean them being derived from property taxes in the area. In the wealthier dectants, especially the Tenth, the streets are roofed over. Mud collectors work above the streets, clearing the roof mud from the tops of the buildings and the street awnings, and hauling it off to the greenhouses at the edge of the cavern to be added to the compost, along with the rest of the city's organic leavings. The mud stains on their clothing can easily identify people who live in the poor sections of town. Roof mud does not wash out easily, often leaving permanent marks where it has struck. Not only the poor, but the rich as well, complain to the Chancellery about this issue.

EASTWARD

Home to a large part of Oshane's middle-class dwarfs and many of the officers of the watch, the First Dectant has no *dahnat*, being *wedshel* from the edge of the estates all the way out to the commercial facilities near the edge of the cavern. A policy of evicting anyone who cannot afford the property assessments has kept out the poor. A more subtle policy of not leasing or selling property to anyone who might not measure up to the racial and financial standards of the dectant keeps out almost everyone who's not a middle- or upper-class dwarf. Social grace (by dwarf standards) being one of the rules for determining residence, elves are the second most prevalent race in the dectant, with humans a close third. Together, elves and humans make up less than a quarter of the dectant. Only a few windlings and trolls live in the First Dectant, and no orks at all.

Far too often, the First Dectant defines itself by what it is not, especially when it comes to comparison with the Tenth Dectant. Even its nickname, Eastward, fails to describe the First Dectant on its own terms. Rather than finding contentment in living in one of the better areas of the city, in terms of crime rate, upkeep of public thoroughways and lighting, politeness of the watch, and status of one's neighbors, First Dectant inhabitants tend to be dissatisfied with what they have achieved, seeing it as insufficient in comparison with the next dectant over. “Looking west” is slang for social and financial ambition. When emphasized, it implies that the person is putting his goals ahead of the loyalty he should be showing to his dectant. To say that someone has his nose in the west is to say that he's showing a snobbish attitude unbecoming of his present situation; that he's putting on airs that he doesn't deserve.

Residents of the First Dectant resent Tenth Dectant residents who come to the First for entertainment. There's an attitude of “slumming” that raises hackles. While violence rarely results, Tenth Dectant residents may find themselves at tables off in a corner or by the kitchen, and treated with an oily unctuousness that borders on insulting. First Dectant residents who move to the Tenth rarely return to the First, even for familial visits, knowing what sort of treatment they will receive. The streets in the First Dectant have awnings three quarters of the way out to the cavern wall. Beyond there, in the workshop and commercial areas, goods are

transported in covered wagons and people carry umbrellas to keep off the roof mud.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the First Dectant include Eudoxia's, the Twelve Needles tailor shop, and the Dectant Chav'ao'ros Hall.

Eudoxia's

A wineshop located halfway out from the city center, Eudoxia's is the premier location for anyone wishing to see or be seen. More political and business deals are worked out here than anywhere else in the dectant. Three stories high, and reaching from Jertigan Street halfway over to Fallow Road, Eudoxia's is stone for its first floor, and framed wood for its second and third, an extravagant expense in an Inner City. Its windows are of the finest leaded glass, and smoked so that passersby cannot see in. The wineshop enjoys an exemption from the city law that states that the watch must be able to see into all public places from the outside.

The ground floor has the main room, with large tables and a stage on which may be found some of the finer musicians of Oshane. Also on the ground floor is the kitchen, and the office of Laskaris Zeno, the owner, who Named the shop after his first wife, dead nearly ten years now from childbed fever. Although a dwarf, Laskaris dresses in elven fashions, much to the quiet amusement of his elven patrons.

The second floor has two large rooms for engagement announcements, business meetings, and social events. The third floor has private rooms, and a back stairway for those who wish to make discreet entrances and departures. The back stairway is guarded by Name-givers chosen for their manners and fighting ability, quite capable of being polite or violent as the situation warrants.

Twelve Needles

A clothing shop in the outer reaches of the First Dectant, Twelve Needles gets its Name from the consortium of twelve tailors who operate it. Maintaining a cadre of spinners, weavers, dyers, and bleachers, as well as a sheep, flax, and linen farm out past Bartertown, Twelve Needles is a large, prosperous shop offering the latest in Throalic fashions. Much of the dectant's gossip goes through the shop with its customers, which include the most ardent social climbers and influential residents of the dectant.

Often called on to produce dress uniforms for the watch officers, and formal clothing for the social elite, Twelve Needles can turn out the garb for an entire wedding party in less than two weeks. Twelve Needles' industry and quality fetch a very high price. The tailors live at a standard far above the normal for their profession, having homes close to the city center.

Dectant Chav'ao'ros Hall

The First Dectant's primary *chav'ao'ros* hall, where the delegates representing the dectant assemblies meet, stands only a block from the Circle. The broad, low building reaches from Travar Street to Kalma Street, including the plaza

leading up to its main entrance, dominated by sculptures from First Dectant artists. Built of stone, the hall has been plastered and whitewashed to produce a smooth, gleaming surface that requires a crew of workmen to maintain, constantly cleaning away the roof mud and other city dirt. It's said that the scaffolding is only cleared away for *chav'ao'ros* meetings, when the building has to put on its best.

The meeting hall takes up half the building, on the side closest to the Circle. The debating floor is inlaid with hardwoods, polished to a mirror-like shine. Each delegate has two glass cylinders, one red and one green. To vote, a delegate places a light quartz in his red cylinder for "No", and into his green cylinder for "Yes". The secretary then counts the lights held up by the delegates. In front of the desks stands the Speaker's Platform, a multi-level stage with the Secretary and the Sergeant at Arms occupying the lower levels, one on each side, and the Speaker's lectern on the upper level in the center. Behind the desks is the observation gallery. Its floor is of stone, and a brass railing divides it from the debating floor. Armed guards stand at strategic intervals along the rail, to make sure that nobody climbs over. This applies to both sides: the guards have had to stop overly excited delegates from physically expressing their opinions of hecklers on more than one occasion.

The other half of the building is given over to offices for the Speaker, the assembly officers, and the delegates, in decreasing size and ease of access. Again, the position of each neighborhood within the dectant determines the position of the corresponding office within the building. The delegates from assemblies close to the Circle have large offices close to the assembly hall. The delegates from the outermost neighborhoods have small offices down a series of increasingly narrow corridors. Mostly delegates from the outermost assemblies have expressed dissatisfaction at this. They feel that the spirit of *chav'ao'ros*, the meeting of Throalic subjects as equals in order to bring their concerns to the crown, is being defeated by this inequitable distribution of office space. Unfortunately, the wealthier assemblies toward the Circle bore most of the cost of the Hall, and so their wishes were taken into account when it came time to lay out the plans. Perhaps with a turn in prosperity for the outer neighborhoods, and the coin for re-modeling the Hall or even building a new one, this may be rectified. In the meantime, the outer neighborhood delegates meet in their own assembly off site, to coordinate their votes against the inner neighborhoods.

Personalities of the First Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Elzbieta Ricomis

The magistrate for the First Dectant is an elderly dwarf woman, a third cousin of the Chancellor, and a staunch supporter of the *Council Compact*, but quite thoroughly on the take. Appearing before her without retaining an advocate who will donate part of his fee to "court costs" guarantees a stiff sentence, regardless of the offense or crime. She detests

orks for personal reasons, and will take out her prejudices just as readily on anyone supporting Oshane's orkish population as on the orks themselves.

Klavdia Iskandarian

A dwarf woman of middle years, Klavdia is a property agent. She dresses in the latest fashions, but with a bit too much in the way of cosmetics, perfume, and jewelry. While she can find homes for lease or purchase in the First Dectant, for a properly large fee she can also help the right people to move west. A good portion of her fee is redistributed to ease the transaction, but Klavdia keeps enough to compensate her for the long and tedious process of convincing the elite of the Tenth Dectant of the suitability of her client. Her success rate is better than half, but not by much.

The elite of the Tenth Dectant regard her as a useful filter, but definitely not as one of their own. She's rarely invited to social functions in the Tenth, and never the really important ones. A desperate need to belong simmers in her mind. Mired as deeply as she is in the system of bribery and connections that rules Oshane, she's quite likely to take yet another step down that road. Given sufficient incentive, she'd be willing to get nearly anything done if it meant she could move west herself. She hasn't hidden a body in a wall yet, but really, it's only a matter of time.

Shirak Doydoyan

A dwarf entering his later years, Shirak is the senior watch officer for the First Dectant. There's very little that goes on in the dectant that Shirak does not know or own a piece of. A good deal of his fortune comes from standing near the top of the pyramid in the corruption that is

rife within the city. He has made large investments in real estate elsewhere in the kingdom, partial ownership of trading companies and the like, as a way of moving his wealth out of Oshane. He knows that the Chancellery can't hide its corruption much longer. Sooner or later, the kingdom will have to take notice, at which point he intends to retire and move out of Oshane. Whether or not Shirak will be able to escape prosecution remains to be seen.

The dwarf has taken serious steps to keep his involvement hidden, making sure that no records of his illicit income exist, and keeping his investments behind a series of false fronts, merchant interests whose only business is owning other companies. Disentangling the web of financial deception he's woven could take enough time for him to die of old age. Shirak is aware of several attempts to investigate the corruption that makes the city work. He's put an end to many of these over the years, and stands ready to do the same again if it becomes necessary.

THE TREES

Known as "The Trees" because of the presence of the Shadow Gardens, whose treetops can be easily seen over the rooftops, the Second Dectant is the center of Oshane's elven community. Surrounding the Shadow Gardens are Urupan-style tenement buildings, hollow squares with courtyards in the middle and the apartments opening thereon, whose predominantly elven and human inhabitants share facilities for laundry, cooking, and child-rearing, acting as an extended family. The inner part of the dectant has the estates of the wealthy and politically connected elves, as well as those of a few dwarfs not wealthy enough to live in the First or Tenth Dectant, and humans who bought their homes outside the Third Dectant based on availability of property. The outside edge of the dectant has the larger work facilities, and a thin strip of *dahnat* wider at the southeastern end than at the northeastern, trailing off before it can extend into the First Dectant.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Second Dectant include the Shadow Gardens, Hombert's Tannery, and Kalantar's Pottery.

The Shadow Gardens

The Shadow Gardens provide homes, temples, and workshops for the core of Oshane's elven community. Bounded by a tall hedge, then by a row of densely planted evergreens, the area maintains quiet calm in the middle of a busy city. The inner



section, toward the city center, holds shrines to Jaspre, Astendar, Garlen, and Upandal. Elves from all over Oshane come here to pay their respects to the Passions. The center of the Shadow Gardens holds a ring of shops selling fabrics, perfumes, and spices, the things that make it possible for elves to live among other Name-givers. Surrounding the shops are work areas, often no more than a few token walls or a hedge to hold down noise and a canopy overhead, where the shopkeepers prepare their goods.

The only metalworkers here are a jeweler and a maker of small hardware, cabinet fittings, and the like, both of whom use True air filters on their hearths so that the smoke does not offend their neighbors. The three weavers share a communal dye bath, housed in one of the few stone buildings in the Shadow Gardens, again with True air filters to keep the smell from escaping. At the outer end of the Shadow Gardens are houses, some on the ground, some in the branches of trees, with winding paths flanked by flower and vegetable beds. These properties are the most highly prized in the city among elves, and are normally inherited rather than sold. When one does become available for purchase, competitive bidding drives the price far too high for any but the wealthiest.

Hombert's Tannery

Located out near the cavern wall, the tannery is owned by Hombert Alumian, a prosperous dwarf who holds a deep-seated resentment of the power structure within the city. Due to the nature of his business, he has not been accepted into the social elite. He grumbles frequently that the smell of the tannery does not adhere to his coin, to no avail. While he could certainly afford an estate in the Tenth Dectant, having the largest tannery in the city with the finest products, no one in the Tenth Dectant would ever sell to him. His family remains on the periphery of dwarf society. Hombert is close friends with Lusvard Nanushian of the Carters' and Drayers' Union, and with Vilena Brodmandel of the Weavers' and Dyers' Guild, both of whom have similar problems with social ostracism due to the nature of their businesses.

Hombert's resentment has led him to first suspect, then investigate, the corruption within the Chancellery. In the process, he's made the acquaintance of Vasy Olowey, but the two are still cautiously sizing each other up. Hombert has no hard evidence that he could take to a kingdom officer. If approached discreetly, or if a group of adepts were to become known through the proper channels as being interested in such things, Hombert would be willing to commission a private investigation into the Chancellery. An opportunity to embarrass the elite that have excluded his family from their society would satisfy him in deep and meaningful ways. On the other hand, Hombert is also vulnerable to the influence of Raggok. If approached by a questor under the right circumstances, he could easily become a follower of the Mad Passion.

Kalantar's Pottery

The second-largest pottery studio in Oshane, Kalantar's Pottery turns out about a third of all the ceramic goods used

in the city, and about the same portion of Oshane's ceramic exports. Tirgen Kalantar, an industrious dwarf man just entering his fourth decade, inherited the studio five years ago. His father, Marlen, had relocated his business from cramped quarters in the Halls of Throal only three years before that but died of lung rot just as trade was picking up. Tirgen, who keeps a large portrait of his father in the studio's showroom, has carried on determinedly, doing his best to see his father's dream come to fruition. The studio employs three masters, one each in casting and molding, finishing, and firing; eight journeymen; and a small horde of apprentices. The studio's chimney fees alone would pay the rent on a small apartment.

Tirgen himself isn't much of a potter, able to throw a decent plate but lacking the talent to achieve mastery. Where he excels is in bargaining and politicking. Just recently, Tirgen won a commission to make decorative moldings for the city's tax offices, to replace the old plaster ones that were crumbling with age. Winning such a large contract from the chancellery required a lot of meetings with the rich and powerful, most of which had little to do with the making of ceramics. The moldings will be carried from the shop to the tax office sites by the Carters' and Drayers' Guild, and installed by the Carpenters' Guild. Everyone involved will make a nice profit, and all the right pockets will be lined. While not mired in the cycle of bribery that dominates city politics, Tirgen is capable of playing the system when he must, and is very good at it.

Personalities of the Second Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Irnerius

Irnerius regards himself as fortunate to have been preserved from Blood Wood's corruption. His gratitude to the Passions led to his becoming a questor of Jaspre. He worked for many years with an elven living legend cult that was trying to find a way to restore Blood Wood to its former glory. Now getting on in years, and depressed over the lack of progress, Irnerius has retired to Oshane and maintains the Shadow Gardens. Given a strong enough reason, he might return to his former ways, but it would take hard evidence and a well-organized group to tempt him out of retirement. He hasn't given up hope, though, and will readily put people in touch with the cult if approached with discretion and conviction.

Rojas Escarion

Rojas owns a tile-making business that holds the street contracts for multiple dectants. An amiable dwarf of late middle years, he dresses well but not in the latest fashions. Rojas is well connected politically, and deeply involved in the cycle of bribes, kickbacks, and preferential hiring. Many of his cousins, and those of his political cronies, work for his business, making and laying the tiles that cover the streets in the rich areas of the city. Rojas is staunchly old guard, strongly committed to the idea of Throal as a dwarf kingdom,



and resents the involvement of other races in the political process. While not loud in his views, he will not hire other races for any but the most menial of positions, and refuses to do business with non-dwarf-owned companies.

His wife, Zhenia, is the treasurer for Dwarfs for Oshane, an old-guard political assembly whose goals include keeping the majority of the city's government in dwarf hands.

Merilni Galinoor

A chalice maker, Merilni lives two streets over from the Shadow Gardens, with her husband, Corodir, a musician, in a small apartment over their shop. Unlike most elves in the dectant, the Galinoors don't seem to have any desire to move into the Gardens. Merilni has said that she's just too old to make the transition, having lived for over two hundred years in Throal, and being comfortable with stone all about her. She works in wood, glass, metal, and jewels, making decorative goblets, ceremonial chalices for the Temples of the Passions, windling friendship cups, and the like. Corodir plays most often at the Temple of Astendar, performing traditional elven music. Once in a great while, he shows up at a tavern, where he displays an astonishing knowledge of raunchy drinking songs. Rumors that he was once a soldier have remained just that. If he did in fact serve with the Arm of Throal or some other military, it was so long ago that only a few other very old elves might remember.

REDTOPS

Most of Oshane's humans and windlings live in the Third Dectant. The homes and shops of the humans are generally whitewashed, with brightly colored trim around the windows and roof edges. Many have been built to look

like homes outside Throal, with steeply pitched tile roofs and gutters. The distinctive red clay tiles give rise to the Dectant's nickname, Redtops. The windlings gave up on growing trees for traditional housing, having not met with the success of the Shadow Gardens, and live either in a windling-scale apartment complex, or in groups renting out apartments designed for larger Name-givers. The remainder of the population of the dectant is the usual mix of dwarfs and orks, with a few elves and trolls thrown in for good measure.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Third Dectant include the Honeycomb, Cup and Bones, and Spinning Spruce.

The Honeycomb

Oshane's windling community focuses on a neighborhood close to the central park. While the site is expensive due to its proximity to the city center, the high population density of the windlings, compared to that of larger races, means that there is more wealth concentrated in a smaller area, which allows the windlings to live in a very nice neighborhood regardless of their individual fortunes. Named the Honeycomb for its resemblance to a beehive, the community consists of a hodgepodge of buildings between one street and the next, shops below and apartments above, with small gardens between them. While there are stairways running up the sides of the buildings, for carrying burdens and for those too young, old, or tired to fly, most of the inhabitants disdain them. The constant hum of activity, with windlings flitting from place to place, down to the gardens and shops and up to the apartments, increases the resemblance to a hive. Most of the buildings are painted in bright colors,

sometimes in broad swaths and sometimes only across the part owned by a particular windling, creating a quilt effect that, while pleasing to windlings, most other Name-givers find far too busy and distracting to the eye.

Cup and Bones

About as upscale as a dice hall can get, Cup and Bones boasts a selection of wines, stewards to oversee the tables, and a polite staff of bouncers. While the moneychanger's window is barred, the ironwork is decorative, and the counter kept clean and polished. Cup and Bones attracts a well-to-do crowd of not only gamblers, but their spouses, with social gatherings permitted as long as more than half the tables are engaged in gambling.

The owner, Nazeli Korchagin, a rotund dwarf with iron-gray hair and beard and brilliant blue eyes, is reputed to have *buundavim* connections, but if so, they're well hidden. Nazeli can be found most evenings either circulating among the tables, talking with patrons, or seated at his own private table near the back, enjoying the attentions of his current sweet young dwarf girl. While there are of course bribes to the watch, as a standard part of doing business, these are paid at high levels and discreetly, through numerous intermediaries, with at least two changes of medium, from coin to jewels to art or something similar, to make it difficult to trace the payoffs back to their source.

Spinning Spruce

Vakhno Harmata, the master of Spinning Spruce, takes great pride in his craft as a woodworker. The elderly human, hands gnarled from many years of meticulous work, spends most of his time supervising the four master woodworkers in his employ. They in turn oversee a small army of journeymen and apprentices. Vakhno himself only works on the most complex of commissioned pieces, and the odd bit he does just for himself. Everything from turned cups and plates to heavy furniture comes out of Spinning Spruce's workshops, some for sale in Oshane, much for export. Vakhno maintains good relations with the Carters' and Drayers' Guild, as the shop is dependent on them for transport of both raw materials and finished goods. While human, he tends toward dwarf styles in clothing, and is conservative in his political views. His wife, Kilina, is much less so, being outspokenly liberal and an advocate for equal rights for all Name-givers, regardless of race.

The power structure has made it clear that it would rather Vakhno keep his wife on a tighter leash, but he just shrugs and says that she's her own person, and he didn't marry her because he wanted a pet. Privately, he agrees with her opinions, and assists her in routing coin to a number of charities and civil-rights organizations. The Harmatas are very careful to whom they provide support. Groups known to advocate violence as a solution get not so much as a copper. With the right approach, Kilina could provide introductions to a broad cross section of the more noble causes in the city. She could also identify the people to steer clear of, unless

one really wants to talk with wild-eyed radicals who are willing to set things on fire to prove their point.

Personalities of the Third Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Majorian Faro

A Sixth Circle Windmaster, Majorian is the head of the Honeycomb Watch, a defensive force that exists largely to keep non-windlings out, especially during times of civil unrest. He paints designs in red, orange, and yellow over his arms and legs, and dresses in similar colors, including his armor of dyed hard leather, so that his troops can see him in battle, and know that he is there to guide them. That his enemies can also clearly pick him out doesn't bother him. He relies on his agility and talents to keep him out of harm's way, while inflicting precisely aimed damage on his opponents.

Majorian is a windling's windling, adept with puns and riddles, quick with clever insults, and married with four children. He could hold political office, representing his people in the city government, if he had any interest in such things. As it is, very little affects the windling community without his knowledge, if not his direct involvement.

Svitlana Bodnar

Svitlana, an energetic, driven human woman, owns a food importation business with farms out in the plains beyond Bartertown. She opposes expanding Oshane's native food production, as it would cut into her profit margin. Importers from the Crystal Greenhouses she disregards, as their production cannot be expanded without costs that would outweigh the benefits. Svitlana resents the Carters' and Drayers' Guild, as its political power stops her from seeking out the lowest bid for transport of her goods to market. Thus far, she has refused to take part in the bribery structure any more than absolutely required. As a result, her shipments are occasionally sabotaged. She's considered hiring adepts to put an end to the interference with her business. Rumor has it she may be a questor of Chorrolis, but there's been no hard evidence yet to support such an assertion.

Svitlana dresses in bright colors, in Throalic style, but in human fashions, avoiding the boxy look of dwarf clothing as unflattering to the human form. She keeps her salt-and-pepper hair cut to shoulder length and caught back with a scarf chosen to complement her dress. Her husband, Petro, is a scholar of human history. He takes very little interest in his wife's business, no more than required to support her in her endeavors.

Gyultakin Kaffash

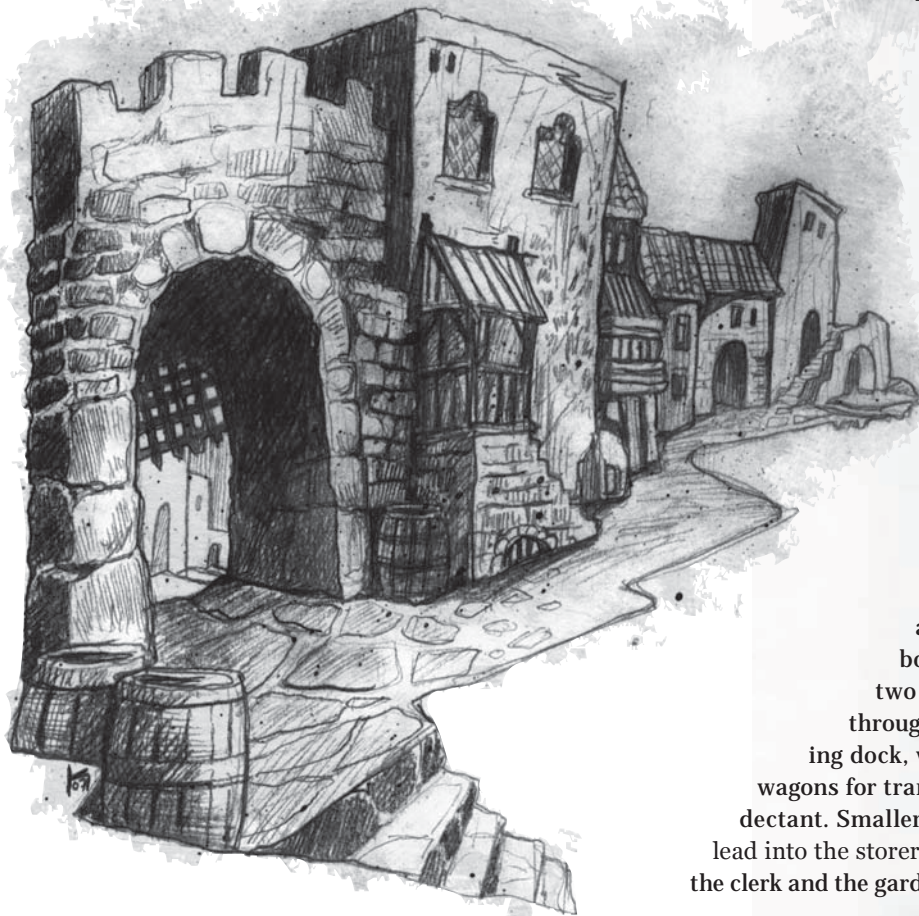
A sturdy ork woman with at least one current lover and a dozen *lelkrags*, Gyultakin makes her living as a weapon maker. She's not an adept, which chafes her a bit. Having

to correct people who call her a Weaponsmith gets on her nerves, and has been known to set off her *gahad*. Gyultakin makes arms for the Oshane Watch, about which she has mixed feelings. She has to earn her coin, and the contract with the watch is nearly the best an Oshane weapon maker can aspire to, but the watch has a reputation for being anti-ork. The watch in turn doesn't completely trust her. After all, she sells weapons to anyone with the coin.

The tension is tight enough that it wouldn't take much to shift it one way or the other. A couple of radical ork slogans painted on nearby buildings, and the watch would be asking Gyultakin some very difficult questions. A few words describing an ork bashing carried out by dwarf watchmen, and Gyultakin just might offer a steep discount to someone willing to do something about it. She might even have some dirt on the watch to share. There's no way she would part with that kind of information for money, but when principles become involved, well, that's a different story, now, isn't it?

KHAZIMIR'S DECTANT

The Fourth Dectant gets its nickname from the Name of Oshane's chief architect, who lived there during the city's construction. A mixed population tending heavily toward orks and humans occupies this dectant, with the usual leavening of dwarfs and other races. Architecture leans toward human style, whitewashed buildings



with brightly colored trim and slanted roofs, and ork style, rambling blocky houses with bright murals on the walls.

While not as wealthy as the First Dectant, incomes are good enough to have the streets tiled halfway out from the baronial estate, and kept reasonably clear of debris. Out toward the cavern wall, though, the dectant gets rough, with a strong *buundavim* presence. Disreputable taverns, brothels, low-class gambling halls, and the like occupy more space in the outer reaches of the dectant than the more respectable citizens would prefer. The watch doesn't seem interested in cleaning the place up, settling for keeping a lid on and cleaning up the occasional mess.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Fourth Dectant include Ruzanna's, City Greenhouse #7, and the Temple of Chorrolis.

Ruzanna's

Located about three quarters of the way out toward the cavern wall, Ruzanna's is noteworthy for being the most well-constructed and well-maintained building on its block. The window bars are free of rust, the locks are of superior make, and the guards are well dressed and highly skilled. Ruzanna Darbinian, an elderly dwarf woman who keeps herself in fighting trim, is the mother of Xacatur Darbinian, the *buundavim* boss of the Fourth Dectant. She

runs a money-lending business that will grant loans to anyone, no matter how poor he is or how little collateral he can put up. The interest charged is exorbitant, normally half again the principal, compounded weekly, and Ruzanna's connections give her plenty of legbreakers to act as collection agents.

City Greenhouse #7

Like the Crystal Greenhouses, the city greenhouses use massive light quartzes to provide sufficient illumination for food production.

Greenhouse #7 is typical: a long, narrow building of heavy stone construction, reaching from one street past the next to the street beyond, with a tiled roof slanted down to both sides. The outer doors are massive, three layers of wood bound with iron, and big enough that two wagons can be driven side-by-side through the opening. Just inside is the loading dock, where foodstuffs are put aboard the wagons for transport to victuallers throughout the dectant. Smaller doors, heavily locked and guarded, lead into the storerooms, which also house the office of the clerk and the gardeners.

Past the storeroom is the greenhouse proper. An elemental spring provides water for a complex system of irrigation pipes. Rows of deep stone troughs hold soil laboriously hauled down from the upper reaches of the Throal Mountains or in from the fields past Bartertown. At the very back is the compost pit, where leavings such as stalks and roots are carefully rotted to create fertilizer. Occasional loads of garbage and roof mud contribute to the supply, and unfortunately also to the smell.

Only food plants are grown in this greenhouse, although other greenhouses have sections set aside for spices and medicinal herbs. Greenhouse #12, in the Ninth Dectant, is the only city greenhouse that grows stoveplants; most of the city's need is supplied by the Crystal Greenhouses.

An ongoing conflict between the Baron and the Royal Chancellery over the city's dependence on the Crystal Greenhouses, and the demand for stoveplants that threatens to outstrip the supply, has yet to be resolved to anyone's satisfaction. More greenhouses would have to be built in Oshane if the decision is made to grow more stoveplants in the city itself, as none of the existing ones could be converted from food production without serious impact.

Temple of Chorrolis

While not the largest building in the dectant, the Temple of Chorrolis is easily the most ornate. Marble sculptures and woodcarvings decorated with gold leaf surround panels of enamel inlay and stained-glass windows. The main doors are of cast bronze, worked in bas-relief with scenes of the Passion. Slender spires of stone dressed to a mirror finish rise at each corner, capped with gilded onion domes. The city's most prosperous moneychanger, Bofa Tresgellian, has his main office in the forecourt, the eight teller windows guarded with iron filigree painted with gold. The main hall stands three stories high, its vaulted ceiling inlaid with a mosaic showing Chorrolis in all eight Name-giver forms. Eight alcoves, four on each side of the hall, hold sculptures by each of the Name-giver races, representing the ideas of wealth and trade. At the far end of the hall stands the altar, weighed down with valuables offered in sacrifice.

The temple enjoys the finest security that silver can buy, with magical traps nearly the equal of those guarding the Royal Apartments. Legend says that anyone taking wealth from the temple without the permission of the Passion, as represented by the chief questor, will see his fortunes fail, and die within a year in abject poverty. Whether this is true or not, only the most audacious and fearless of thieves will steal from the temple. The chief questor, a dwarf Named Jonrid Streltsova, owns one of the city's most powerful brokerage firms. He makes his coin buying and selling contracts on goods, those imported and those made locally, without ever taking possession of the actual things contracted for. Jonrid wields considerable power in the city government because of his wealth and commercial influence, and can surely be counted as thoroughly enmeshed in the underground economy, although no evidence of corruption has ever surfaced. The cunning old dwarf has been far too wily to leave traces of anything unscrupulous.

Personalities of the Fourth Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Tashkilat Silverstrings

An ork minstrel and street musician, Tashkilat overhears things in the course of his work, and knows a good deal more about business and political dealings than most people would expect. He's not above turning extra coin by selling information. This is a dangerous game, and Tashkilat has made friends with some of the rougher elements of the city in order to have protection from the powers that might try to silence him. He's a flamboyant, flashy person, as befits a street musician, with a ready wit and grin. Adept he particularly favors, and will offer to sing their exploits for just a few coins. For a few more, he could tell them things that might be useful.

If approached correctly, Tashkilat could put adepts in touch with the *buundavim* and the Drayers' Union legbreakers, just in case one needs that sort of muscle. He advises respectful treatment of such people; while not adepts, they are highly skilled in what they do, and there are many of them.

Lamara Rikhter

An elderly dwarf woman, whose husband passed away a good fifteen years ago, Lamara makes her living as a bone carver, turning out jewelry and small, useful items. She's an odd person, keeping to herself instead of spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, but highly skilled, with her work much sought after.

Twelve years ago, while on an expedition into the outer reaches of the kingdom in search of fossilized bone, she encountered a Horror, Reneischi, which Horror-marked her. Reneischi is a subtle Horror, given to slow corruption. From time to time, Lamara uses Name-giver bone or fossilized bone that Reneischi has tainted. Those carvings tend to do subtle, unpleasant things, ranging from influencing the owners to carry out antagonistic acts, to Horror-marking the owners and working through them to spread the Horror's influence. While suspicion has been raised, thus far the carefully fabricated evidence has pointed to the existence of a questor of Raggok.

Lamara keeps her tainted bone locked away in a vault in the floor of her shop, hidden by living stone on five sides and a spell on the sixth. She carefully removes all bone dust when working with the tainted bone, so as to leave nothing for an astral scan to find. The Horror expects to have a firm enough foothold within the next five years to move its campaign to a more active stage, and begin inciting Name-givers to murder.

Dularkukht Mingrelia

A troll woman born in Oshane, Dularkukht is the chief clerk of the dectant's court. Meticulous and honest beyond reproach, she handles all filings and notifications for the magistrates. She immediately reports any attempt at bribery to the City Watch, much to the consternation of the



city's power structure. It can be very difficult to get rid of an honest person who's good at his job. Not one case has had paperwork go astray in the past eighteen years, since Dularkukht was promoted to chief.

Her staff is reasonably loyal to her, sometimes feeling overworked and over managed, but they realize that Dularkukht holds them to no higher a standard than she holds herself. While city-born, she carries the troll sense of honor, and will not allow a breach of it. She regards her staff as being her clan, and will not suffer insult to them. She's frustrated by the casual corruption of the magistrates and the city government. Thus far, she's been unable to find a way to bring her superiors up on charges. Someone with connections at the kingdom level, who could bring authorities down upon the city officials, would find her a staunch ally.

ORKTOWN

Gaining its nickname from being the home of most of the city's orks, the Fifth Dectant, better known as "Orktown", is loud and colorful, in several senses of the words. The buildings are painted in bright colors, many with murals of orkish scenes (Hrak Gron featuring heavily in them), many with trim in colors contrasting shockingly with the walls. Dwarfs dress in bright colors to offset the drabness of their underground environment. In Orktown, people dress in clothing the dwarfs find garish. Tunics and hose with

the left and right sides in contrasting colors, often with the sleeves counterchanged, are popular. Jewelry tends to be large and flashy. Even if it's just colored glass, it's still worn proudly.

The noise level rises considerably with distance from the city center, only quieting when the poorest quarters are reached. Voices, tools, musical instruments, animals, and carts all add to the din, which slacks off only in the smallest hours of the night. Personalities tend to be large, even expansive, with a tolerance for eccentricity that borders on appreciation. It's said that in the Tenth Dectant, odd family members are kept hidden away, while in Orktown, they're paraded on the street corners. The air is filled with smells from bakeries to *trisharis* to butchers to stables, with the smoke from cooking fires carrying the strong pungency of spices. Taken together, the sights, sounds, smells, and people can all be a bit more than the upper crust can handle. The orks, on the other hand, thrive in such a ruckus.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of Orktown include Hog Wild, Axeman's Square, and Vakhtang's Glass.

Hog Wild

A *trishari* specializing in ork cuisine, and serving the products of the Selrushing Hurlg Works, Hog Wild has in the four years since it opened become a favorite of the dectant. The most popular dish, 'Pig on a Stick', consists of three large chunks of pork, marinated and heavily seasoned, threaded on a skewer, dipped in batter, and deep-fried. A silver gets a stick and a mug of *hurlg*, and if one asks, a chunk of heavy, dark bread, although this earns a strange look from the cooks for wanting something other than sizzling animal flesh.

Located just west of the midpoint of the dectant, Hog Wild does a brisk business five days a week. On holidays, the line of waiting customers goes around the corner, and most of the business is walk up, as getting a table takes more patience than most orks have.

Axeman's Square

A plaza out behind the dectant's courts building, Axeman's Square got its Name from the chopping block at its center, where the city's executions used to take place. Nowadays, executions are done by hanging, on the gallows set between the chopping block and the court building, but the Name has remained. Executions are announced three days in advance, with posters providing the details pasted to the walls of all nearby buildings.

On the day of the execution, Name-givers crowd the square, held back by heavy ropes threaded through tall iron spikes hammered into the pavement. The City Watch turns out in dress uniforms, and in force, to make sure that the crowd doesn't get unruly. Peddlers sell food, copies of the bill of conviction, and the occasional morbid items, such as toy gallows or miniature headsman's axes carved

of wood. Many people bring their children, to show them what happens to Name-givers who follow the Mad Passions or otherwise turn evil. The convict is led to the gallows with a great deal of ceremony. The bill of conviction is read aloud, and the mercy of the Passions is invoked on the criminal's spirit. Then the executioner takes over. Afterward, the body is left hanging for an hour, with the bill of conviction pinned to it, before being taken down and carried off to the city's trash recycling pit.

Vakhtang's Glass

Vakhtang Tsereteli, an ork and a master glassmaker, has a delicate touch defying the stereotype of his race. His shop employs two journeymen and three apprentices, also orks. While the majority of the shop's products are tableware, Vakhtang's specialty is airship models. Delicate trceries of clear glass form the rigging, while sheets of rolled glass constitute the sails. The hulls are built up with layers of colored glass. The most popular design is the *Earthdawn*, but nearly as popular are *Justice*, the flagship of the Navy of Throal, and the legendary galleons. These sculptures range from two hands high, selling for a hundred silver pieces, to massive pieces a yard long, priced in the thousands. Custom work is of course available.

Personalities of the Fifth Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Guizbas the Rainbow

A mural painter Named after the multi-colored spatters she never seems to be without, Guizbas includes Krathis Gron in any new work involving Hrak Gron. She carries a copy of *Seeds of Nation* with her at all times. She's been saving up to move to Cara Fahd for a couple of years. The problem is, there's always art supplies to be bought, or a musician to see, or a new work by an ork poet, and Guizbas gives in to her *gahad* freely and without reservation, throwing herself into production of her own art and enjoyment of the works of others. "Do what your Passion drives you to do," she says frequently. She's also willing to take less coin for a project if it gives her a chance to paint her heroes, the bigger and more exuberantly the better.

Guizbas knows most of the movers and shakers in the dectant, and in the ork neighborhoods of the Fourth and Sixth Dectants, being on good terms with the *chav'ao'ros* speakers and street poets equally. She's not interested in social class, only in whether or not people are true to their nature.

Khachatur Patchwork

An old-clothes dealer, Khachatur has a network of suppliers, many of whom steal occasionally to provide better garments for resale, and some of whom are informants for an information-selling concern he runs on the side. His shop, located about two thirds of the way out from the baronial estate, is piled with old clothing on every surface. A pair of

large, feral cats stalks through the place, keeping the rodent population in check and producing the occasional litter of kittens. The neighborhood has a higher population of feral cats than usual as a result.

Khachatur is a broad-shouldered ork with a pronounced stoop from years of bending over a needle and thread, mending his stock. His hair has gone gray, but he's only in his late twenties. Some say it's the stress of running the business by himself since he turned ten and his parents died, leaving him and his siblings to fend for themselves. The fact that Khachatur started out as a rag picker for another shop, and has moved up to owning his own place, says much for the amount of work he's put in. Khachatur's rag pickers are generally young orks, five to eight years old, who slip in and out of places throughout the dectant and neighboring areas without being noticed for the most part. They overhear a lot, and sometimes bring back more information than old clothes. Khachatur has maintained careful neutrality in his dealings, supplying what he knows to anyone with the ready coin, and not playing favorites with the City Watch, the *buundavim*, or any other faction. After all, his shop is terribly vulnerable to fire.

Rhostislav Holota

A mercer, or dealer in textiles, Rhostislav fights a continuing battle to keep his prices competitive. He's resorted to hiring non-guild carters to move his goods, finding it to be cheaper to pay a few local bravos to guard his shipments than to pay guild prices. Recently, he lowered the wages he pays to his spinners, weavers, and fullers, who aren't guild members. His laborers would join the guild and bring its weight to bear against their tyrannical overseer, but they'd have to first qualify for membership, which would involve the production of master works, and then pay the guild entrance fees. Both of those require coin that the laborers just don't have. Rhostislav, a tough-minded dwarf in his later years, has told his workers that they can always find positions elsewhere, knowing full well that most of the jobs available are guild-controlled. Rhostislav has a running feud with Vilena Brodgandel over his non-guild shop. Thus far, he's stood her off. She hasn't sent bully boys round to convince him of the error of his ways—yet. Given his profit margin, and subsequent ability to hire toughs of his own, that could get ugly. The same situation applies with Lusvard Nanushian and the Carters' & Drayers' Guild. Of course, the laborers would be caught in the middle, and would be in desperate need of protection from a disinterested party who was willing to stand up for the common Name-giver.

THE UPS AND DOWNS

Less orkish than the Fifth Dectant, but more so than the Seventh, the Sixth Dectant is a study in contrasts. Strongly resembling the Fifth Dectant on its eastern border, the cultural mix shades over into a mix of elvish, human, and dwarf, with a pinch of t'skrang thrown in for seasoning, by the western edge. Those interested in living in a truly cosmopolitan society do well here, with the dectant's racial

neighborhoods spilling over into each other with abandon. People of the Sixth Dectant aren't so much about borders and boundaries as they are about the shared experience of living in Oshane. They attend each other's festivals, eat each other's foods, and even borrow clothing styles. It's not unusual to see a dwarf man wearing a hat gaudy enough for a t'skrang ship captain, or an elf in a tunic colorful enough for an ork. This highly diverse, sometimes erratic culture gives rise to the nickname of the dectant, "The Ups and Downs". Underlying all this brotherhood of Name-givers, however, is a strong current of tension. While the Sixth Dectant has much less trouble with the racial strife that plagues the rest of the city, over the past ten years it has developed the strongest *buundavim* presence in Oshane.

People come from all over the city to partake of the vices offered. From gambling to prostitution, cheap untaxed liquor to intoxicants of a stronger nature, the Sixth Dectant has something to offer everyone. The honest citizens of the dectant, and there are many, are at a loss as to what to do about their dectant's reputation and the *buundavim* that create it. Some feel that the strength of camaraderie, born among the Name-givers of the dectant from their common problem, may be enough to drive out the *buundavim*. If every honest subject in the dectant refuses to allow the *buundavim* to do business there, then the dishonest element will be forced out. Others believe that there just aren't enough honest Name-givers, or that their resolve would crumple like parchment after the first few beatings. One body found in the street would be enough to cow the populace for months, perhaps even years. The *chav'ao'ros* assemblies here have heard of the solution the Fifth Dectant has sought to their arson problem. They're watching closely to see if it works.

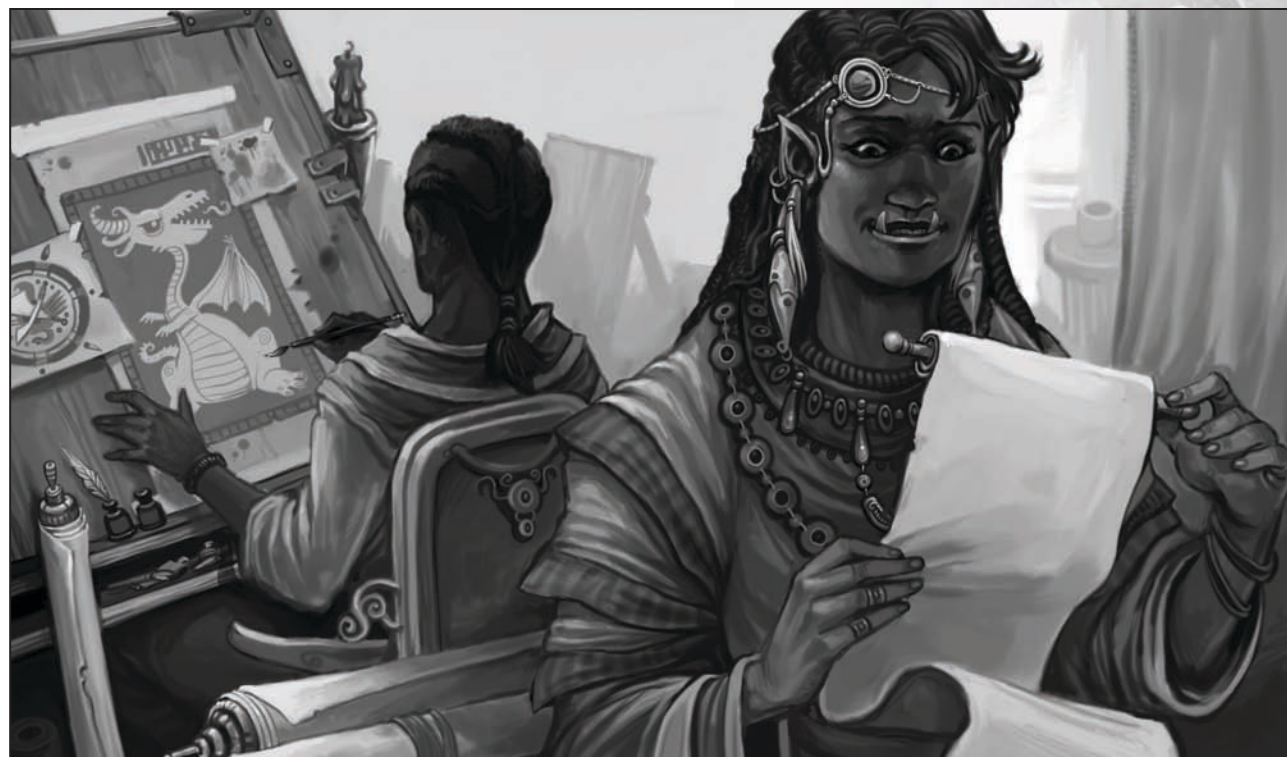
Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Sixth Dectant include the Temple of Garlen, Isahak's Meats, and Skareen's Tolls and Chimes.

Temple of Garlen

The city's primary Temple of Garlen stands at a major intersection in the Sixth Dectant, easy to find even without its being one of the largest and most impressive buildings in the dectant. Four stories tall, made of brick and timber with stonework for the first story only, the temple gives an impression of solidity and warmth, for all its size looking like a comfortable home. The baker next door keeps the air filled with the smells of breads and pastries, which add nicely to the atmosphere of the place.

Tanguistl Berdic, the chief questor of the temple, is the stereotypical picture of dwarf motherhood, rounded and with gray hair in a braid halfway down her back, dressed simply and usually wearing a frilly apron. She welcomes anyone who comes peacefully, seeking support of the Passion. The injured and diseased are given special treatment, their comfort being as important as the treatment for their wounds or illnesses. The main hall is two stories high, with timber framing in the ceiling, a big fireplace where there's always a kettle on, an assortment of baked goods from next door (usually day old and donated), and a few acolytes to take care of visitors until the questors can see them. Fees are negotiable, and waived in special cases. It's said that Tanguistl will attempt to cure the Horror-scarred for free, just to make the world a little better a place in which to live. Don't mistake her motherly attitude for lack of backbone, however. Tanguistl has resolutely kept her temple out of the city's politics, refusing to give preferential treatment



to anyone, and absolutely forbidding even the thought of refusing treatment to anyone. Like a mother bear, Tanguistl is fiercely protective of her charges, and will stand up to anyone and anything that threatens them.

Isahak's Meats

Located out near the cavern wall, as required by city law, Isahak Truni's meat production facility raises hares and poultry, butchers them, and supplies the meat sellers of the dectant. Isahak, while a dwarf of less than middle years, has gone partly gray. The bribes required by the city inspectors have cut severely into his profit margin, which is getting thinner every day. Already he has had to move his family from their former home near the center of the city to a neighborhood halfway to the cavern wall.

Isahak fears for his children's safety in the less well-policed area. He trusts the watch less and less with each passing day. He has become cautious friends with Svitlana Bodnar; although their businesses are to some extent in competition, their interests are similar enough to bring them together for a common cause. While Isahak fears for the safety of his family if he takes direct action against the city's corruption, he would be willing to be a silent financial backer. He doesn't have a lot of silver to contribute, but would gladly put it forward if it meant an end to the ruthless squeezing.

Skareen's Tolls and Chimes

A bell foundry owned by Skareen Uolevi, a fussy, exacting windling, this shop produces everything from delicate windchimes to the massive bells required by the city government's buildings. Working primarily in brass and bronze, Skareen designs each bell himself, relying on his journeymen and apprentices to do the heavy work of casting, unmolding, and rough polishing. Skareen sees to the final polishing, and the assembly of the chimes or installation of the clapper. Any bell or chime whose tone is even the slightest bit off is either set aside to be sold as a second, or melted down for another try. Only once Skareen is completely satisfied does he allow the customer to hear the bell. Skareen is a hard taskmaster, driving his journeymen to seek refuge in the neighborhood taverns after their work day ends, but they have to admit that the finished products are the finest in the city.

Personalities of the Sixth Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Kerrar Bright-tidings

One of the most beloved toymakers in Oshane, Kerrar belies the irascible stereotype of orks, being genial and charming. Beggars can always count on him for a copper or two. His shop employs four journeymen and a dozen apprentices. Twice a year, at the Celebration Days and during the Weepers' Month, he gives away toys to the poor children of the city. The Baron has honored Kerrar for his contributions to the people of Oshane.

Secretly a questor of Raggok, Kerrar has been poisoning children's minds with tainted playthings for the last eighteen years, so that they grow up to be corrupt politicians and racists. Only one in fifty of his toys carry the Mad Passion's influence, but those that do incite their owners to selfishness, jealousy, prejudice, and vindictiveness. Kerrar has built his reputation up to the point where his toys are gaining in demand outside of Oshane. He looks forward to exporting them to all of the Inner Cities, and to the Halls of Throal.

Narine Skobaleva

One of the most lethal women in the city, Narine maintains a veneer of polite manners over a savage and cunning intellect. The owner of a gambling establishment close to the midpoint of the dectant, she has interests in several other businesses, some of which serve to clean the coin obtained from less legitimate pursuits. While making no secret of it, Narine is quiet about the fact that she rules the *buundavim* in the Sixth Dectant, and has at her beck and call every thug and criminal in her division of the city. Most of the dectant's prostitutes, gambling dens, untaxed liquor distributors, and the like pay her tribute. Those that don't are either too small to take notice of, or frequent visitors to the Temple of Garlen.

Of average height for a dwarf and a bit slender, with dark curly hair down to the small of her back, and piercing gray eyes, she dresses well, but not flashy; not quite in the height of fashion but enough to pass in the upper circles of Oshane society. Thus far, she's not attempted to move into Tenth Dectant society, but when she does, the city's rich and powerful will find themselves with a threat to be reckoned with. Failure to extend invitations to her when she desires them has already caused serious trouble for a number of people. It's said that the leaders of the city's *buundavim* fear her, that she is rising in the organization over the bodies of her competitors, and that she will rule the city's underground within the next few years.

Semra Fairhanded

Semra manages a group of copyists, illuminators, and bookbinders, operating out of a shop (and the apartments over it) about a third of the way out in the dectant. Her Name derives from her handwriting and lettering style, which, while lacking the flourishes and elaborate ornamentation currently popular in Throal, provides a clear and eminently readable text that is at the same time aesthetically attractive. An ork woman of strong beliefs, tough minded and independent, Semra came to Oshane two years ago to seek her fortune in a trade that up until then was not well represented. She brought her three children, two *lelkrargs*, and her current husband, Haqverdi Goldfingers, a limner who oversees the artistic embellishments of the shop's works.

Embattled at every turn by the rampant and blatant corruption that pervades the city, Semra is gathering evidence to present to the Royal Chancellery, but finds herself in danger. She is willing to spend a considerable sum, including the price of hiring adepts, to preserve her life, and

the lives of her family and employees, and to complete her investigations. The Chancellor of Oshane is taking her quite seriously as a threat. Marruth has already contacted the *buundavim* about supplying an assassin.

THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

More businesslike than the other dectants, the Seventh distinguishes itself largely by its preponderance of business facilities. While there are plenty of homes in the dectant, from the estates in by the Circle to the *dahnat* at the fringes, it is the trading establishments that dominate the architecture. The Syrtis Trade Mission stands as the centerpiece of the dectant, just out past the estates. Beyond that are the warehouses of the trading firms that deal with the Syrtisians, and beyond that are other storage facilities and trading houses. Visitors to Oshane find it odd that the city's principal commercial storage is in the Seventh Dectant, rather than in the Eighth, where it would be closer to the tunnel that leads to the Halls of Throal. Politics and economics determined the location. The Eighth Dectant is closer to the powerbrokers of the Tenth, making space in the Eighth proportionately more expensive. The Seventh, being further away from the city's axis of political control, is cheaper in which to build.

Because of the large amounts of material wealth in the dectant's warehouses, the watch patrols in larger groups in the Seventh than in other dectants. The standard patrol is eight plus a sergeant, rather than four including a senior watchman. Low-Circle adepts, paid for by the trading companies, stand guard at the more prestigious firms. These adepts are called *b'jados* in Throalic, meaning "trading-house heroes". They frequently have lengthy associations with the wealthy families, sometimes marrying into them. The *b'jados* all know each other on a professional level, if not a personal one. Given a sufficient crisis, they would come to each other's aid, despite company affiliations. Some are close enough to seek vengeance for injuries inflicted upon their friends. The city's *buundavim* generally keep their activities in the Seventh Dectant confined to



vice, providing the strong drink, gambling, and purchasable companionship that adepts so often crave. What thievery is carried out against the trading companies is usually in the form of forged bills of lading, counterfeit purchase orders, and other clerical methods of unlawfully gaining access to goods.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Seventh Dectant include the Trade Mission of House Syrtis, the brokers Alojiant and Lorikian, and the Shining Ruby.

Syrtis Trade Mission

Most of the city's t'skrang live in the Seventh Dectant, at the trade mission maintained by the Syrtisian *aropagoi*. The complex spans four streets in every direction, and contains offices, living quarters, an artificial pond, and warehouse facilities. A high stone wall protects the compound; a necessity given the city's history of riots. Visitors are received through the front gate, and normally only allowed into the negotiating hall, where business transactions take place.

Only *aropagoi* members and carters with carefully scrutinized papers are allowed through the back gate, where cargo and household supplies pass through. A side gate provides access for the inhabitants. All of the gates are of stout, heavy wood, bound with iron, and well guarded. While the Syrtisians wish to conduct trade on a friendly basis with Oshane, they know that they must protect themselves first and offer contact to the city second.

Traditional t'skrang architectural styles were employed in the building of the complex. Its domes and towers rise above the protective wall, providing a unique counterpoint to the dwarf-style square and solid buildings of the rest of the dectant. Directions tend to be given relative to the trade mission, as it can be clearly seen for a long distance, given the six-story height of its three main spires, and the slope of the Oshane cavern floor.

Alojiant and Lorikian, Brokers

A dwarf-owned wine brokerage that opened a subsidiary branch in Oshane when the city was opened for settlement, Alojiant and Lorikian brokerage has its main offices in the Hall of Upandal in

Throal proper. Sohaemus Alojants and Hranush Lorikian, the senior partners, sent their second daughter and third son, respectively, to Oshane to manage the new branch. Years later, Edessia Alojants and Katush Lorikian became well-established members of Oshane society, with estates in the Tenth Dectant. They do much of their work from their homes, only showing up at the business site in the Seventh Dectant for their more important clients.

The brokerage complex comprises three buildings of increasing size. First comes the trading hall, where deals are struck. The trading room resembles a wine shop, with a bar and tables. Sample bottles are served with all of the ceremony expected at a prestigious establishment, with water, crackers, and cheese provided. Several offices open off the trading room, with desks and chairs where deals can be concluded. Behind the trading hall stand the offices of the firm. A private bar and a banquet hall take up the ground floor. The three floors above hold the offices proper, the records rooms, and the meeting rooms where more important, larger deals are concluded. Behind the office building rises the cellars, actually an above-ground facility, where the company's wines are kept. The lower section stands two floors high, and consists mostly of an open warehouse chamber where crates of wine are stored.

A second, smaller warehouse room opens off the first, with heavy iron gates separating the two. This second room holds brandies and liqueurs, which are more expensive and produced in smaller quantities. The two floors above house the vaults and cellaring rooms, where bottles are racked for the years required to attain maturity, or to increase in value, which tend to go hand in hand. Some of the vaults are leased to the city's wealthier families, where they can store their private reserves in the hands of professionals, with the added benefit of the bottles being insured against loss as part of the storage fee.

The Shining Ruby

With the sigil of Astendar displayed prominently next to the oval blue sign painted to look like a gemstone, there can be no mistaking that the Shining Ruby considers itself a temple to the Passion. One of the finer dance halls in Oshane, the Shining Ruby attracts patrons from across the city. Down the right side is a long bar, serving wines, chilled juices, and light ales. On the left are tables and chairs, where customers can rest between dance sets, or just take in the atmosphere. The rest of the hall is given over to the dance floor, a vast expanse of wooden parquet carefully polished so as to be attractive without being slippery. At the far end, a low stage holds the musicians. A shallow earthenware bowl sits at the front of the stage, for tips and request fees.

While most of the clientele come for dancing and the social venue, a few take advantage of the milling throng to hide assignments and other clandestine meetings. The dancemaster, an elven man Named Lorissian, takes his duties as master of ceremonies and instructor very seriously, going to great lengths to make sure that every customer is involved in the evening's revelry to the extent that he wants to be. As long as the two silver piece entrance fee is paid, and

no trouble is caused, Lorissian doesn't concern himself with customers who hang at the back and don't want to dance.

Personalities of the Seventh Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Destasia

The Syrtisian trade ambassador is a handsome woman of brilliant green and yellow coloring, with a lilac head crest. She wears a good deal of jewelry, but not so much as to be in bad taste, and dresses in silks in elegant styles. She is gracious and polite, but drives a hard bargain. Those who mistake her excellent manners for a lack of business sense find out the hard way that she is as shrewd a merchant as she is generous a host. She's led the Syrtis Trade Mission since a year after the founding of the city, and while she occasionally grows homesick, she does her foundation more good where she is, and so remains.

Her efforts to establish a hatchery in the trade mission have thus far met with failure, the *shivalahala* having denied her permission each time she's requested it. Destasia hasn't given up. She's negotiating for more property in the dectant, into which to expand the trade mission, and provide more living space for the city's t'skrang. Her idea is that by establishing more of a presence of her race, essentially building her own *niall*, she can convince the *shivalahala* that the Syrtisian presence in the city needs to be self-sustaining.

Guizgayit Faturachi

An energetic, vibrant, and attractive dwarf woman, Guizgayit imports flax from the Garahamite settlements, the communities on the slopes of the Throal Mountains, and markets it to the city's textile industry. She makes frequent trips through the tunnels up to the settlements, accompanying her shipments and visiting the farmers who grow her products. During these times, her husband, Stasik, runs the Oshane end of the business. Stolid and conservative in comparison to his vivacious, outgoing wife, Stasik takes no risks with the business, sticking tightly to the deals already made. His wife is the one with the entrepreneurial spirit, who entertains potential new customers and renegotiates existing deals according to the fluctuations of the market. Rumor has it that she's a questor of Chorrolis, but if she is, she keeps it very well hidden.

Having thus far avoided getting caught in the web of rivalry that dominates the textile industry, Guizgayit has proven herself a master of playing all of the ends against the middle, balancing off the demands of each mercer against the next. Her involvement in the city's corruption is subtle, if it exists at all. She has no bagman, no employee whose job it is to collect and distribute coin for illicit payments. The only hint of wrongdoing on her part consists of a series of salacious rumors about her maintaining lovers in several of the Garahamite settlements. She does occasionally commission jewelry that doesn't show up in her personal wardrobe,

and her husband doesn't wear such adornments. Whether these items are being given to paramours, or hidden in a secret hoard, or sacrificed to a Mad Passion, forms the basis of the rumors.

Ardashir Yeritsian

One of the most humorless dwarfs in all of Throal, Ardashir is the chief tax collector for the Seventh Dectant. He dresses in dark, somber colors, and avoids the public discussions that are central to dwarf culture. It is said that he never married because he couldn't find a wife as boring and withdrawn as himself. Ardashir's only interest is the collection and distribution of tax money. Frequently seen making the rounds of the merchants, he never leaves his house or office without four guards, chosen from the biggest, strongest, and most skilled in the Seventh Dectant Watch, and two assistants, whose primary job it is to carry the strongbox. His frequent random audits have earned him a great deal of enmity, as he eagerly assesses large fines for even the slightest infraction of the tax laws.

Ardashir is scrupulously honest, unusual for a city official, but the Chancellery has found it advantageous to leave him that way. He ensures a steady flow of revenue into the city's coffers, exacting every last copper due. Anyone making any sort of business transaction in the dectant draws his attention, the more so if it appears to be a new business or a one-time deal. Adepts selling loot from their adventures can be sure of a visit from Ardashir within the next day, to collect the city's share of the profits. With the entire City Watch to call upon, the tax collector is not someone to be trifled with.

TROLLTOWN OR "THE CLOTH DISTRICT"

What nickname the dectant is called depends on who one speaks with. The Eighth Dectant has two claims to fame, one being an ethnic neighborhood and the other a workshop district. Most of Oshane's trolls live in a racially segregated neighborhood in the Eighth Dectant. Issues of scale keep trolls out of the predominantly dwarf areas. The troll neighborhood is built with high, wide doors, buildings of only two to three stories due to the distance required between floor and ceiling, and broad streets. Dwarfs tend to avoid the troll neighborhood for similar scale issues. They find the steps too high to climb comfortably, and all the furniture is far too large for them. The watch in this neighborhood is largely troll, with only the strongest and most burly members of other races serving alongside them. Non-troll watchmen in the Eighth Dectant are more likely to be adepts than elsewhere in the city. The rest of the dectant is similar to the rest of the city, with dwarf architecture predominating. About two thirds of the way out from the Circle, a district of textile businesses crosses multiple streets, most of its buildings taking up an entire block each. These structures hold the weaving rooms, the dyeing vats, the carding and spinning facilities, the offices of the owners, and the apartments of the workers. Name-givers not having business in the cloth district generally avoid the place, due to the strong smell

of soaking flax, fabric dye, bleach, and finishing solutions. The smells cling to the inhabitants, giving rise to songs and jokes that derisively describe how to tell a weaver by his body odor.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Eighth Dectant include Masks and Mirrors, Ishkariot's Charms and Things, and Mashur's Measurements.

Masks and Mirrors

A playhouse that skirts the edge of disaster by presenting the occasional satirical work poking fun at the city government, Masks and Mirrors has had a few incidents: actors being injured, props and sets being damaged, rats let loose in the audience, and the like. The owner, Arshavir Petrosiants, a dwarf lean and wiry by his race's standards, has set his mind firmly on pointing out the city's problems, whether the Chancellery likes it or not. He finances the project mostly out of his own pocket, having inherited a sizable fortune from his adept parents. The lead playwright, Leonty Chemeris, a human with a pallor much more severe than that caused simply by living underground, travels with a pair of troll bodyguards, and has been the target of three failed assassination attempts in the past year. Two actresses have moved out of the city after being terrorized by masked assailants.

Arshavir has to pay for a private fire watch on the playhouse, his home, and the apartment building where Leonty lives. Far from discouraging Arshavir, however, all of this pressure just reassures him that he's on the right course. "An artist with the public's ear has a responsibility," he says, "to present the truth, regardless of how unpalatable it may be." The Chancellery does not, of course, agree, and is considering stronger measures. Arshavir may find the watch suddenly absent from his neighborhood one night, and may end up with more problems than his inheritance, already badly depleted, can handle.

Ishkariot's Charms and Things

Small and out of the way, this shop carries goods useful to magicians. Ranging from specially prepared inks and parchment, to quills taken from unusual birds, to amulets that have been prepared but not enchanted; everything that doesn't have to be made by the magician is available here for a price. Ishkariot Papaz, the proprietor, a tired-looking dwarf man with a salt-and-pepper beard, is a non-adept enchanter of some minor skill. He occasionally has blood charms available, but infrequently, as it takes him twice as long to make them as they normally require. He charges half again the normal price for such items, telling his customers, truthfully, that there simply isn't anyplace else in the dectant where they can buy them. The tax collectors have audited his books repeatedly, looking for evidence that he's making charms for the *buundavim*, but have thus far been unable to bring charges. If Ishkariot is in fact making charms for the under-the-table trade, he's buying the components from an

untraceable source, with coin reserved specifically for the purpose and kept out of his legitimate funds.

Mashur's Measurements

Lernik Mashur, an ork man whose *gahad* is sparked by imprecision, runs a weight and measure making shop. His journeymen and apprentices turn out scales, balances, scoops, cups, and other tools for determining the weight, volume, and value of trade goods. Each tool carries the seal of the Chancellery, guaranteeing that it gives fair measure. The slightest doubt about the accuracy of Lernik's work can drive him into a cold fury. He's been known to order potential customers out of his shop, and in one case to throw another ork out the door and halfway across the street when the man accused Lernik of rigging the scales for a prominent grain merchant. An investigation by the Chancellery found no impropriety, the scales testing correctly, but Lernik did have to pay a fine for the injuries he caused.

Lernik works side by side with Rusudani Meipariani, the Chancellery inspector, a human woman with a love of precision nearly as great as his own. It is her job to test each item and affix the Chancellery seal before the tool can be sold. While some people have discussed the possibility of a relationship between the two, the idea is generally dismissed, given their coolly professional demeanor and the distance, physical and social, that they maintain from each other.

Personalities of the Eighth Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Mihnea Lohse

A windling who uses hair dye, tattoos, and body paint to make up for the uniform gray that living in Oshane forces upon him, Mihnea, with his lover Raisl Engen, runs a tattoo shop in the outer reaches of the dectant. While in not the best of neighborhoods, the shop is popular with the watch, to which Mihnea gives a discount, and so enjoys good protection. Raisl does most of the artwork, designing the tattoos in concert with the customers, and maintaining a large library of flash, or pre-drawn tattoo designs. Mihnea does the actual tattooing, producing intricate designs worthy of his race's reputation for fine work. While Mihnea would never jeopardize his relationship with the watch, he does hear a great deal, and if it were truly worth the risk, might be willing to share what he knows. Of course, if it came back on him, his cousin Majorian Faro over in the Third Dectant would be very interested in having a word with the person responsible.

Vilena Brodgandel

A slender, attractive human woman, who uses far too much perfume to cover the smell of the textile industry, Vilena is head of the Weavers' and Dyers' Guild. A close friend of Hombert Alumian, the tanner, and Lusvard Nanushian, of the Carters' and Drayers' Guild, Vilena is

a devout unionist, believing strongly in the power of the workers when they unite for bargaining. She's recently introduced a resolution in the guild to reduce the membership fee, or place it on a sliding scale, so as to allow Rhostislav Holota's workers to join. They need the protection of the guild, and said protection should not be withheld simply because of an inability to pay. That sort of thing puts the guild on the same level as the *buundavim*. This has caused friction between Holota and the guild, which has led to some small incidents of violence between each side's enforcers. Vilena has expressed disapproval of such incidents, but it has been noted that she hasn't asked for the guild people involved to be punished in any way. Given her connections in the tanning industry, and with the Carters' and Drayers' Guild, it's likely that Vilena will win the conflict with Rhostislav, and either unionize his shop or force him out of business. The effect on his workers of such moves remains to be seen.

Frohlander Vidkun

A highly successful mercer, Frohlander is a staunch supporter of the city's guilds. The portly dwarf has made his fortune by relying on the predictability of the market and the bribes necessary to get things done. While he would like to pay less for the work he needs done, he accepts the existing system as the way things are, and sees no real reason to change it. Rhostislav Holota has been on his mind a good deal of late. The low wages Rhostislav is paying his workers are allowing him to undercut the going rates for textiles in Oshane, and destabilizing the market.

Frohlander is strongly thinking of hiring an adept or two to cause Rhostislav enough trouble that he either stops his unscrupulous activity, or goes out of business. Either resolution would be acceptable. Vilena Brodgandel has been speaking with him about her idea of lowering the membership fees for her guild, but Frohlander is dubious about that. Any time one changes the cost of a thing, the market takes time to stabilize, and may swing violently before that happens. Frohlander would prefer a solution that didn't disturb the status quo quite so much. Rhostislav having problems with the *buundavim*, or some outsider causing him trouble, would be less of an issue in the long run than making changes to the system by which Oshane operates.

NEARLY THERE OR "THE SPLASH"

Known as "Nearly There", with some derision, by outsiders, the locals refer to the Ninth Dectant as "The Splash". Like the First Dectant, the Ninth suffers from both comparison and proximity to the Tenth. It is not as wealthy, not as socially elite, and not as architecturally significant as its neighbor. This leads many of its residents into subtle feelings of inferiority, and a tendency to try to outdo the Tenth with whatever resources they can muster. As a result, the Ninth Dectant is frequently gaudy, and at times downright tasteless. Over-use of bright colors, even by Throalic standards, leads to an atmosphere more suggestive of a carnival than of prosperity.

The inhabitants of the dectant are perversely proud of their accomplishments, however, often taking the time to point out the more flagrant bits. Visitors, for example, are directed to the fountain at the dectant's *chav'ao'ros* hall, with its overly muscled statuary of notable adepts in melodramatically heroic poses. The glass mosaic on the front wall of Kertmenjian's General Store, a much larger shopping establishment than its folksy name would suggest, really shouldn't be missed, and considering the light quartzes above, below, and behind it, can't be missed by anyone who can see. The annual Parade of the Passions, with its wagon-carried shrines, musicians, mummers, stilt walkers, and other assorted performers, winds its way through the dectant with enough noise to be heard on the far side of the city. It all has a slightly desperate edge to it, a frantic undercurrent of Name-givers trying to prove that they're just as good as those people to the east. Name-givers in the Ninth Dectant are more likely to work longer hours, have more stress-related illnesses, and die younger than anyone else in the city who lives above the poverty line.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Ninth Dectant include the Temple of Upandal, the Guild Hall of the Stonemasons, and Stonecutters' Hall Hach'var Court.

Temple of Upandal

The city's primary Temple of Upandal stands near the baronial estate. A masterpiece of architecture and engineering, the building swoops upward in graceful curves eight stories high. The top two are open decks, with slanted awnings about the edge, and a steeply peaked roof at the very top, keeping roof mud from accumulating or dripping on the Name-givers attending the seventh-floor *trismari* or the eighth-floor observation deck. Ever practical, the questors of Upandal make a good deal of the coin required for upkeep of their magnificent structure by renting out the seventh floor and selling tickets to the eighth. The city's elite compete for reservations at Seven Platters, the *trismari*, one of the most expensive places in Oshane to go for a meal. The observation deck enjoys popularity with members of the younger set, who use it as a pre-tryst meeting place. The lower stories house a draftsman's shop, two firms of architects and three of engineers, a goldsmith, two potters, and a library, in addition to the temple itself.

The sanctuary is a grand, impressive chamber, with soaring columns decorated with carvings of plants and fantastic animals, highlighted in gold leaf. Stained glass windows at the sides and over the altar have light quartzes set behind them, so that the sanctuary is bathed in colored light. The altar features a set of the finest tools available, for symbolic representation, and a broad table where works (and models of buildings) can be placed for receiving the blessing of the Passion. The chief questor, Leyli Kaytsuny, is a retired blacksmith, who still keeps her hand in at the temple's small forge, making and keeping in repair the decorative ironwork for the doors and windows. While stooped from age and years of bending over the anvil, making her shorter than the aver-

age dwarf, she still carries herself with the authority that being a master of her craft and a questor of the Passion of craftsmanship gives.

Stonemasons' Guild Hall

Just down the street from the Temple of Upandal, the Hall of the Stonemasons' Guild stands as testament to the skill of its members. Entirely of mortar-less construction, each block is carved and fitted so well that it's said one couldn't slip a sheet of parchment into the crack. The stone was quarried in the Oshane cavern for the most part, with only the blocks for the central load-bearing areas being brought in from the Mines of Throal, as the stone of the Oshane cavern is prone to fracturing under stress. Non-members may only see the front hall and the parlor that opens off of it. The rest of the Hall is restricted to dues-paying members. The Stonemasons do not discuss guild business outside of the Hall, and so nobody is quite sure what goes on inside.

Stonecutters' Hall Hach'var Court

Named after the guild that donated the most coin and labor to its construction, Stonecutters' Hall reaches from Leadbeaters' Street across Marble Way to Eveningstar Street, and from Najoral Street to Barrowman Road, just out past the estates. The majority of the complex is given over to the *hach'var* court, its seating, and two galleries for the food vendors and souvenir peddlers. Prices are high. A meat pie and a mug of ale cost two silver, as do a sausage roll and a mug of cider. For thirty silver pieces, a *hach'var* ball signed by the team captain is available.

Out front is a plaza, taken up before games by the ticket sellers and the punters. Laying on a bit of coin before the match is a well-established tradition, and the punters, standing on salvaged packing crates, holding slates or with them leaned precariously on easels (sometimes knocked over by the press of the crowd), do their best to keep up with the demand. Normally, a punter will only make the odds and take the bets. An assistant will actually collect the coin, and another assistant will keep the book, recording the bets and handing out receipts on slips of parchment stamped with wax seals as proof of their legitimacy.

Inside, the noise level under the high, arched timber roof is tremendous. The shouts of the players and the roar of the crowd echoes off the bleachers, the walls, and the roof above into a nearly solid wall of sound. Some races find it a bit off-putting, but the dwarfs love it. Unfortunately, so do the orks, which has proven a constant source of racial friction. Many dwarfs do not approve of the orks appearing to co-opt the traditional dwarf game. All it takes is for a jeer to ring out at the wrong moment, or a foot to be stepped on in the crush, and a full-fledged race riot can erupt. The watch mounts extra guards for all matches, often leaving the poorer dectants guarded by only the thinnest of skeleton crews. At such times, the *buundavim* and unassociated criminals have been known to operate in brazen openness.

The Chancellery has received many complaints about the *hach'var* court and its impact on the city, but as yet has taken no action. What action could be taken without offend-



ing everyone involved, given the sanctity in which dwarfs hold their game, the revenue generated by the arena's taxes, and the increasing demands of the *chav'ao'ros* assemblies in the poor dectants, remains to be seen.

For more information on *hach'var*, see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 53.

Personalities of the Ninth Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Lusvard Nanushian

Head of the Carters' and Drayers' Guild, Lusvard came up through the ranks, and has the musculature and scars to show for it. The broad-shouldered dwarf keeps his graying hair and beard trimmed close, a safety precaution in his business, and dresses plainly, in undyed fabrics and leathers. A good friend of Hombert Alumian, and a strong opponent of Sviltana Bodnar, Lusvard presents himself as the protector not only of the laborers in his guild, but of their families as well. Every coin not paid takes food out of a child's mouth. Lusvard's own children certainly have no worries in that category, with their father being one of the most prosperous dwarfs outside the Tenth Dectant. Lusvard could afford to move there, but regards the rich and powerful as being a little too full of themselves. He'd rather stay in a good neighborhood and a large, prosperous home than move to a place where he'd have to wear silks and ruffles all the time, and have his children put on airs, or worse be treated badly because of their working-class origins.

Lusvard is up to his eyebrows in the graft and corruption that make Oshane work. He receives tribute from his guild

just as they receive protection money and bribes from their customers. A good deal of his riches comes from something perilously close to extortion. While no friend to the *buundavim*, Lusvard knows them well, and works with them when he has to. The guilds on the one side, and the *buundavim* on the other, after all, keep the city's finances moving and make the things available that people really want. If the tax collectors miss a load of goods, Lusvard doesn't know anything about it and wouldn't do anything about it if he did. He and the watch have had a rocky relationship since his early years, when he was a legbreaker for the guild. He pays his tribute to the Chancellery, and they in turn keep the watch in check.

Dunya Jilavian

A young dwarf woman with a mischievous nature, Dunya is a minstrel much favored by the watch for her knowledge of bawdy drinking songs. She's cute as a button, and she knows it. Her appearance is calculated to appeal to the average watchman, with low-cut tops, dresses that show off her ankles, and plenty of jingly jewelry. She's playing a dangerous game, investigating the corruption within the city government. Little by little, she's ingratiated herself with the watch, and is gathering information, piecing together the true structure of power in the city. Some of what she discovers she hands off to Arshavir Petrosiants of Masks and Mirrors, as fuel for the fire his plays have lit under the Chancellery. Some she sells to Khachatur Patchwork. Some she keeps to herself, having not found the right ear into which to pour it. Dunya has yet to meet Sviltana Bodnar, or Semra Fairhanded. The person who introduces them could very well start a conflagration that could take down the Chancellery.

Vika Nesunts

A slender human woman with large dark eyes and long dark hair, Vika runs a silversmithy a bit toward the center of the city from the dectant's midpoint. A devout questor of Upandal, she makes every project into an act of devotion, no matter how small and plain it may be. Her attention to detail and care in workmanship set her work in high demand. Her journeyman, a dwarf man Named Sukias Egoyan, is nearly as meticulous as she is, even in matters of dress and behavior. If one is not orderly in one's person, one will not be orderly in one's work. Her three apprentices despair of ever being good enough to achieve mastery. While Vika is never cruel, her exacting nature will not admit anything less than perfection. Working not only in silver, but in lesser metals such as copper, tin, brass, and bronze, Vika produces household goods like candlesticks and flatware, vases and urns, and jewelry, and has arrangements with several sculptors to cast their clay and wood works in metal. She pays the extra taxes required to do business in Oshane quietly, but wishes that she did not have to figure in the additional costs, which raise her prices.

THE WALL OR "THE NEIGHBORHOOD"

The most expensive dectant in Oshane in terms of property costs and taxes, and the hardest to move into in terms of social exclusivity, the Tenth Dectant is home to the city's most rich and powerful. Shops cater to the tastes of the very wealthy. Workshops are hidden around the back, out of view of the general populace, or located in other dectants if they're too large or loud or smelly. Buildings are generally set back from the street, with tiled walkways covered with awnings to keep the roof mud off the inhabitants. Facades are carved, or painted in muted colors, or both, making the buildings attractive without being obtrusive.

Near the Circle, the estates hide behind stone walls, often topped with spikes or broken flint, and sometimes patrolled by liveried guards. Out at the edge of the dectant, a thin strip of lower-rent properties houses the servants who don't live on premises, and the workmen who labor in the shops that don't have apartments above. There is no *dahnat* in the Tenth Dectant. Beggars are turned away at the borders, and roughed up if they insist on sneaking in. Only those people of substantial means, and who have been accepted into the circles of the elite, can live in the Tenth Dectant, along with the Name-givers who directly serve and support them.

The watchmen here are well mannered but ruthless. If you belong in the dectant, they're your best friends. If they don't think you belong, they're icily polite, until they make sure of your status. If they determine you really don't belong, you'll be lucky if all you get is an escort to the edge of the dectant. The watchmen have a habit of teaching lessons to people they feel don't really understand the nature of their crimes. Trespassing has been known to be a capital offense if the watchmen are in a bad mood and have a good place to dump the body. Outsiders refer to the Tenth Dectant as "the Wall", speaking of its residents as "living behind the

Wall". The residents simply call it "the Neighborhood", with a slight air of superiority.

Places of Interest

The most prominent spots of the Tenth Dectant include Hundred Seasons, Malkhas Piliposian's Bookshop, and Gotsiridze and Sons.

Hundred Seasons

Geghetsik Lokaron, owner and proprietor of Hundred Seasons, is a spice merchant with a thriving smuggling business. The wealthy prefer not to have to pay city import taxes. The watch turns a blind eye in return for proper consideration. The Carters' and Drayers' Guild happily supports both the legitimate and illegitimate sides of Geghetsik's business, making extra coin off the one in "surcharges" and off the other in bribes. Geghetsik himself, a dwarf whose sharp eyes belie his advanced years, keeps two sets of books, one for the tax inspectors and the other for himself.

Every spice normally sold in Throal is available at Hundred Seasons, as well as many imported from throughout the Theran Empire. Exotics, such as the closely guarded spices used by the t'skrang, can be purchased if one is well known to the staff, and is willing to pay the extra fees for such unusual requests. Items other than spices can be obtained through special arrangement, although only for the best of customers, and infrequently. Geghetsik draws the line at items that are frankly illegal, such as images of Raggok or poisons. He's willing to cater to the desires of his customers, up to a point, but will not support them in anything that could bring ruin to his shop.

Malkhas Piliposian's Bookshop

A bookseller who has traveled extensively throughout Throal and points beyond on buying trips, Malkhas has an encyclopedic knowledge of fact and legend. The problem is, he can't tell one from the other, and so anything he says must be carefully examined to determine if it is fact, rumor, or outright fiction. His specialty is Throalic history, although he knows a good deal about dwarf history in general. His collection also includes works on the Scourge and the Orichalcum Wars, as well as a random assortment of other subjects. He's a bit shorter than the usual dwarf, with a pronounced stoop from years spent at a desk. He dresses in scholar's robes, and keeps his long beard neatly braided. He wears a felt cap both to cover his baldness and to keep his head warm. His bookshop is large and prosperous, with a dozen scribes and copyists, two bookbinders, and three illuminators.

Gotsiridze and Sons

Hamants Gotsiridze, a fussy dwarf in his later years, is the third of his line to own the Gotsiridze and Sons jewelry shop, together with his son, Zori, and his daughter, Marrusia. Technically, of course, that makes it Gotsiridze and Son and Daughter, but the Name of the shop has been established for too long to change it. Besides, the reputa-

tion of the shop is bound up in the Name, and with such an exclusive clientèle, reputation is everything.

Hamants caters predominantly to the Tenth Dectant, although he has done work for Name-givers who live elsewhere under special circumstances. His shop has no display room, instead having a parlor where clients are made comfortable, then shown designs and finished pieces for approval. Behind the parlor are his workshop and the storage vault for his materials, partially done work, and completed pieces. Hamants is rumored to have more material wealth on hand than the Chancellery, although that couldn't be verified even with a look at the dectant tax rolls. His position within the community and the very large sums he trades in put Hamants in a special category, where the tax office sends a delegate to confer with him on regular occasions, and his taxes are handled discreetly.

Hamants' wife, Aris, sits on all of the important social committees of the dectant. They're among the first to be invited to any important occasion. Hamants makes no secret of his membership in Dwarfs for Oshane, a staunchly old-guard and somewhat racist political group. "Throal," he says, "is a dwarf kingdom. The sooner everybody else living here realizes and accepts that, the sooner things will get to running more smoothly." He will not do business with an ork, no matter what amount of coin is involved.

Personalities of the Tenth Dectant

The following Name-givers can be encountered in this part of the city.

Iskuhi Khrimian

An elegant human man, Iskuhi dresses in clothing that is stylish and yet allows freedom of movement. Grace and the ability to use it are requirements of his career as a professional duel second. For a fee, usually a fairly large amount of silver, although he's been known to accept jewelry and works of art, he will stand with anyone challenged or challenging, and take up arms in his client's Name if required. More often than he draws steel, however, Iskuhi finesses the situation, getting the aggrieved parties to agree to halt at first blood, or to discuss the matter further before weapons become involved. His skill at diplomacy has prevented the untimely death of more than one scion of a noble house. Iskuhi also works as a negotiator, being a professionally neutral third party, handling contracts, and bringing the interested parties to agreement in terms. Iskuhi knows many of the scandals of the Tenth Dectant intimately, having been brought in to help settle quite a few. He's well versed in the business dealings, both legitimate and less so, of the wealthy families and merchants of the north side of the city.

While openly compromising the privacy of one of his clients would be bad for business, he might be willing to discuss a few of the less sensitive details in private, for a consideration sufficient to match his risk.

Eraida Lalafarian

While not quite the antithesis of the stereotypically elegant elven lady, Eraida is brisk, businesslike, and usually dressed in workmen's clothes with a bag of tools slung over her shoulder. She keeps her wheat-blond hair cut short, just past the top of her neck, and tied down under a kerchief. A locksmith of very high repute, Eraida handles security for the wealthiest estates in the dectant. She and her journeymen have installed everything from burglar bars to puzzle-locks that could take days to solve without the secret. She guards her reputation zealously, having hired adepts to fight duels four times in the past year. Her honesty is her stock in trade, after all, and she cannot afford to have it slandered. While it is possible for a thief to obtain the secrets of her work, it is highly improbable, given that her home and workshop are guarded with her best work. Bribery attempts meet with either pointed steel or a call to the watch, depending on the rank of the person involved.

Tey-Muraz Demiokhina

A dwarf glassmaker, Tey-Muraz owns three shops, one in the Tenth Dectant, one in the Ninth Dectant, and one in the Fourth Dectant. He never visits the one in the fourth, though, and rarely sees the one in the ninth, leaving them to masters in his employ. He hasn't actually made glass himself in years, except in a small studio at home, once in a great while. Those pieces are not sold, but given as gifts. While they bring a high resale value, selling them off within five years of receiving them guarantees being stricken off the Demiokhina social calendar.

Tey-Muraz spends most of his time these days managing his investments, and doing the social rounds. He owns rental properties across the city, all with resident managers to handle repairs and collect the rent, and maintains interests in two cartage firms and an import/export business. Recently, he's taken to speculating in wine and spices. Never meeting the actual importers and distributors of the goods, Tey-Muraz works entirely through brokers, seeing his investments only as promissory notes and contracts. He and his wife, Najada, are sponsors of the annual Northside Ball, one of three events where the young of the wealthy and noble families are presented to society. Given the importance of having their heirs properly introduced, nobody is willing to risk offending the Demiokhinas, and thus being dropped from the invitation list.

INTO THE FIRE

Gahad-driven Name-givers? If that term doesn't set off my gahad, nothing will! Now have a taste of my fist, you stinkin' ground-hugging hairball...

• Ork Student •



This chapter contains everything you need to get started if you intend to tie **Burning Desires** into a running campaign or start with a new group of traveling adventurers. We assume that you are familiar with the Kingdom of Throal setting (see the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 36, or the **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One** sourcebook), and that the players have already created characters according to the rules presented in the **Player's Compendium**.

Gamemasters are encouraged to run any type of introductory scenario before moving on to the main story (which begins in **The Road to Oshane**, p. 41). This chapter provides three adventure hooks related to Oshane, which can be used for this purpose.

The following adventure hooks are intended to give both the gamemaster and the players a chance to explore the setting of the Kingdom of Throal and forge the relationships between their characters. Gamemasters should feel free to add their own or run the hooks presented in any order desired.

POINT OF PRIVILEGE

The construction on the Inner Cities of Raithabal and Thurdane is on hold, as the funding was diverted to the military for the war against the Therans. Since the Throalic defeat at Prajor's Field, petitions to recommence the construction of these cities have fallen on deaf ears. However, while King Neden has yet to make an official decision about the fate of these cities, Thurdane's architect office has recently been re-opened for business. The office handles the planning of the construction and sells estates and realty before the city is finished and settled. Many of the dwarf trading houses invest in the Inner Cities and rent their houses to Name-givers of other races when the city is settled.

Of course, the dectants with a higher standard within these cities are at a premium, resulting in the need for reservations. Unofficially, due to the close relations with Throal and Throal's officials, the best places are usually sold to the dwarf trading houses. The Pran'gar, a wealthy ork family from Bartertown, hopes to beat the dwarf coteries at work here. Vardak Pran'gar, the family leader, hires the group to travel to Thurdane's architect office and place a reservation for him for four villas in the city. Needless to say, the group should feature a dwarf character of good reputation. Vardak makes a generous offer to the player characters in exchange for their help and hints that follow-up jobs may be possible.

When the player characters arrive at the architect's office of Thurdane, they are confronted with a long row of people who want to place a reservation. Clearly, the characters can't take their place at the end of the row and hope that they would be able to place their reservation successfully. Eventually, the player characters manage to skip the line and get into the office faster, only to find that the best spots have been reserved already. Perceptive characters looking at the construction plans scattered throughout the office will note that House Elcomi has reserved the villas Vardak has in mind.

Approaching House Elcomi to transfer the reservation to them is unlikely to work unless the characters are willing to part with an unreasonable amount of money or turn in a favor from a previous adventure. The only way seems to be that the group must break into the architect's office to forge or replace the reservation documents. It's not an easy task, since the group's request at the office will come to House Elcomi's attention—the architect informs them himself. The office is guarded by a pair of dwarf guards (for game statistics, see p. 38), who may receive help from a group of adepts hired by House Elcomi to watch the group's steps. (Use the gamemaster character statistics in the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, starting on p. 236, for these adepts.)

DWARF GUARDS (2)

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12 **Strength** (15): 6/D10
Toughness (17): 7/D12 **Perception** (14): 6/D10
Willpower (14): 6/D10 **Charisma** (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 11 [12]^L **Initiative:** 5/D8
Spell Defense: 10 [11]^L **Physical Armor:** 6
Social Defense: 8 [13]^{De} **Mystic Armor:** 2

Death Rating: 40 (76) **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown:** 6/D10*
Unconsciousness Rating: 32 (60)

^L Numbers in brackets [] apply when a guard's lucky charm is active.
^{De} Numbers in brackets [] apply when a guard's Detect Deceit ability is active.
* Dwarf guards know the Wound Balance skill.

Combat Movement: 28 **Full Movement:** 56
Karma Points: 15 **Karma Step:** 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (4): 11/D10+D8
Air Dance (4): 9/D8+D6*
Anticipate Blow^D (4): 10/D10+D6
Avoid Blow^D (4): 11/D10+D8
Durability (9/7) (4): 4/-
Karma Ritual (4): 4/-
Melee Weapons^D (5): 12/2D10 (Improvised Weapons)
Thread Weaving (War Weaving)^D (4): 10/D10+D6
Throwing Weapons (4): 11/D10+D8
Tiger Spring (4): 4/-
Unarmed Combat^D (5): 12/D10 (Pin Down)
Wood Skin^D (4): 11/D10+D8

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.
* -2 armor Initiative penalty applied.

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman; Blacksmithing (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:

Dwarf Military Organization (3): 9/D8+D6
House Elcomi Lore (2): 8/2D6

General:

Detect Weapon (2): 8/2D6
Disarm (2): 9/D8+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
— Dwarf (Throalic)
Riposte (3): 10/D10+D6
Search (2): 8/2D6
Speak Language (1): 7/D12
— Dwarf (Throalic)
Spellcasting (2): 8/2D6
Tactics (3): 9/D8+D6
Wound Balance (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Ring Mail (Phys 6; Init 2)
Battle-Axe (Forged +1; Damage 13/D12+D10)
Sap (Damage 7/D12)

Whip (Damage 9/D8+D6; Entangle 9)
2 × Bolas (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 12–20–24; Entangle 9)
Thread Bracers (Rank 4; PhysDef +2; SpellDef +2)
Adventurer's Kit
3 × Craftsman Tools
Dwarf Winternight Cloak
Cloaksense Brooch
Light Quartz Lantern
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Lucky Charm: Dwarf guards wear a lucky charm, valued at 2D6 × 20 silver pieces. Each attempt to activate the charm causes the wearer 1 Strain Point of damage and requires a Spellcasting (6) Test. If the test succeeds, the wearer gains a +1 bonus to his Physical and Spell Defense for a number of rounds equal to the Spellcasting Test result.

Loot

75 silver pieces

Legend Points

365 Legend Points

Notes

Dwarf guards possess the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability and the special Detect Deceit ability (see **Rules**, below).

Fourth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests

Commentary

These two guards are unwaveringly loyal to House Elcomi. Their orders are to protect the office and its documents no matter what. They are Fourth Circle dwarf Warriors.



Rules

The dwarf guards possess the following special ability:

Detect Deceit: Whenever someone tries to deceive a dwarf guard, the guard makes a Spellcasting Test against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the guard's suspicions are roused, although he does not determine the character's true intent. The dwarf guard gains a +5 bonus to his Social Defense for a number of days equal to the Spellcasting Test result, making him unlikely to fall for the character's scam. This bonus only applies against the character who the guard is suspicious of.

READING-ROOM BRAWL

Many reasons exist to travel to the Great Library of Throal: a group of adepts offering their adventure logs to spread their legend, search for information, have an ancient text translated by one of the libraries' scribes, or hear a lecture by one of the scholars.

While visiting the Great Library, the player characters witness a scholar, a dwarf Named Patrimen, holding a lecture to a group of young dwarfs, humans, and orks next to the main room of the Library (for a map, see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 116). The scholar's topic is the question of why some kaers didn't survive the Scourge without getting breached by the Horrors.

Patrimen is known as a lateral thinker and has a reputation of illustrating his points from unconventional angles. The other staff at the Great Library can tell many anecdotes about Patrimen's past lectures, which often resulted in heated debates and one time even in a brawl among the students. This time, the scholar's reputation reaches an apex, however.

Patrimen puts forth his chain of arguments that mixing the living quarters of the hot-blooded, "*gahad*-driven Name-givers" (as he calls the orks) with the "more peaceful Name-giver races" (as he refers to dwarfs) is a recipe for civil unrest and a high rate of violence among the population. His conclusion is that this problem can only grow and escalate, which is the reason for the failure of many kaers and citadels without the Horror's intervention.

When Patrimen cites modern-day Oshane as an example, the *gahad* of an attending ork is triggered. His anger quickly sparks to the rest of the students, who start throwing chairs, tables, and books at each other and Patrimen—who flees as fast as possible. The staff tries to calm down the orks, but when some of them use the opportunity to settle a few old debts, the situation escalates in a library-wide brawl.

The characters, if they aren't involved in the fight already, are asked by a desperate Jerriv Forrim (a senior scholar; see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 39) to stop the riot before the interior of the Great Library is damaged too badly. He is worried about the books, scrolls, and other exhibits, and only hopes that no one starts a fire.



ORK STUDENTS (10)

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8

Toughness (12): 5/D8

Willpower (10): 5/D8

Strength (14): 6/D10

Perception (13): 6/D10

Charisma (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 6

Initiative: 5/D8

Physical Armor: 0

Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 34

Wound Threshold: 9

Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 6/D10

Combat Movement: 26

Full Movement: 52

Skills

Artisan:

Calligraphy (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:

Academic Politics (2): 8/2D6

Citadel and Kaer Lore (1): 7/D12

Ork Racial Lore (1): 7/D12

Oshane History (1): 7/D12

Scourge History (1): 7/D12

Throal History (1): 7/D12

General:

Melee Weapons (1): 6/D10

Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Research (2): 8/2D6

Speak Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Throwing Weapons (1): 6/D10

Unarmed Combat (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Arcane Tomes

Painting Tools

Scrolls

Traveler's Garb

Writing Kit

Loot

None

Legend Points

40 Legend Points

Notes

Ork students possess the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

Commentary

These are non-adept ork students who have given in to their *gahad*. They attack by brawling, and by picking up and hitting with or throwing books, chairs, and tables. When swinging improvised weapons or hurling improvised missiles, they suffer a -2 penalty to their Attack Tests. (See **Improvised Melee Weapons**, p. 411, and **Throwing Objects**, p. 413, in the **Combat** chapter of the **Player's Compendium**.) They gain a +1 bonus to their Action Tests while rioting, due to their roused *gahad*.



DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Sviltana Bodnar is a businesswoman from Oshane (for a description, see the **Oshane** chapter, p. 22), importing food from the farms outside Bartertown. The regular shipments to her shop have stopped a week earlier, and she suspects the whole affair to be a ploy by the dwarf Lusvard Nanushian, head of Oshane's Carters' and Drayers' Guild Union (for more information, see the **Oshane** chapter, p. 34).

During her latest trip from Oshane to Bartertown, a pair of dwarfs follow Sviltana, and she fears that they will attack her once she exits Throal's gates. At the Grand Bazaar, she hires the group—of which she heard as being trustworthy—to work for her as bodyguards and protect her from harm for the rest of her trip. She's willing to pay the player characters handsomely if they accompany her to Bartertown and back—easy money for a group of adepts.

Upon arriving in Bartertown, the player characters have no problem finding the merchant who was contracted to handle Sviltana's shipments, an elderly dwarf Named Barashula Goldhand. The meeting takes places in the office of the merchant and, much to the surprise to everyone, the shipments never stopped. Sviltana and Barashula agree that an investigation of the matter is required and hire the characters to watch over the next shipment, following it all the way to Oshane.

To avoid suspicion, the player characters must do so unseen, so that they can witness what happens to the ship-

ments first-hand and gather evidence of Lusvard's foul play. However, their opposition expects the group's actions. A few hours before the player characters reach Oshane, a group of ork *buundavim* crosses their way—obviously looking for trouble. The player characters can try to negotiate with the orks and solve the whole confrontation without spilling blood (which is possible since the orks mainly want to stall the characters, preventing them from seeing what happens to the shipment), or clash with the troublemakers (which is likely to raise the attention of the local watch). For the thugs, use the ork *buundavim* thug statistics in the **Cast of Characters** chapter, p. 115. If you need the local watch, use the dwarf, human, ork, and troll guards statistics in **The Road to Oshane** chapter, p. 46.

If the player characters manage to get past the orks in time, or watch the cart transporting the shipment, they will witness the cart driver selling Sviltana's packages to another group of *buundavim* along the way. Apparently, the dwarf is corrupt and willing to make some extra coin this way. The *buundavim* are buying the shipment for Narine Skobaleva (for a description, see the **Oshane** chapter, p. 28), who exploits the animosity between Sviltana and Lusvard to her own benefit. It's up to the characters how this encounter ends: if they manage to uncover the fraud, they may win two strong contacts and an enemy in Oshane, which might come into play later in the adventure.

THE ROAD TO OSHANE

They say every journey begins with a single step. Just make sure you don't put your foot in a bear trap straight off.

• Vardemar Tetragillian, Troubadour and Author of *Advice to New Heroes* •



This chapter covers the beginning of the adventure. The goals are laid out, and the group becomes involved in the situation. The journey takes the group from the Halls of Throal to Oshane, and the characters are introduced to the racial and political tensions they will have to deal with in the Inner City. The opportunity is here for a good or a bad start. How the tone is set for the rest of the adventure depends on the group's actions.

The gamemaster may lead into this chapter from any adventure that ends with the group in the Halls of Throal. It is advised that the group be somewhat at loose ends, with no pressing commitments, so that the characters are free to accept the offer of employment.

OVERVIEW

In the first part, the group is contacted by the *chav'ao'ros* representatives and told of the situation. In the second part, guards from Oshane harass the group on its way to the city. If the characters pursue the investigation, the guards warn them they may come to a bad end.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following text assumes that the player characters are in the Gate Tavern. If they aren't, the gamemaster should alter the text to suit the situation.

You're sitting around a table in the Gate, a tavern just off the Grand Bazaar. It's been a couple of days since your last business was concluded and you've been at loose ends, but enjoying the break in your normally hectic lives. Around you other adventurers, alone or in groups, regale each other with tales of their exploits. This is a good place to be seen, to spread your legend, and build your reputation.

*Apparently it's working. Two orks come in, one tall and thin, the other short and plump, dressed in semi-dwarfish fashion, with the slightly pale look of natives to Throal. They take in the scene, obviously at a loss, then spot you and approach. The tall one introduces himself as Klesh, chief bookkeeper for the J'Kistir Moneylenders Combine, and speaker for the *chav'ao'ros* assembly of the fifth neighborhood of the Fifth Dectant of Oshane. He presents his companion as Andresh, brewmaster at the Selrushing Hurlg Works and recorder for the same assembly, then inquires if you are who indeed you are. Not currently owing any large bills that you know of, you confirm this for him, and he looks relieved.*

"May we join you?" he asks. "We have an offer to discuss."

THEMES AND IMAGES

Contrast the friendly chaos of the Halls of Throal with the open hostility of Oshane. The Throalic Watch is everybody's friend, the keepers of order, reliable people who can be counted on in a tight situation. The Oshane Watch is a load of bullies and political appointees, abusive of their authority and openly racist. The difference should be shocking to the group. Likewise, play up the differences in personalities when compared to races of the people the group meets. The orks are reasonable and well behaved, with almost dwarf manners. While Andresh's *gahad* simmers constantly, Klesh helps his friend keep control and not give credence to the stereotype of orks. The dwarfs in the Oshane Watch, on the other hand, are rough, crude, and unkempt, certainly nothing like the dwarfs the group will have known in the Halls. The reversal of stereotypes should unsettle the characters, letting them know they're no longer on familiar ground.

Desperation is a key factor in this chapter. The orks are willing to choke down their *gahad* and put up with open

derision from *ujnort* in order to bring help to their people. Members of the Oshane Watch are so anxious to stop the investigation before it even starts that they are willing to risk an open confrontation outside of the city limits. This is an adventure based on constant tension. The gamemaster should start building this early, and keep the players on edge throughout the story.

BEHIND THE SCENES

In the first scene, the *chav'ao'ros* representatives, the two orks speaking for the neighborhood assembly, hire the player characters. In the second scene, the group travels with the two orks to Oshane. A good deal of background on the situation is provided. In the third scene, the group and the orks come up against a squad of the Oshane City Watch. The characters find out that they're not supporting a popular cause, at least not as far as the authorities are concerned. This scene introduces one of the major points of tension within the story, and sets up multiple conflicts later on in the adventure.

HIRING THE HEROES

The gamemaster should play up the noise and style of the location. This is a professional adventurers' gathering place. The walls are lined with trophies brought in by the clientele. The players should be lulled into an expansive mood by the evidence of their success, and ready to take on the most difficult of challenges. Give descriptions of some of the more outrageous patrons, such as the elf in crystal chain standing at the bar, or the obsidiman Nethermancer brooding in the corner, his black robes chased with stark white embroidery in eye-twisting patterns. Have the player characters overhear snatches of tales:

"So that's when we decided the dragon had to die."

"And there we were, dangling by a single rope a scant hundred yards above the flames..."

"No kidding, he loosed from two hundred yards away and put the arrow straight through the brig-and chief's left eye."

Klesh and Andresh are who they say they are: speaker and recorder for the assembly in the most prosperous neighborhood of the Fifth Dectant of Oshane, one of the Inner Cities of Throal. Built in a huge cavern hollowed out of the depths of the mountains, Oshane is one of seven cities built to expand the Kingdom of Throal from its original Halls. The Inner Cities are each divided into ten wedge-shaped segments, called dectants, each with its own assembly.

Klesh and Andresh have come to the Halls of Throal seeking help with a string of fires—doubtless, arson—in their dectant. Klesh explains to the group:

"For the past two weeks, our dectant has been plagued by fire. While the walls of our city are of

stone and the blazes are easily contained, three families have been left without homes or worldly goods, and the contents of two shops have been destroyed. Worse, an entire warehouse of grain was lost. Food is short now, until new supplies can be carted in, and the pall of smoke from such a huge fire is affecting the entire city.

"The natural chimneys that lead to the surface, high in the mountains, were blocked up for protection against Horrors and the like during construction of the Inner Cities, and now each one has to be explored and cleared before it can be opened. Oshane's city government doesn't have the coin for this, not without imposing heavier taxes, and as bad as things have become, a new tax levy would bring things to a boil. Unfortunately, the laws of Throal insist that an Inner City must survive or fail on its own once it's settled and self-governing, and Oshane is far too long past that point to appeal to the crown for funding. As a result, there's a constant haze of smoke hanging in the air, setting young and old to coughing and causing everyone's eyes to smart and weep.

"We have appealed to the guard for investigation, but they turn the dectant upside down and inside out and find nothing. The City Chancellery tells us that the expense of sinking new ventilation shafts is prohibitive, as is the cost of opening the natural chimneys, and refuses to spend any more than the barest minimum on our welfare. On advice from the Royal Chancellery, we have amassed a fund and decided to seek help ourselves. If you can put an end to the fires, a thousand silvers are yours."

If questioned, Klesh says that he and Andresh asked about, and were told to seek out the group as adepts of good reputation, likely to provide assistance. The fee is not negotiable, as it was gathered by taking up a collection, and there is no more silver available. All other dectant funds are going to the fire victims. Details of the fires will be discussed if the group accepts the offer.

If asked about the food shortage, Klesh assures the group that it's only temporary, until replacement grain can be brought in, and that neighboring dectants are sharing their grain to help alleviate the situation, but the orks' inherent lack of patience is magnifying the problem out of all proportion. Hungry orks have no willingness to wait for a solution. See **Tensions Among the Orks**, p. 43, for further discussion about the food shortage.

ON THE ROAD TO OSHANE

This information needs to get to the players before their characters get to Oshane. How it is presented is up to the gamemaster, who is advised to pull additional information from other sections as needed. After all, the player characters will be on the road with Klesh and Andresh for four days, and will have as a result plenty of time to ask questions.

The Briefing Packet

Klesh tells the characters about the previous fires. For ease of reference, this information is presented in summary form. The fires occurred in the order presented.

Urjqurt's Apothecary: Fifth Dectant, outer neighborhood. Small shop, well-established proprietor. Damage: a cabinet full of extracts and tinctures destroyed, ceiling above damaged but not burned through, shop interior smoke damaged.

Telixa Home: Fifth Dectant, three blocks from the apothecary heading inward. Devijne is a baker at the Goat and Coins, her husband Uldris a delivery driver for the Selrushing Hurlg Works. "Good man," Andresh says, "hard worker." Kitchen half burned.

Wobotu Home: Sixth Dectant, poor neighborhood. Rix is disabled by illness; his wife Qonnyz works at a laundry. Storage room damaged, family baby furniture lost.

Gortser's Pottery: Fifth Dectant, halfway out. Greenware shed damaged, a lot of unglazed, unfired pottery destroyed, some pots that were in the kiln damaged.



Grain Warehouse: Fifth Dectant, about midway between the park and the edge. Large facility, holding unmilled grain brought from outside the city. Total loss, source of much of the smoke in the cavern.

Tivze Home: Fifth Dectant, about a third of the way out. Myrrarn Tivze is a Fifth Circle Illusionist who raises her family on investment profits from a cache of kaer treasure she found years ago. Dining room and family shrine both destroyed, several injuries incurred. Much outrage over the burning of the shrine to Hrak Gron.

Additional Information

The Baron's official Nethermancer, Sortag Kevechnin, is an alcoholic dwarf who was hired on the lowest bid. He swears that there are no Horrors in or around Oshane, and the Barony stands by his opinion. Mind you, he's only Fifth Circle, and most days can't see past the bottom of his current bottle.

The city watch suspects Raggok cultists, or agents of Thera or Iopos. Thus far, the watchmen haven't found any of either. Andresh is disparaging of the city watchmen, saying that they couldn't find their own backsides with both hands and a light quartz. Klesh gives the city watch the benefit of the doubt, saying that Raggok cultists are secretive by nature, and hard to spot. Agents of unfriendly powers, such as Thera and Iopos, would be trained in how to avoid detection. Considering the arsons have caused considerable unrest among the population, and some people are beginning to speak out against the Baron, followers of Raggok seem like a strong possibility to him.

To Klesh and Andresh's knowledge, no other adepts have investigated the fires. The assembly could only afford to hire one group of adepts. The Barony (or the Chancellor, anyway) hasn't been willing to part with the funds for an official investigation, saying that a few fires aren't worth that kind of expense.

Tensions Among the Orks

The following text assumes that the player characters talk to Klesh and Andresh on the way to Oshane. If they don't, the gamemaster should alter the text to suit the situation.

"There seems to be an obvious pattern to me," Klesh says. "It's all in the Fifth Dectant, with the exception of the Wobotu place. The fires have all been directed against orks, and progressively more prosperous ones. The most recent was a direct attack on our racial beliefs. This tends to lend credence to the idea that the dwarfs... and no offense, mind you," he adds directly to any dwarf group members, "but the dwarfs of Oshane are not like other Throalic dwarfs. The Oshane dwarfs may be looking for a way to drive out the orks. There's a lot of tension between us and the city government."

"We breed too fast for 'em," Andresh mocks. "They figure another few years, we'll take over by force of numbers. The Baron doesn't seem to understand, we're Throalic subjects. No way we'd toss out

a Baron put there by the king. That'd be treason." He pauses, stares off into the distance a moment. "Now, if the king tossed him out for being incompetent, and replaced him with an ork, like Varulus did to Lendiltay in Bethabal, that'd be another thing entirely."

"But that's not what we're after here," Klesh reassures the group. Andresh grunts and looks away, not quite willing to overtly disagree. "All we want is to be able to live our lives in peace, like any other Throolic subject. We want the fires to stop."

"Before they smoke us out," Andresh continues to grumble. "Passions-cursed ventilation system has enough trouble handling the cook fires and forges and stuff. All these big fires, they're filling up the cavern with smoke and it don't go nowhere. Chancellor says it'd cost too much to sink new ventilation shafts. There's all these natural chimneys, you know, fissures in the rock that go up to the surface. I figure we open a few of those, it's a lot cheaper than mining out a whole new shaft."

"The problem with that," Klesh says, more to Andresh than to the group, "is that those chimneys have been there since before the Scourge. A lot of them were blocked up when the Inner Cities were built, rather than go to the time and expense of clearing them out. Passions only know what might be in them. Some of them might go down to Braza's Kingdom. I agree with the Chancellor on this one. It's far too dangerous to even think about opening those chimneys unless teams of adepts go down them and make sure they're safe to open."

"Hogwash," Andresh mutters, but he's looking away from Klesh again, and doesn't seem inclined to continue the argument.

"Bringing in Elementalists would be even more expensive," Klesh continues, with a sidelong glance at Andresh. "You're talking about cleaning the air of an entire city, and in the process having to deal with new stuff being added, from the city's chimneys and such. It'd take a ritual casting, or so I'm told, to generate enough power to clean the cavern's air, and that means a lot of time and effort from upper-Circle adepts. There's just not that kind of coin available. The Chancellery can't even afford to put in enough air sponges to keep the air clean without the burden of the extra fires."

Andresh spits to the disrespectful side, but says nothing. Klesh favors him with another quick glance, more in the interest of ensuring his companion is keeping his gahad in check than expressing any form of disapproval.

"So you see," says Klesh, turning his attention back to the group, "this is causing a lot of tension among us; and even more between us, the guards, and the Chancellery. That's why we've sought you out."

Over the course of the next few days, as you travel onwards to Oshane, Andresh continues to grumble about the ventilation problem and the racial tensions. Klesh tries to avoid the subject, but it's not easy. The trip is not a comfortable one, and you feel that you'll be glad to see Oshane. At least once you get there you can confront the problem and maybe do something about it.

Be careful what you wish for...

SHAKE HANDS WITH THE BADGE

The player characters have been hiking for three days now, with another day to go before they finally reach Oshane. At least their employers have been picking up the tab for the inns and meals along the way, although with them buying, the characters have had to go along with their choice in places. If the non-orks have to face one more bowl of *quaalz*...

Then the group comes around a bend in the tunnel and there's a welcoming committee. A scruffy band of Name-givers of various races, with dwarfs predominant, dressed in mismatched armor but all bearing the sigil of the city guard of Oshane on their shields, fan out in a defensive line when they see the characters coming. They haven't drawn steel yet, but they've got their hands on their weapon hilts. The crowd in the tunnel melts away as if it had never been, leaving the characters alone to face the law.

The player characters are on their own. The gamemaster should emphasize the speed with which the passersby disappear. The noise level in the tunnel drops markedly. Eyes are averted, and people get out of the group's way. A Perception (5) Test is required to notice this before the group rounds the bend. The guards are confident and braced for trouble. Klesh and Andresh are uncertain. There's a sudden snap of tension in the air.

The Oshane guards look more like mercenaries hired from a particularly rough bar than a proper city watch. They obviously provide their own gear and simply paint the sigil of the Oshane Watch wherever there's an open spot for it. There are two guards for every group member, two to cover the orks, and an extra patrol group of four, plus the unit commander overseeing the operation. Dwarfs are predominant, then humans, a couple of elves, and a troll or two if needed to balance the group's strength. There are no orks. The unit commander is a powerfully built, somewhat scruffy dwarf with a targeting eye on the right. At no point does he or any other guard give his Name. If asked directly, the guards will tell the players it's none of their Passions-forsaken business.

The unit commander takes a step forward and addresses the orks. "Surprised at you," he says. "Always took you for law-abiding citizens. Didn't think you'd turn into vigilantes."

Klesh begins to protest, but is cut off. "What were you thinking of, Klesh?" the guard commander asks, obviously not expecting an answer. "Running off to the Halls and hiring a bunch of sellswords? I'm very



disappointed in you. I thought you had more faith in the process. And a chav'ao'ros speaker, too." He shakes his head sadly.

By this time, there's no doubt the group will be considering some sort of intervention. Care should be taken with an obviously touchy situation. These people are guards carrying the badge of Oshane. If a fight breaks out, the group could be charged with offenses at the very least, or carted off to jail for major crimes. The guards intend to convince Klesh and Andresh to withdraw their offer to the group. They will appeal to the orks' sense of civil obedience, pressuring them to trust in the process that they themselves are part of. Only if the group draws weapons will the guards clear steel. If there is no fight, and the orks cannot be convinced to abandon their mission, the guards will step aside and let the group pass. They will, however, warn the group not to expect any assistance, nor to break any laws while in Oshane.

Beating up the guards is a bad idea. If a fight breaks out, Klesh and Andresh will side with the guards and the idea of a peaceful resolution. They don't want the group arrested, and point out that the guards have no reason to arrest anyone. The group's best option is to support the orks verbally and with social savvy against the guards. A few well-chosen words and a confident attitude will get them past this encounter unscathed. Spells, such as Trust or Bedazzling Display of Logical Analysis, are appropriate if cast while the guards' attention is on another character.

Someone is bound to question why the citizenry made themselves scarce at the group's approach. Generally, being questioned by the guards is considered a reassuring event, not a bad one. If the characters have a chance to investigate, they'll find that the guards put it about that they were out to intercept a group of dangerous felons. The guards can simply tell the populace that the player characters weren't the group they were looking for, if they let the characters continue on their journey.

DWARF GUARD UNIT COMMANDER

"Just a bar fight? The Code clearly states that this is an Offense. The Edict clearly states that all Name-Givers must not physically harm another. The Justification is the essential right to life of all Name-Givers. The Penalty is a night in the drunk tank, and payment of fines equal to the cost of property and possession loss of the tavern owner, and cost of medical fees to the victim. A little harsh? Seems like fair punishment to me. Oh, you mean the lecture..."

"I don't know if I saw what you did; my right eye's vision is a little fuzzy because of the targeting eye. It'll cost you a nominal fee equal to your fine, of course."

"I assure you that the guards are doing their best to stop all these fires. Perhaps we need to take a collection to create a squad of fire suppressors from the guards?"

The unit commander is a Third Circle Dwarf Warrior. He has an ever-present book on the *Code of the Council Compact*, which he uses to determine the proper course of action in regards to his current orders. He has a habit of quoting passages from the *Code* to all criminals that he apprehends, describing the crimes they have committed and their punishment. Of course, his knowledge of Throalic law certainly helps him circumvent it, as he is a corrupt officer. He is completely complicit in Marruth's scheme under Rozerl's command and rakes in the silver as a reward for it. He is totally loyal to Rozerl (see p. 111 for more information). His motto: just because you enforce Throalic law doesn't mean you have to abide by it yourself.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10

Toughness (20): 8/2D6

Willpower (12): 5/D8

Strength (16): 7/D12

Perception (13): 6/D10

Charisma (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 6

Death Rating: 42 (69)*

Wound Threshold: 13

Unconsciousness Rating: 34 (55)*

Combat Movement: 22

Initiative: 5/D8

Physical Armor: 6

Mystic Armor: 1

Recovery Tests: 4

Knockdown: 7/D12

Full Movement: 44

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Karma Points: 11

Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents

Acrobatic Strike (3): 9/D8+D6

Air Dance (4): 9/D8+D6*

Anticipate Blow^D (3): 9/D8+D6

Avoid Blow^D (3): 9/D8+D6

Durability (9/7) (3): 3/-

Karma Ritual (3): 3/-

Melee Weapons^D (4): 10/D10+D6

Throwing Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6

Tiger Spring (3): 3/-

Unarmed Combat^D (4): 10/D10+D6

Wood Skin^D (3): 11/D10+D8

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

* -1 Initiative Penalty applied.

Skills

Artisan:

Calligraphy (3): 8/2D6

Painting (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:

Dwarf Racial Lore (4): 10/D10+D6

Dwarf Military Organization (4): 10/D10+D6

Ork Racial Lore (2): 8/2D6

Throalic Laws (5): 11/D10+D8

General:

Bribery (3): 8/2D6

Conversation (3): 8/2D6

Etiquette (3): 8/2D6

Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Speak Language (4): 10/D10+D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, Troll

Research (2): 8/2D6

Streetwise (3): 9/D8+D6

Tactics (3): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)

Hardened Leather Armor (Phys 5; Init 1)

2 × Bolas (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 12–20–24; Entangle 9)

Club (Damage 10/D10+D6)

Dwarf Sword (Forged +1; Damage 11/D10+D8)

Targeting Eye Blood Charm (2 Damage Points)

Adventurer's Kit

Book on *Code of the Council Compact*

Cloaksense Brooch

Carving Tools

Dwarf Winternight Cloak

Guards of Oshane Uniform

Leather Gloves

Light Quartz Lantern

Mountain Boots

Painting Tools

Silver Brooch (with Guards of Oshane Symbol)

Whistle

Writing Kit

Loot

30 silver pieces

Legend Points

230 Legend Points

Notes

Dwarf unit commanders possess the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

DWARF GUARD

"Throalic laws apply in all parts of Throal, even in predominantly ork inner cities."

"The Guards of Oshane are investigating this matter already. You adepts are not needed here in Oshane."

"The arsonist is sure to be caught soon with us on the case."

The pragmatic and traditional dwarf guard is just trying to do his job. Unfortunately for him, work in the Guards of



Oshane is a lot tougher than in other parts of Throal. One of the major problems that he has is that he just doesn't understand the racial tension brewing in Oshane. All Name-givers are the same to him, citizens of Throal being protected by the Guards. The fact that orks may see things a little differently completely escapes him. He certainly doesn't understand why the orks of Oshane resent the guards who are trying to protect them and stop these fires.

The increasing tension between the orks and dwarfs of Oshane sometimes flares up even between the ork and dwarf guards as arguments and other conflicts. But this ork resentment towards the Guards of Oshane has made many of the dwarf guards start to see the orks as enemies to the peace of Throal. Many of these dwarf guards ally themselves with Rozerl and her corrupt guardsmen in league with Marruth. The dwarf guards also resent the player characters for trying to solve a problem in Throal, traditionally the role of the guards.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12 **Strength** (16): 7/D12
Toughness (18): 7/D12 **Perception** (10): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10 **Charisma** (7): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9 **Initiative:** 5/D8
Spell Defense: 6 **Physical Armor:** 8
Social Defense: 5 **Mystic Armor:** 1

Death Rating: 42 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown:** 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Combat Movement: 28 **Full Movement:** 56

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman; Leatherworker (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:

Dwarf Lore (3): 8/2D6

Dwarf Military Organization (3): 8/2D6

General:

Avoid Blow (5): 12/2D10

Detect Weapon (4): 9/D8+D6

Disarm (5): 12/2D10

Evidence Analysis (3): 8/2D6

Melee Weapons (5): 12/2D10

Missile Weapons (5): 12/2D10

Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Speak Language (2): 7/D12

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Streetwise (3): 8/2D6

Tactics (3): 8/2D6

Throwing Weapons (5): 12/2D10

Equipment

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

Hardened Leather Armor (Phys 5; Init 1)

2 × Bolas (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 12–20–24; Entangle 9)

Dwarf Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6)

Sling (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 20–40–80)

Belt Pouch (with 15 stones)

Brass Brooch (with Guards of Oshane Symbol)

Guards of Oshane Uniform

Leatherworking Tools

Whistle

Loot

D10 silver pieces

Legend Points

145 Legend Points

Notes

Dwarf guards possess the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

HUMAN GUARD

"What's all this then?"

"No more of that, now."

"You can go under your own power or I can break your head and drag you by the ankles. It's your choice."

The human guard helps to maintain order in the streets. He's chosen to make his living enforcing the laws of Oshane and Throal, a difficult job sometimes but one he finds rewarding. Maybe he has a strong sense of order, maybe he genuinely wants to help people, or maybe he just gets off being behind the badge, but for whatever reason he's out on the streets, cleaning up the messes society leaves.

Talk first, his training says, and then use the pommel of your sword rather than the blade if possible, but he's quite capable of handling himself if the situation turns nasty. A guard never works alone, either, so he's always got someone to watch his back, and there's reinforcements just a whistle away.

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8 **Strength** (17): 7/D12
Toughness (11): 5/D8 **Perception** (10): 5/D8
Willpower (8): 4/D6 **Charisma** (5): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 4/D6
Spell Defense: 6 **Physical Armor:** 6
Social Defense: 4 **Mystic Armor:** 0

Death Rating: 32 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Wound Threshold: 8 **Knockdown:** 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 24

Combat Movement: 22 **Full Movement:** 44

Skills

Artisan:

Painting (2): 5/D8

Knowledge:

Throal Politics (3): 8/2D6

General:

Avoid Blow (5): 10/D10+D6

Detect Weapon (4): 9/D8+D6

Disarm (5): 10/D10+D6

Evidence Analysis (3): 8/2D6

Melee Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6

Missile Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6

Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Speak Language (3): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*

Streetwise (3): 8/2D6

Tactics (3): 8/2D6

Throwing Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)

Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Broadsword (Damage 12/2D10)

2 × Bolas (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 12–20–24; Entangle 9)

Mace (Damage 11/D10+D8)

Net (Size 6; Range 2–4–6; Entangle 12)

Sling (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 20–40–80)

Belt Pouch (with 15 stones)

Brass Brooch (with Guards of Oshane Symbol)

Guards of Oshane Uniform

Light Quartz Lantern

Painting Tools

Whistle

Loot

D8 silver pieces

Legend Points

105 Legend Points

ORK GUARD

"I will do my best to protect the people of Oshane!"

"Adepts and criminals who threaten the peace of Oshane are my enemy."

"Orks should be the ones who protect Oshane not the dwarfs, for it is our home and our people."

As an ork in the Guards in Oshane, the ork guard is torn between two sides. On one side is the law that he is a part of and believes in, and the other side is his own people. He joined the Guards of Oshane to protect his fellow orks, but many view him as a traitor to the orks by joining a dwarf-led organization. As the situation spirals towards a riot, the ork guard will be forced to choose where his loyalties really

lie: to the Guards of Oshane and an orderly society, or to his own race. The ork guard has a strong sense of justice, so if he ever found out the truth about Marruth's corruption, he would leave his badge behind and rally his people against Oshane's Chancellery. (Perhaps even leading the march to the Chancellery in **Panic in the Streets!**, p. 92) His *gahad* always flares up when innocents are threatened and when injustice and crimes go unpunished. His *gahad* never flares up when people insult the ork race or the guards.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10

Toughness (14): 6/D10

Willpower (13): 6/D10

Strength (14): 6/D10

Perception (10): 5/D8

Charisma (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 6

Social Defense: 6

Initiative: 5/D8

Physical Armor: 6

Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 36

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Recovery Tests: 3

Knockdown: 6/D10

Combat Movement: 30

Full Movement: 60

Skills

Artisan:

Body Painting (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:

Ork Racial Lore (3): 8/2D6

General:

Avoid Blow (5): 11/D10+D8

Detect Weapon (4): 9/D8+D6

Disarm (5): 11/D10+D8

Evidence Analysis (4): 9/D8+D6

Melee Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8

Missile Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8

Read and Write Language (2): 7/D12

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Speak Language (2): 7/D12

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Streetwise (4): 9/D8+D6

Tactics (3): 8/2D6

Throwing Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8

Unarmed Combat (5): 11/D10+D8

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)

Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

2 × Bolas (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 12–20–24; Entangle 9)

Mace (Damage 10/D10+D6)

Net (Size 6; Range 6–10–12; Entangle 12)

Sling (Damage 8/2D6; Range 20–40–80)

Belt Pouch (with 15 stones)

Brass Brooch (with Guards of Oshane Symbol)

Guards of Oshane Uniform

Light Quartz Lantern

Painting Tools
Whistle

Loot

D8 silver pieces

Legend Points

105 Legend Points

Notes

Ork guards possess the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

TROLL GUARD

"The people pay me to keep Oshane secure, and roving bands of so-called heroes like you make my life difficult. And when my life gets difficult, I get mad, and when I get mad, I like to take it out on roving bands of heroes. So I only have one rule—don't make my life difficult!"

The troll guard's job is to keep the peace, and if he has to break a few skulls to do it, so be it. He's got a bad attitude, a big weapon, and the law on his side. In short, he's your worst nightmare: a troll with a badge of office.

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8	Strength (18): 7/D12
Toughness (16): 7/D12	Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (9): 4/D6	Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6	Initiative: 2/D4–1
Spell Defense: 6	Physical Armor: 8
Social Defense: 6	Mystic Armor: 0
Death Rating: 37*	Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11	Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 29*	

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 20 **Full Movement:** 40

Skills

Artisan:

Armor Runic Carving (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:

Oshane Lore (3): 8/2D6

Oshane Politics (3): 8/2D6

General:

Detect Weapon (4): 9/D8+D6

Disarm (5): 10/D10+D6

Melee Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6

Missile Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6

Riposte (4): 9/D8+D6

Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Speak Language (3): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*, Troll

Streetwise (3): 8/2D6

Tactics (3): 8/2D6

Throwing Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6

Unarmed Combat (5): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)

Chainmail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Club (Damage 10/D10+D6)

Net (Size 6; Range 2–4–6; Entangle 12)

Pole-Axe (Damage 15/D20+D6)

2 × Troll Spears (Damage 12/2D10; Range 18–30–36)

Troll Sling (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 30–60–120)

Belt Pouch (with 15 stones)

Absorb Blow Blood Charm (2 Damage Points)

Brass Brooch (with Guards of Oshane Symbol)

Carving Tools

Guards of Oshane Uniform

Traveler's Garb

Notes

Troll guards possess the troll Heat Sight racial ability.

Loot

15 silver pieces

Legend Points

275 Legend Points

TROUBLESHOOTING

In the first part, the only thing that can really go wrong is the group refusing to take the offer. Work with the players' emotions, telling them of the children left homeless, the families going hungry, and the elderly slowly dying. Appeal to their sense of justice with the ineffectiveness and disinterest of the guards. If all else fails, use peer pressure from other bar patrons, who tell the player characters that no hero worthy of the title would turn down such a plea for help. The threat to their reputations ought to motivate the player characters if nothing else does. The money will have to suffice. Again, argue the sympathy angle if needed, or the reputation factor if that fails. If the player characters still won't take the job, find another adventure for them.

In the second part, a gamemaster character can point out that this is a Kratan standoff, if none of the players realize it. Neither side really wants a fight, so the groups could simply walk away. If negotiations completely break down and there's a fight, try to keep it non-lethal. Have Klesh and Andresh interpose themselves between the guards and the player character group, pleading for weapons to be put away. Hopefully the group will see reason.

If the worst happens and somebody harms or kills a guard, the group will have to go through the Throalic justice process. Maybe the players will be less combat-happy with their next set of characters.

SMOKE AND ASHES

*I'm not saying that arson shouldn't be a crime,
but fire is a great purifier.*

• **Taslin Goratriv, Leader of *Dwarfs for Oshane*** •



This chapter brings the group into the Inner City of Oshane, and plunges the player characters straight into the middle of the situation. The events in this chapter take place directly after **The Road to Oshane**, p. 41, and set the stage for all succeeding chapters.

OVERVIEW

In the first part, **Between an Ork and a Hard Place**, p. 51, the group arrives in Oshane to find there's been another fire. This time, a child is dead. The situation is reaching explosive levels. The group must attend an emergency *chav'ao'ros* meeting and help settle the populace.

In the second part, **Poking Through the Rubble**, p. 52, the group investigates the scene of the most recent blaze. In the third part, **Getting a Room**, p. 54, the group finds lodging, either with an ork family or at an inn, and the characters get an idea of the social situation and racial tensions in Oshane.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the characters approach the city of Oshane, read the following aloud:

At long last, you arrive at the Inner City of Oshane. As you approach the end of the tunnel, where it opens into the great cavern, the noise level increases, rising from a muted distant hum to a steady cascade, a waterfall of voices and sounds of daily life echoing within the city's cavern. A faint whiff of burning grows stronger as you approach. This is not the usual scent of the collective cook fires of an underground city, but an unpleasant, charred odor: the smell of fire out of control.

Then you emerge. Before you, Oshane spreads out in a vast bowl, the center of the city being lower

than the outlying regions to afford everyone a clear view of the seat of power. High above you, a gray haze obscures the roof of the cavern. Klesh glances up apprehensively.

"It's thicker than when we left," he says. "We must hurry."

*He leads you through crowded streets, making for the Fifth Dectant. Business seems to have come to a standstill. While there are many people standing about in groups, they're either arguing loudly or huddled close and talking in conspiratorial tones. Both types give nervous and angry glances to the guard patrols passing by. You're given stares as well, but nobody ventures to say anything to you, and the bystanders generally get out of your way. The strolling gangs of *buundavim*, on the other hand, glare at you and only step aside if you put hands to the hilts of your weapons. The guards seem either too cocky or too dim to be aware of the tension. They're a scroungy lot, not anything like the usual immaculate and polite dwarf guard. There seems to be a preponderance of gambling halls, bars, and brothels, more than you should see in a respectable neighborhood. The city is dark, with many of the streetlights in need of maintenance.*

*The noise and the tension rise as you enter Klesh and Andresh's neighborhood. Stone buildings of two and three stories rise around you, well appointed and well kept, a sharp contrast to the poorly maintained streets. A large crowd stands outside of one of the more impressive structures: a wide hall with the Throalic sigils of *chav'ao'ros* over the doors. Mostly orks, these people are dressed in recent fashions, but disarranged and harried. They're arguing heatedly among themselves, and you sense that with the right spark, this crowd could easily flash into a mob. When the individuals on the fringes spot your group approaching, they head your way, beginning a surge that may very well overwhelm you.*

THEMES AND IMAGES

Smoke of old fires mirrors the smoldering anger of the populace. While the flames are out, the blaze is just heating up in the minds of the citizens. One more spark could ignite an inferno of rioting, leaving the city in ruins. Tempers flare over any slight, and while the crowd moves out of the way of the player characters, a casual brush or a trod-upon toe could set off a fight the characters really don't need.

The tragedy of losing a child, the senselessness of the fire, and unfocused anger looking for a target—if the player characters don't come up with something, anything, and fast, that anger could easily land on them. The gamemaster should be graphic with the descriptions of the burned house; note the sound and feel of cinders crunching underfoot, the smell of the still-smoldering wreckage. Impress upon the group the swiftness and totality of the devastation. This isn't just a house fire. It's a disaster.

BEHIND THE SCENES

From this point on, security forces are heavier and take longer to respond. In less strife-ridden areas of the Inner Cities, a dectant would have 10 guards to keep watch over an average population of 2,500 inhabitants. In Oshane, with its history of race riots and other public disturbances, each dectant has 16 guards. Normally, guards travel in groups of four, with one being the sergeant, but in Oshane, they travel in groups of eight with an accompanying sergeant, for a total of nine. When trouble breaks out, a patrol of guards would normally arrive within ten combat rounds. In the Fifth Dectant, this can take up to twenty combat rounds, and the guards will arrive prepared for aggressive action. In the Halls of Throal, if a disturbance breaks out that involves adepts, six Royal Guard adept reinforcements arrive within six combat rounds. In Oshane, they start arriving within ten combat rounds, and straggle in every round or so after that. In the Halls of Throal, the reinforcing adepts should be of a Circle between 2 less and 5 more than the group's average. In Oshane, this should vary from 1 less to 6 more.

BETWEEN AN ORK AND A HARD PLACE

When the player characters arrive at the assembly hall, the crowd is debating taking action on its own, and whether or not to wait for their speaker and recorder to return from the Halls. When they see Klesh and Andres coming, they clamor for an immediate meeting. Hopefully, none of the group members draw weapons, as this would severely damage their first impression. If they do, Klesh calls for them to be put away. He singles out one of the more prominent citizens.

"Moodri," he asks, "what has happened?"

Moodri, a large ork in every direction, expensively dressed, spreads his hands expressively. "There's been

another fire," he replies. "One of Stangya's children is dead."

See the **Cast of Characters** chapter, p. 109, for further description of Moodri.

If the Group Wants to Investigate Immediately

Klesh realizes that the situation is out of control. He asks Moodri to lead the way to the site. He'll hold the meeting there, and introduce the player characters to the crowd after they've done their first bit of investigation. The crowd follows along without urging. The mood will be more ugly, though, and the group will have to provide Klesh with more social support at the meeting than if it's held in the hall.

If Klesh is Able to get the Crowd and the Characters into the Hall

The assembly hall is a spacious theater with seats arranged in semicircular rows on a slanting floor so that everyone can see the speaker clearly. The resemblance to the overall design of the city is intentional. The speaker's podium is wooden, with *chav'ao'ros* sigils down the front, a table next to it for the recorder, and a row of seats behind it for guests of the speaker. Appointments are plush; the decor is tasteful in an orkish way and moderately expensive. This is obviously a well-heeled district if it can afford a meeting hall like this. There's a series of collection boxes at the back, big wooden crates sitting on the floor each half filled with clothing, dishes, and daily necessities. Each collection box has a small lockbox fastened securely to it with a slot on top for coins, and the Name of a family that has suffered from the fires. Dropping a few silver pieces into the boxes (it has to be more than one) gains the player character a +1 bonus to his Interaction Tests for this scene only.

Arguments die down into angry muttering, then away completely as Klesh takes the speaker's podium and bangs his gavel repeatedly. A call of "Silence!" by a player character would help.

At the Meeting

Klesh calls the group forward and introduces the player characters one by one to the assembly. He includes a brief comment about the past exploits of the characters to enhance their acceptance by the crowd. "Yes, the situation is worse now," he says, "but these heroes are up to the task." He then turns the podium over to the characters and lets them field a few questions from the crowd. This is a chance for the group to make a good impression, if the players can think fast on their feet. A few sample questions:

- Have you ever investigated a murder before? (Yes is good, No is bad.)
- So are these Theran agents or Raggok cultists? (Any commitment to a theory of who's at fault is bad.)
- What do you intend to do with the arsonist when you catch him? (There is no good answer here, a vague dodge is best.)

- Do you have any official standing or connections with the guards or the Chancellery? (Hopefully not.)
- What makes you think you can solve this?

If the meeting is held at the site, the following additional questions are asked:

- What did you find?
- How soon do you think you'll have the arsonist in custody?

The crowd is not hostile towards the group. They are angry, and looking for an outlet. Klesh calls for an end to the questions when they die away, or when it becomes obvious that the group has either proven itself or not.

If the Group Handles the Questions Well

The group gets a +1 bonus to all Interaction Tests within the neighborhood, and 10 percent off the cost of goods and services. Klesh restates the plan and ushers the group out, either to go to the fire scene or to find the characters lodgings if they've already investigated.

If the Questioning Goes Poorly

Klesh steps in to rescue the player characters, saying something about how these are people accustomed to acting, not to talking about it. This explanation will play well with an ork audience. The group incurs a -1 penalty to all Interaction Tests within the neighborhood until the characters turn up something solid on the case. Again, Klesh escorts them out of the meeting.

Looking for Suspicious Characters

Perception Tests are pointless here to try and guess if the arsonist is in the audience. Let the players roll if they insist, but don't give them a Difficulty Number. Just tell them that there are too many people and they are all too upset to pick out anyone acting strangely. Besides, Linn, the real arsonist, isn't present.

If Fire Patrols are Suggested

Suggesting fire patrols, a volunteer fire brigade, or some other approach to getting the community involved is an excellent strategy. Sethra, one of the community's matriarchs, throws her considerable political weight behind the idea. She'll take charge of the administrative details, knowing all the right people to talk with to get it done. The player characters gain a +1 bonus to Interaction Tests made against the dectant's subjects. Rozerl (see **Something for Nothing**, p. 69) will be harder to get along with, and the characters incur a -1 penalty to all Interaction Tests made against her for the remainder of the adventure.

POKING THROUGH THE RUBBLE

When the characters head off to investigate the Daamehok home, read the following aloud:

Down the main avenue you go, then off to the left on a side street. You smell it long before you arrive:

the charred, burnt-hair odor of a house fire. It used to be a two-story house. Now it's a shell with the roof and pieces of the upper walls missing. A heavy pall of smoke still hangs about the area, mute testimony to the city's inadequate ventilation. Your eyes sting and your breaths catch in your throats.

"It happened just a few hours ago," Moodri says. He points to a notable gap in the upper level of the ruins. "Vessna was napping upstairs. She wasn't feeling well, so she didn't go out to play with her brothers and sister. Her mother was baking bread in the kitchen. When she realized the house was ablaze, she tried to get to her daughter, but the steps had burned through too badly for her to get up them. By the time a ladder was brought, the floor had fallen in."

An angry murmur rises from the crowd that has followed you from the hall. Curiously, with such a potential mob gathered, there are no guards in evidence.

Investigation Results

The wreckage is still smoldering. The heat remaining from the fire causes Step 4/D6 damage every other round that the characters spend investigating. Walking around in the embers damages the characters' shoes or boots, requiring them to be patched. If the characters remain in the ruins for more than seven rounds, they start taking Step 4/D6 damage every round as their footgear burns through. Touching anything in the outer parts of the house also causes a Step 4/D6 burn, things in the center of the house Step 6/D10. Heavy gloves will protect against this damage, as long as the item isn't held for more than two rounds.

Examining the ruins requires a successful Perception (7) Test. Unfortunately, the one real witness, Solensya, is in no shape to be questioned. Any result gives the investigating character not only the information at that level, but at all previous result levels as well.

Pathetic Result: You trip over a charred beam on the floor, and hit your head against the wall. You're at a -1 penalty to all Action Tests for the rest of the scene.

Poor Result: Yep, it's burnt.

Average Result: The charring is heaviest around the base of the stairs. Looks like that's where it started.

Good Result: Somebody poured a flammable liquid at the foot of the stairs, and splashed it up the stairs and onto the wall. You can see the deeper trenches where the liquid burned first.

Excellent Result: There's a blue ceramic flask and a liquor bottle lying nearby. The flask is cracked and blackened, and the bottle half melted, but they could be used to trace the accelerants. See **Little Clues**, p. 76, for more information.

Extraordinary Result: One of the windows across the room has a pane that was broken from the outside, before the fire. There are glass fragments around it on the sill and the floor, and the soot is mostly on the outside of that

pane. The window is too small for an ork to pass through, and most dwarfs would be too broad to do it, but a slender human, an elf, a t'skrang, or a windling could manage it.

The Rest of the House

Examination of the walkway between the burnt house and the next reveals an old produce crate on the ground under the window, the kind of open-work box that once held vegetables. There are no marks on the box that would allow the player characters to trace it back to its source. There are no clear footprints, but scuff marks on the box include some grayish dust noticeable with a successful Perception (6) Test. A Good

result tells the investigating character that this is stone dust, something found at construction sites or quarries but not generally on the city streets. The size of the person who made the marks cannot be determined with accuracy. The characters may ask about the broken window above the box if they had not noticed it from inside. If they inquire about the window and investigate, allow them another Perception (8) Test to notice this window was likely broken before the fire started and its size relative to the average Name-giver.

There is not enough left of the upstairs to investigate. Only a windling could possibly get up there without a ladder.

The floor is gone, and the walls are scorched, cracked, and covered in soot. The only trace of Vessna is her Name, scratched into a windowsill in sprawling childish lettering. Asking Moodri reveals that the dectant's mortician removed the remains as soon as possible, to spare the parents the sight.

If the Group Insists on Seeing the Body

The mortician's shop is two streets down, on the other side of the main avenue. Reluctantly, the mortician, a severe, dour ork Named Malleri, allows the group to view the remains. No matter how hardened the player characters are, dealing with the remains of a child who died by fire is a harsh experience.

The body is about the size of a small dog, curled in on itself and identifiable as an ork only with difficulty. In many places, the flesh is charred

completely away and bone shows through, held together with a web of fire-cured connective tissue strands.

All body hair and most of the fleshy protrusions (such as ears and nose) are gone. Identification was made by a missing front incisor, a baby tooth that the girl had lost only a few days previously, and by the location of the body.

Casting an Experience Death spell would be pointless, as would any other means of discovering the dead girl's memories. She was asleep when the fire began, and died without seeing anything useful to the investigation. Let the player

characters go through with this if they insist; it's their risk, after all. Examination of the physical evidence likewise will turn up nothing new.

There's a closed-casket funeral for Vessna two days after the fire. Attending gains the character a +1 bonus to all Interaction Tests made against the orks.

Interviews

Stangya Daamehok and his wife Solensya are across the street at a neighbor's house with their other three children, Viritya, Fyvar, and Jocasti. The children are in shock, still trying to comprehend that their home and their sibling are both gone. Solensya is unconscious, having been sedated by the local questor of Garlen after her burns were treated. Stangya is awake, alert, angry, and willing to talk with anyone that might help catch the murderer. Unfortunately, he wasn't home when the fire started.

"I was at work, of course," he says defensively. "At the carpentry shop, over on Unicorn Street."

Stangya doesn't have anything useful to contribute. He does present a chance for the group to see the racial tensions in the city first-hand, and becomes a possible flashpoint later in the adventure. If anyone lets it slip that a short person set the fire, Stangya pounds his fist on the table.

"I knew it had to be a dwarf!" he snarls. "That's why those Passions-cursed guards aren't doing anything! They're protecting one of their own!"

Great effort is required to keep him from charging out to attack the nearest guardsman. Convincing him of any other theory should be next to impossible.

The neighbors didn't see anything really useful. Many saw the fire, but no one saw it started. None of them saw anyone who didn't belong at the scene. Most will offer theories, but they're all repetitions of the themes already played: Raggok cultists, Theran saboteurs, dwarfs who want the orks out of their city, or *buundavim* that have the guards in their coin purses. They complain loudly about the lack of guard presence, saying that the city guard doesn't care what happens in ork neighborhoods the way they care about their own people. If pressed about "their own people," the neighbors simply say, "You know what I mean," adding, "no offense" to any dwarf group members. The player characters won't learn anything from the interviews that will further their investigation. If they don't canvass the neighborhood, though, they'll lose standing in the eyes of the citizens and incur a -1 penalty for future Interaction Tests.

GETTING A ROOM

When the player characters are ready to find lodgings, read the following aloud.

Klesh escorts you away, and directs you up the street.

"We'd best get you settled in somewhere, let you put your packs down. People will calm down a bit

now that they know somebody's taking an interest. Moodri's offered his place. Passions know they've got enough space for an army. I just hope he asked his wife first." He laughs, maybe a little forced, but at least a halfway honest laugh.

The group must decide whether to accept the hospitality of an ork household (see **Dinner and a Row**, below), or get rooms at an inn (see **At the Sign of the Star**, p. 56). The players should consider the advantages and disadvantages of each; a gamemaster character could help if the group seems prone to a snap decision. Cost isn't the only factor. The inn will grant more privacy, but Moodri's may have better security. Meal times would be less restricted and the fare more varied at the inn, but the quality of home cooking and the atmosphere of a family table would far surpass anything available for pay, if the group likes Inner City orkish cuisine. Some people find children underfoot to be a nuisance, while others enjoy having a child climb into their lap and demand a story. Refusing hospitality when it's offered could be taken as an insult, or it could be seen as an effort to remain politically neutral. There's no way to know until the choice is made.

Klesh steps away and waits until the debate is resolved, then guides the group to its chosen destination. Andresh excuses himself at this point to return to his regular work.

If the group declines lodging with Moodri, he should insist that the characters at least have dinner at his home. He'll be very sad if he can't at least make sure they get a decent meal. Also, dinner at Moodri's will give the player characters a chance to see the racial tension in the city up close and personal. If the player characters accept the offer of dinner, play through **Dinner and a Row** anyway.

Dinner and a Row

Klesh gladly turns the group over to Moodri, saying that he's been away from the books for far too long. He'll be at his business until late in the evening, then at home, if the group needs him before morning.

Moodri escorts the group to a sprawling building with a gemcutter's shop at one end, a goldsmith's shop at the other, and three stories of house in between and wrapping partially around. The stone walls are gaily painted with brightly colored murals, depicting scenes of orks in war, peace, and commerce. Anyone familiar with Ork Racial Lore may notice a splendid work featuring Hrak Gron by the entrance to the gemcutter's. There's a small mob of children playing a rowdy game in the street. As the group approaches, a leather ball comes flying out of the crowd straight at the group. Anyone who likes may make a Dexterity (4) Test to try to catch the ball, but if he succeeds, three or four children will immediately try to tackle him.

Moodri shoos the children away, laughing. "No, they're not all mine," he says, "but thanks." He ushers the group past the kids into the main room of the house: a massive chamber with massive furniture, decorated more or less in southern ork tribal style. There are two or three smaller children playing here. It's hard to tell exactly how many

because they're hiding behind the furniture and jumping out at each other and at an adolescent ork girl who's more or less keeping watch on them. She's dressed in orkish tribal fashion with no dwarf influence, and sports a pair of facial tattoos, one a tribal symbol and the other a coming of age mark. A successful Ork Racial Lore (5) Test, or Half-Magic (5) Test by a Scout or Cavalryman, provides the Name of the tribe: the Thundra Skulls.

"Make yourselves at home," Moodri tells the group, and goes off to find his wife. The girl, Derozzma, doesn't talk to the non-ork player characters unless they speak to her, and even then she blatantly ignores any dwarf characters. She shows great interest in non-Throalic orks, however, and tries to find out if she's related to them. It's up to the game-master if she is or not.

Moodri comes back, followed by Sethra, a woman of truly monumental proportions, bigger in every direction than any female ork the group has ever met before. She's dressed in long, flowing robes of red and orange with gold threads shot through the material, and an electric blue scarf struggling to hold back a waterfall of curly black hair that tumbles to her waist. She's bejeweled, beringed, braceleted, and necklaced beyond the bounds of good taste for anyone but an ork, and might be considered gaudy by some of her own people. She sweeps into the room like a ship under full sail, ignores her husband and introduces herself to every group member, taking a full if unnerving interest in each of them, even the dwarfs (if any).

Before the player characters can quite catch their breath, she makes her exit, loudly proclaiming that there's not enough places set at the table, and that the centerpiece needs more flowers. If the player characters are staying at the house, they're shepherded out of the room, told where to find the necessary facilities, and informed that dinner will be served soon. If the player characters are staying at the inn, they're served beer or *hurlg*, their preference, and left in the main room with Moodri and the rest of the family for a candlemark.

The gamemaster should give the group a little time to recover after she leaves.

Digging In

The group is escorted to the dining hall by one of the innumerable children. Seventeen yards long and seven yards wide, lit by light-quartz sconces and dominated by a multiple-section table big enough to seat an entire clan, the hall rings with voices as the family sorts out where the guests will sit and who gets to sit next to and across from them. Two small boys go tumbling across the floor right in front of the group as they try to settle the argument by wrestling, closely followed by an older girl who picks both of them up and sends them to the foot of the table. Smaller children are standing up in their chairs to steal fruit and rolls from the baskets already set out, occasionally being scolded by the adults.

Into the midst of the confusion sails the mistress of the house, and within minutes, the seating order is sorted out. The player characters are at the head of the table down the



side to her right. Across from them are a handful of orks in tribal clothing, including Derozzma. *Hurlg* is poured for the adults, wine for the non-orks, and water for the children; tureens of *quaalz* and platters of deep-fried meats are brought out from the kitchens, and everyone falls to with gusto. Not much is available in the way of alternative dishes, other than cheese and some dried smoked fish left over from the last time a t'skrang merchant came through. Any group member who seems taken aback by orkish table manners will be encouraged and assisted by Sethra and Moodri.

Over dinner, the southern orks are introduced: Zorrler Ghostwalker and her *dramar* Detrinvam Blackcrystal; their children Abono, Dorde, and Bectelb (the three young ones Derozzma was watching); and her *lelkrargs* Derozzma, Stirm, and Hebino, all adolescents, and Nimynnico Longstrand, a young adult and a Cavalryman Initiate. Nimynnico's sister, Clemeg Treetops, is mentioned, having taken service as a healer back home. Zorrler is a first cousin of Sethra, having recently moved her family to Throal in the hopes that her older children will find suitable mates among either the city-dwelling orks or the tribes attached to the Throalic government as military units. Like their mother, her children are picky and haven't found anyone they're willing to have children of their own with in their native region.

If there are any orks among the group, Zorrler will be very interested in them. She'll draw them out about their past exploits, their plans for the future, and their family

backgrounds. Her *lelkrarg* children may or may not object to her blatant attempt at mate finding, depending on the group members and the whim of the gamemaster.

If there are no orks among the group, Zorrler will loudly object to the presence of so many *ujnort*. Whether or not she does so, an argument erupts between her and Sethra over the city-dwelling part of the family's adoption of the customs of other races, specifically dwarfs, and their association with non-orks. Moodri stays out of it, knowing better than to get between his wife and anyone giving her grief. The player characters should be drawn into this fight if they try and avoid involvement. Eventually, words fly hot enough that Detrinvam's *gahad* is roused and he grabs a knife to defend his wife's honor. He accuses the guards of conspiring to rid Throal of its ork population, implies that the group is in on the conspiracy, and offers to face in single combat the last member of the group who spoke to Zorrler.

If the characters can't get themselves out of the mess, Moodri ends the fight by slamming his tankard on the table with a cry of "Enough!" The tankard shatters, spraying *hurlg* all over him, his wife, and everyone in the first two seats on either side. Moodri blinks in astonishment, and in the silence Sethra says, "I thought you liked that tankard."

With the tension broken, Moodri rises to his feet and speaks for the first time since the fight began, as two of the kids bring out towels and start cleaning up the mess. He addresses the primary insults tossed in the fight and gets rid of them, then goes on to talk about justice. "Hrak Gron showed us," he says, "that justice belongs to those who do something about it. We've appealed through the *chav'ao'ros* process, staying within the law, and this is important!" He forestalls interruptions with a raised hand. "If we break the laws in our quest for justice, then we are no better than what the *ujnort* say of us. Klesh acted on advice from a Royal Chancellor when he hired these people. Let's see how well that advice works before we go marching out into the streets and proving to the *ujnort* that we are no better than their low opinions of us."

The rest of the meal passes in a subdued mood, with most of the orks at the table being cautious of another chastisement. Afterwards, Zorrler will approach the group member she was most vigorously disagreeing with, and talk quietly with him. She's not going to apologize, that would be unorkish of her, but she'll try to find some common ground. If the group member can work through the awkward situation with her and make it come out okay, with no loss of honor on either side, she'll give him a hug and a neck bite and say that he is a good person as far as she's concerned. If it goes badly, she'll spit to the disrespectful side and stomp off in a huff.

At the Sign of the Star

If the player characters decide to stay at the inn, Klesh takes the group up the main street, toward the inside of the decant, to a large inn one street short of the park. For a good neighborhood, the streets are in poor repair, and Klesh apologizes the first time or two someone trips on a loose cobble.

At least once, the player characters see a recruiting poster for the city watch, scrawled over with orkish obscenities. The *Star Sapphire* has a guild mark prominently displayed on its door, and a sign with its rates posted on the wall to the right: not cheap, but appropriate for the sort of quality that earns a guild mark.

Inside, the common room is divided by the size and arrangement of its furnishings. All of the dwarf-scale tables and chairs are by the door and the outer wall, with a clear walkway between them and the ork-sized furnishings in the rest of the room. There's one group of dwarfs, all wearing guard badges on their armor: a scruffy, ill-bred lot like the rest out on the streets, all sitting together, who look the characters over suspiciously when they walk in. Scattered throughout the rest of the room are a dozen orks, a couple of humans, and a table with an elf and a windling on the left and three orks on the right, arguing quietly over a document on the table between them. Nobody is sitting at any of the tables along the walkway.

Behind the bar is the proprietor, Dreena, a portly ork woman in her middle years. She finishes tapping a beer, gives it to the serving wench, then greets the group. Rooms are arranged, during which time Klesh makes the rounds of the ork side of the room; he's a politician, after all. He's obviously talking about the group, from the looks and the nods.

The Angry, Drunken Dwarf

The dwarfs don't seem to care much for the presence of the group. One of them, who's had one more ale than was good for him, stands and strolls up to the player characters.

"You don't think you're taking the place of the guard, now, right?" he says, leaning forward aggressively. One of the larger orks turns around in his chair and retorts, "Like you're doing a lot of good?"

The argument that erupts should involve the group. It definitely will involve everyone else in the room, as the dwarf guards hotly defend their capabilities and deny the need for outside investigators, and the general populace brings up every fire thus far, none of which have been solved. Even with help from the characters, assuming they don't take sides, keeping the two factions from coming to blows is going to take all of the staff, including the scullion who was stirring the stewpot at the fireplace. The argument ends when Dreena screams "My stew!" and charges through the interference to rescue the stewpot, which is bubbling noisily over into the fire. Have this happen before the argument turns physical.

Once she's rescued the dinner, Dreena berates everyone impartially. She's upset with the guards for leaving the situation so long, and upset with the citizenry for taking the law into its own hands. The guards leave and the citizens go quietly back to their drinks. Klesh tells the player characters that he'll see them in the morning, and goes off to see to his business. He'll be there until late in the night, then at home if the group needs him.

The Rest of the Night

The characters may want to sit down and talk with some of the locals. They can learn little from doing this, other than general public knowledge about the fires (times, places, and approximate damage) and a few of the rumors going around Oshane. If any of the group knows about the political situation in the city and manages to ask a few sharp questions about the Chancellery or the baron, disparaging comments are made about both but answers remain vague. These are normal townfolk who have no reason to know about the corruption in the high offices. They spend a lot of time griping about the guards, the lack of street maintenance, and all the *buundavim* moving in from Bartertown.

No further incidents of note should occur at the inn this night. If the characters want to go out and investigate the fires at night, see the appropriate scene for the location visited. If they just generally poke about, run a patrol of the watch past them and send them back to the inn without learning anything useful. The group just came into town; it shouldn't be able to find anything major yet.

The Elf and the Windling

Paiyou, an elf, and Tlax Geinoi, a windling, are traders from Yistane. They're here marketing some of Yistane's peculiar fungi. The orks at the table with them are healers, who want to experiment with the properties of the fungi but don't want to pay for something untested. They want free samples before they consider a bulk purchase. Paiyou and Tlax are irritated that the orks won't accept the results of elven healers back in Yistane. None of these people are adepts of any sort.



The Rest of the Customers

The orks and humans are tradesmen and laborers from nearby businesses, having a drink after work. They're interesting only if the gamemaster wants to divert the player characters.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Klesh and Andresh intervene promptly if the characters draw weapons at the approach of the crowd. "Are you mad?" Klesh hisses at them. "*These are your employers.*" He absolutely will not allow anyone to raise a weapon against the crowd. Trying to calm them by other means, however, is permitted. Even if the player characters make a total hash of the questioning, the adventure continues. It's just going to be tougher to secure cooperation, conduct interviews, etc.

If the group fails to discover all of the evidence available at the scene of the arson, the adventure will not be derailed, just extended. You can have a gamemaster character spot something if everyone fails their Perception Tests. If the player characters miss the stone dust, have them find a chunk of granite in the room that was used to break the window, and give them the same information. Getting into a fight with the guards at this point would seriously derail the adventure. If the situation at the inn looks like it's going to come to blows, despite Dreena's rescue of the stewpot, Klesh can step in and negotiate a truce. After all, that's what he does. Beyond that, Dreena is angry over the damage to her cooking, and very few people are going to be willing to face off against an ork woman armed with a big wooden spoon.

Paiyou and Tlax are here for roleplaying opportunity; they have nothing to do with the main storyline. If the players want to spend some time talking with them, however, and go off on a wild goose chase, let them. Paiyou and Tlax can leave town at a suspicious moment, or otherwise drop out of sight, if it looks like the players are fixating on them.

The dinner sequence at Sethra and Moodri's has its own troubleshooting built into the scene. At worst, the characters offend a notable member of the local power base, end up at the inn, and have trouble later on with their Interaction Tests.

SCENES OF THE CRIMES

The more convinced you are you've found all the clues, the more likely you are to have missed the most important one.

• Davresh Kegamian, Questor of Mynbruje •



The scenes in this chapter can be run all together, or in pieces, one crime scene at a time, depending on how the group wants to pursue its investigation. All events occur after **Smoke and Ashes**, p. 50, and can be dropped in wherever it makes the most sense.

put your talents to the test against a readily visible foe. This is a hunt, when you don't even know yet what it is you're after.

Checking out the scenes of the crimes had better give you a clue. You need one.

OVERVIEW

This chapter lays out evidence that the group can discover at the various arson scenes, and encounters at each one. The order of the scenes doesn't matter; the evidence will be discovered regardless of when the various locations are checked. One important item that the player characters discover from all of their interviews is that the guards haven't been doing their job as thoroughly as they should, however.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the characters are ready to investigate the crime scenes, read the following aloud:

You set out for the arson scene. You're starting to get used to the persistent smell of smoke, but it still catches in your throats and sets you to coughing every now and then. The problem of ventilation in a cavern city never seemed so personal before. You begin to realize what these people are facing, and just how much responsibility you've taken on by agreeing to help them. This isn't just about a series of fires. These people's lives, and their ability to live in their homes, are at stake.

Maybe you should have held out for more coin. Not that they'd have been able to pay it, but it would have given you an excuse to not take the job in the first place. This isn't a stand-up fight, where you can

THEMES AND IMAGES

At every scene, the story is the same: loss, old tragedy, and open wounds. Fires don't just destroy property. They burn away one's sense of security. They eat memories, devour privacy, and bring strangers in to poke through the wreckage of one's life. The people interviewed, home and shop owners, are still upset. After all, none of the fires is more than a month old. Some of the people to be interviewed still have burns that eventually will turn into scars. They all have traumas that haven't even scabbed over yet, much less begun to heal. The ashes are cold, but rebuilding has just begun.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This section is arranged by site, in the order that the fires occurred. The group may investigate the scenes in any order, and may have other encounters in between the investigations. The gamemaster must consider the encounters the group has had and how they will affect cooperation of the neighbors with interviews, presence or absence of guard units, and what the group will be searching for at each site. The gamemaster is advised to run **Something for Nothing**, p. 69, after the second or third site has been investigated. How long each site takes to investigate depends on how thorough a job the player characters do in searching for physical evidence and conducting interviews.

Each scene has an associated Difficulty Number for Perception Tests to find the clues by searching for evidence.

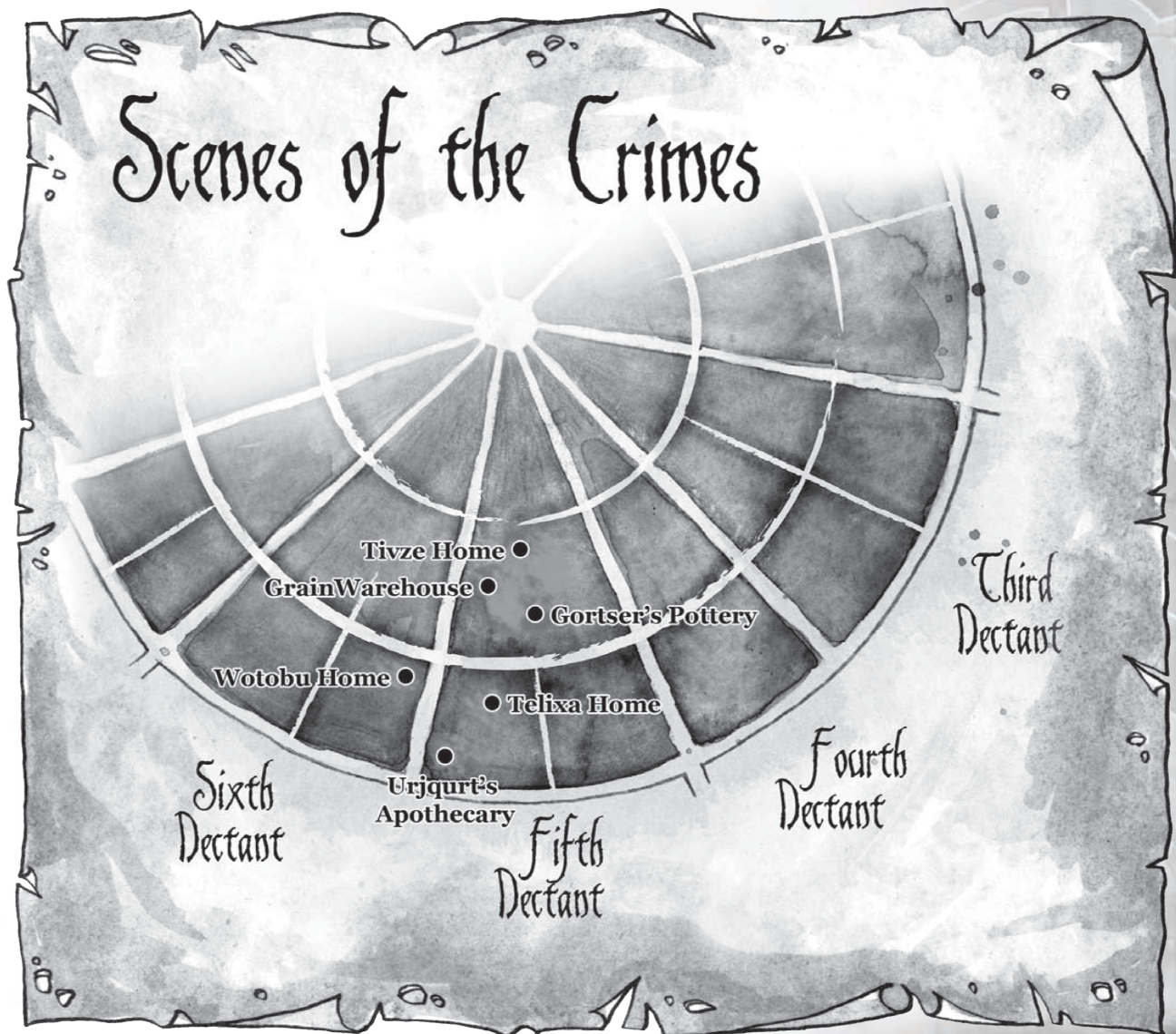
The Difficulty Number increases by +4 for Interaction Tests to find information by interviewing. The gamemaster should use common sense as to what can be found by searching the scene and what can be found through conversation. Obviously, gamemaster characters will not point out physical clues in remote locations unless the scene is in need of **Troubleshooting**, p. 67. Use of talents such as Evidence Analysis or skills like Interrogation does not reduce the Difficulty Numbers, but does give an advantage when making a Test.

What is found is determined by the Result Level of each Test, according to the **Investigation Results** for the scene. Any result includes the evidence of any lesser result. A failure in an interview does not mean a hostile reaction, unless the gamemaster wants it to. It normally only indicates that the person being interviewed is clueless. A failure in an interview can also indicate a false lead (due to a misunderstanding, for example) or by the gamemaster character speculating on possible meaning of the limited information he has. There are also Astral Sensing Results for each scene, with their own Difficulty Numbers and results. Again, any result includes the evidence of any lesser result.

URJQURT'S APOTHECARY

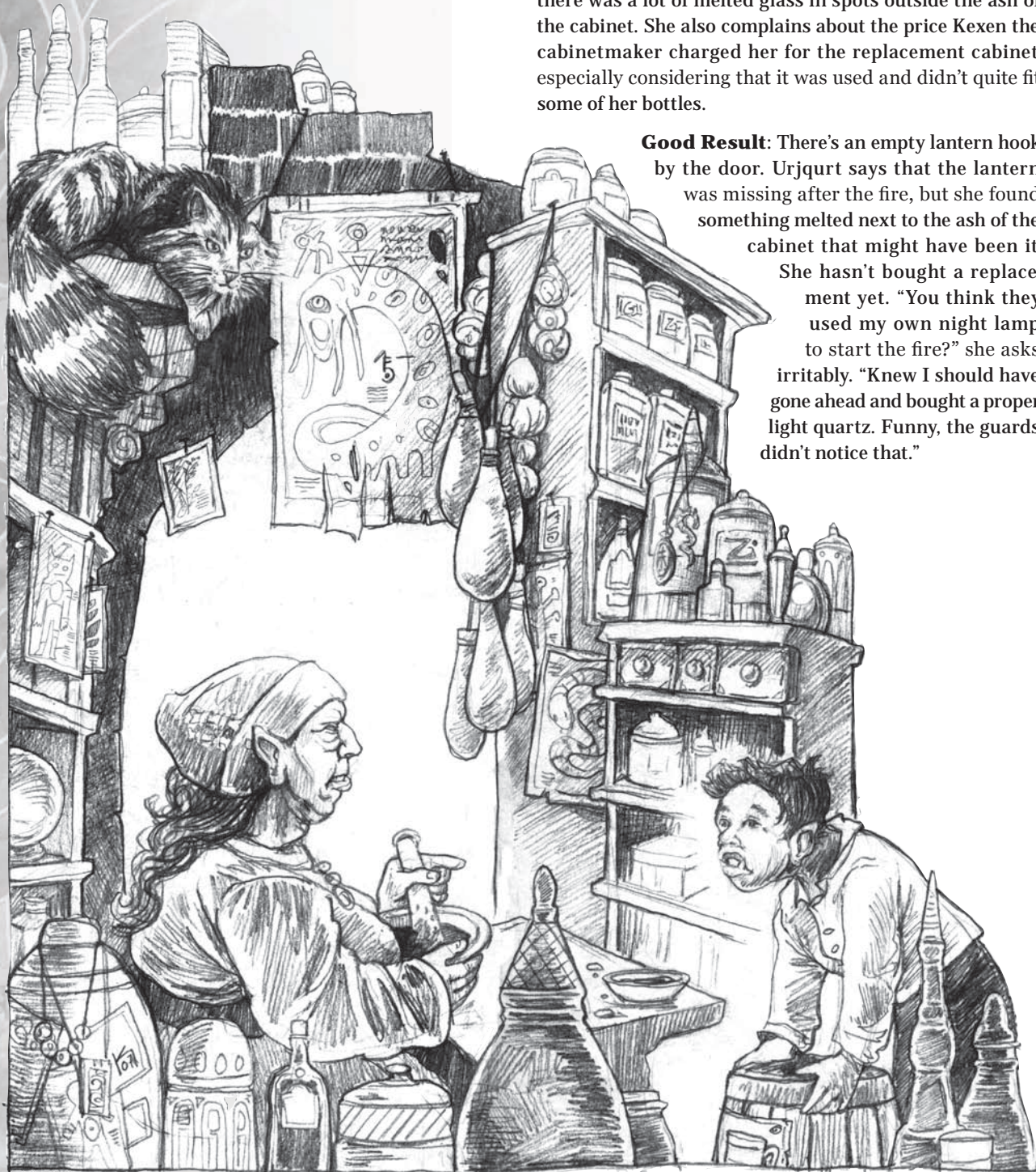
Down a back street in the outer reaches of the dectant, squeezed in between a cobbler's shop and a glassblower's, Urjqurt's is a small shop, still being rebuilt after the fire. Most of the soot has been washed off the front wall, but the marks above the main window can still be clearly seen. The interior smells strongly of smoke, not only wood, but all sorts of strange herbs from where the stock went up in the blaze. The roof beams that hold up the second story have been partially replaced. Char marks are still visible, and the decorative painting around the upper walls and across the ceiling is burnt away in some spots and obscured by soot in others.

Urjqurt, an elderly ork woman in her late thirties, shrouded in heavily embroidered orange and yellow robes, the symbol of Garlen painted on her forehead, is behind the counter, smashing something in a mortar and swearing at her arthritis. A small boy (her grandson but easily mistaken for an apprentice) is up on a ladder, cleaning off the soot carefully so as not to damage the paint underneath. Urjqurt is quite willing to talk about the fire, but will ramble on at length and require reminders to stay on topic. She talks



about the general health of the populace, which is about average, but she insists on detailing every cold, every minor injury, and every complaint of the elderly in the decant. If the player characters manage to extricate themselves without insulting her, give them a +1 bonus to Interaction Tests in the neighborhood the following day. She knows just about everybody in the decant, and will tell them all about her encounter with the group.

Checking out the shop requires a successful Perception (6) Test, and a successful Astral Sensing (9) Test for magical evidence. Only the hairs in the cat flap cannot be found by interview.



Investigation Results

Pathetic Result: Urjqurt has to point you to the fire damage.

Poor Result: There was a fire here a while back. Probably deliberately set. “Oh, really?” says Urjqurt sarcastically. “The guards told me that.”

Average Result: The fire started in the middle of the shop. There’s a blackened and cracked spot in the stone, underneath a fairly new-looking cabinet. If asked, Urjqurt comments that the cabinet’s predecessor held extracts and tinctures of various herbs, made with alcohol, and that there was a lot of melted glass in spots outside the ash of the cabinet. She also complains about the price Kexen the cabinetmaker charged her for the replacement cabinet, especially considering that it was used and didn’t quite fit some of her bottles.

Good Result: There’s an empty lantern hook by the door. Urjqurt says that the lantern was missing after the fire, but she found something melted next to the ash of the cabinet that might have been it. She hasn’t bought a replacement yet. “You think they used my own night lamp to start the fire?” she asks irritably. “Knew I should have gone ahead and bought a proper light quartz. Funny, the guards didn’t notice that.”

Excellent Result: Urjqurt recalls that when she came downstairs, smelling smoke, the shop was disarranged. She'd been too concerned about the fire to worry about the possibility of a burglary, and after the fire so much was damaged she couldn't tell if anything was taken or not. She also remembers that the front door was already unlocked, which would have had to be done from the inside as the door not only has a heavy lock on it, but also a bar that she puts on it at night. The bar is mounted on a pivot and counterbalanced so that an old woman can easily operate it, but only from the inside. There's no night latch on the bar and the doorframe extends over the edges of the door on the outside, so there's no way to slide something between the door and the frame to lift the bar.

Extraordinary Result: You find a few strands of hair caught in the cat flap in the back door. They're curly and coarse, and too long to belong to the shop's cat. As well, the cat is a tabby and the hairs are black. It looks like whoever did it crawled in through the cat flap, losing some of his hair in the process. This rules out the larger Name-giver races, although the cat flap has an unusually large opening. One look at the tabby should tell the group why: the shop has a very large cat. A dwarf could fit through the cat flap with some difficulty, which might explain the hair. However, a windling could also manage it, as could a child of elven, human, t'skrang, or ork stock. For details on using the hair to find the arsonist, see **Little Clues**, p. 76. Again, Urjqurt comments on the guards missing the clue. "Bunch of idiots," she complains.

Astral Sensing Results

Pathetic Result: You get a headache from the strain.

Poor Result: The astral space of Oshane is only somewhat clean at best. There's just too much noise for you to see anything.

Average Result: A lot of clutter. Nothing stands out.

Good Result: You're not sure. There's something familiar going on here, but you just can't quite put your finger on it.

Excellent Result: Something about the back door catches your attention. It's going to take further investigation.

Extraordinary Result: The hairs in the cat flap have the slightest trace of taint about them, as if they belonged to someone who had been a little too close to something nasty in the recent past.

THE TELIXA HOME

Two streets in toward the park and one over from the apothecary, three stories high, the Telixa family's home is still having the damage to the kitchen repaired. The room opens onto an alley behind the house, so the effects of the fire are not evident if the player characters approach the front door, as they should. Going around to the back without introducing themselves will make a bad impression and get them compared to the guards, who tend to go poking around where they please without so much as an "excuse me."

If the group comes by during the day, the eldest daughter (Laea, age eight) will be home, watching over her three younger siblings (Tefed, Rutin, and Daxaleun; all three years old but easily mistaken for five by someone who doesn't know orks). Devijne and Uldris, her mother and father, respectively, will be at work. Devijne is a baker at the Goat and Coins. Uldris drives a delivery cart for the Selrushing Hurlg Works. Laea can tell the group the basic outline of what happened, but the characters must speak with her mother to get the only eyewitness account of the discovery of the blaze. The fire was set in the middle of the night, when Laea was asleep. She heard about it from Devijne but didn't see the blaze herself.

Interviewing Devijne requires the group to visit at night or buy meals at the Goat and Coins, a neighborhood tavern of passable quality, and wait for her to put her latest batch of rolls aside to rise. She's a short but hefty ork woman who carries a flour-covered towel and wipes her hands on it any time she touches pretty much anything.

"We had pickled cabbage for dinner that night," she says, "so I left the window open. The one over the washbasin, yes. When Rutin called out that he smelled smoke, I went downstairs and found the hearth shovel in the middle of the floor, coals and ashes strewn all over, and the pantry and the cupboard in flames."

If the characters have asked in a reasonable manner, they'll be allowed to check around the place for clues to the culprit. Make Perception (6) Tests for physical evidence, and Astral Sensing (9) Tests for magical evidence. If the group has offended the family or investigated from outside without going into the house, the player characters cannot achieve better than a Good result.

Results from the interview tests can also be applied here.

Investigation Results

Pathetic Result: You're at a complete loss to find the site of the fire, until you realize you're tracking ash through the house and think to follow your own footsteps.

Poor Result: There's still some ash in the cracks in the stones of the alley, obviously where it was swept out of the back door of the house.

Average Result: The window frame is charred lightly at the top and there are soot marks up the side of the house. The windowsill is at waist height for an elf, and the window is too small for an obsidiman, ork, or troll to fit through. Any of the other Name-giver races could manage it easily enough.

Good Result: Under the window is a wooden counter that doesn't match the rest of the kitchen: a replacement for the one burned in the fire. It holds the washbasin and a cutting board. Whoever came in the window had to be light enough not to break the furniture under his weight, and graceful enough to not send the ceramic washbasin crashing to the floor.

Excellent Result: The group is shown the remains of the cupboard. The bottom two shelves of the freestanding cabinet are pretty much gone, and the two upper shelves are damaged heavily. The family hasn't yet had the silver to replace it. Also, there are black scorch marks on the stone where the cabinet used to sit. Apparently the arsonist tossed a shovelful of coals from the stove into the bottom shelf and maybe the one above it. Some of the coals burned through the bottom shelf and dropped to the floor, the flying sparks touching off the counter. The pantry is in similar shape. The closet where the nonperishable and semi-perishable foods are kept has scorch marks rising from the bottom and the floor is heavily marked in the right front corner. The group is told that there was a bag of flour there that had coals dumped into it.

Extraordinary Result: Devijne shows the group a pair of Throalic runes carved hastily into the countertop near the washbasin. Whoever did it apparently used a dull knife or other semi-sharp instrument. The sigils spell out *VISH*. Devijne has no idea what that could mean. She doesn't know anyone Named Vish or whose Name begins with that syllable, nor does anyone else in her family.

Astral Sensing Results

Pathetic Result: You get a headache.

Poor Result: There have been too many people coming and going to make out anything.

Average Result: Astral space has been badly muddled here by someone spellcasting—maybe an Elementalist during the fire. It smells like water. You might find things a little clearer in the out-of-the-way parts of the house.

Good Result: There's a whiff of something slightly unpleasant coming from the kitchen. Could be something died in there, maybe a rat caught in a trap spending its last few breaths in pain, but maybe not.

Excellent Result: The runes carved in the countertop smell of taint. Could be the knife used to carve them was tainted, or the person who carved them; it's hard to say.

Extraordinary Result: Those runes smell of Horror. Whoever carved them, whatever they mean, there's a Horror involved somehow.

THE WOBOTU HOME

Across the laneway and into the Sixth Dectant, but still well out in a predominantly orkish neighborhood, the Wobotu family lives in a modest two-story house. Its walls are painted a sad, faded green with no murals. The street it's on is full of cracks, potholes, and bumps, and the light quartzes are dim. Two dozen small children, mostly orks and all in need of a bath, are playing in the street, using bits of broken furniture and crockery for swords and shields. They seem to be trying to reenact a battle from the war against Thera, but a loud argument has erupted because nobody wants to be a Theran.

Rix Wobotu, the father of the household, is at home no matter what hour the group comes calling. A thin, fatigued, sickly looking ork, he's lost a lot of his body hair and his eyes are bloodshot and rheumy. He's got a hacking cough and occasionally dabs at his lips with a bloodstained handkerchief. If asked, he explains that he's a former miner and has miner's lung. His wife Qonnyz works long hours at a laundry to support the family, along with what his older sons make scavenging the rubbish tip at the edge of town for recyclable materials: glass they can sell to the glassblowers, wood that's sold for firewood, that sort of thing. She's not available to talk. Rix was the one who discovered the fire anyway.

The main room of the house is as shabby as the exterior, with old, threadbare furniture, a worn rug on the dusty stone floor, and very little of real value. Rix drops heavily into the only really comfortable chair available, and apologizes for not having anything better to offer the group than water. He's relieved when that's not a problem, and says that the guards left when he couldn't provide them with beer.

He was trying to sleep in his chair on the night of the fire, like he's done every night since his lungs packed up on him. His cough keeps his wife and kids awake if he sleeps upstairs. Sometime in the early hours of the morning, he woke up and smelled smoke. When he got up to check on it, he heard one of the shutters slam in the next room. He went into the storage room to find a small fire burning merrily in the middle of the room, built from some of the baby furniture that had been put in storage. His wife came downstairs to find him pouring the kitchen wash water on the coals. Little damage was done to the house, but the Wobotus lost a crib that had been in the family for six generations.

If the player characters do anything to help Rix, such as bringing his family food or helping out with the housework, or trying to get his disease cured, they'll score some points with the community. Add a +2 bonus to their Interaction Tests with the poor in the area for the next three days.

Investigating the scene requires Perception (6) Tests or Charisma (8) Tests for physical evidence, and Astral Sensing (12) Tests for magical evidence, due to the heavy astral pollution caused by Rix's prolonged illness and suffering.

Investigation Results

Pathetic Result: You're puzzled by the smell of smoke, until you realize you're standing on a charred spot in the floor.

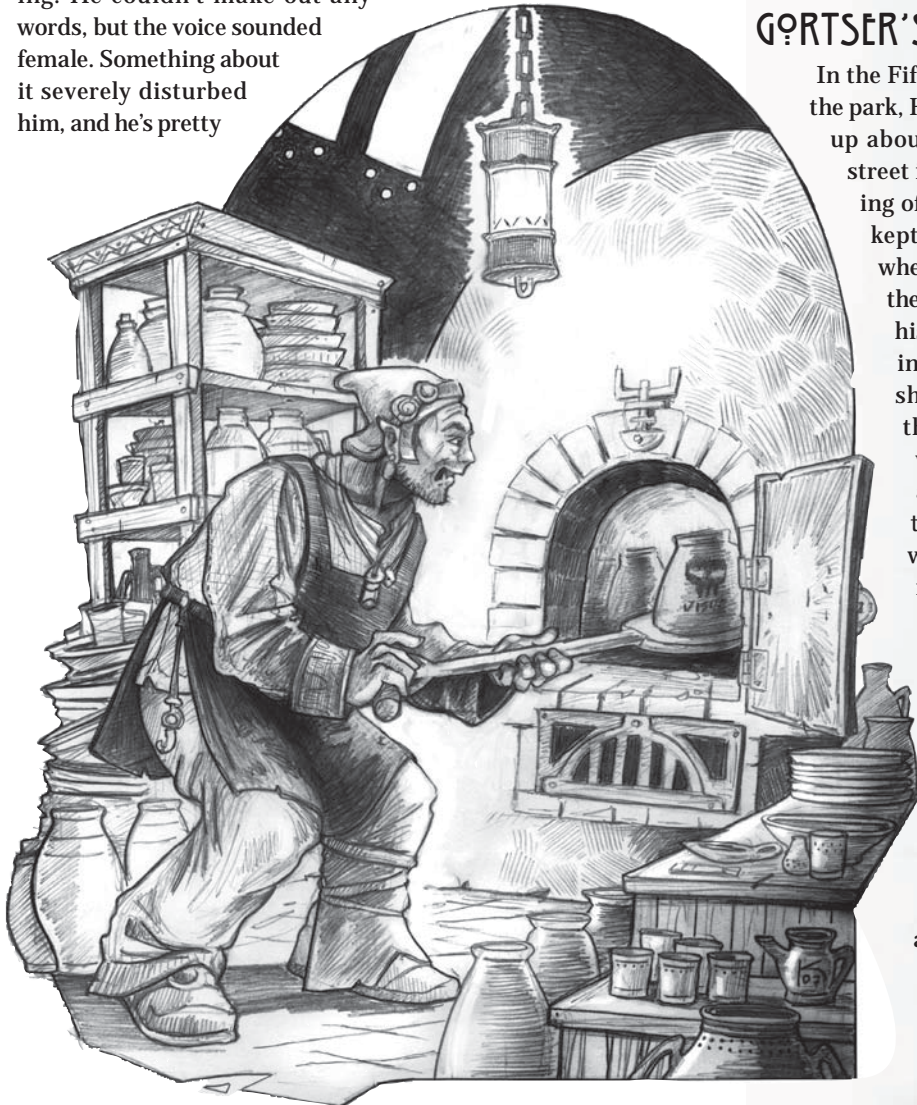
Poor Result: There's a blackened spot in the middle of the floor. The ashes have been cleaned up, but there's still soot on the ceiling. The room is half full of old furniture, including the headboard of a crib with a few splintered bits of wood where the rails were broken off.

Average Result: The crib rails weren't all that thick, but the wood was reasonably sturdy. After all, ork babies had used the crib for six generations. There's no way a windling could have broken the rails, not without using a hammer and making a huge amount of noise.

Good Result: The window has a latch, but it's loose. Anyone with a slender piece of metal could easily slip it between the upper and lower sash and flip back the latch, unlocking the window. The shutters latch outside the window and could be unlatched by anyone with a thin arm or a long stick. They're meant for privacy, after all, there being no weather in the cave city.

Excellent Result: Rix remembers finding a flask in the storage room during the cleanup that didn't belong to the family. He turns it over to the group. Ceramic, glazed a dark blue, the flask has a carved wooden stopper with the remnants of sealing wax around it. Inside are a few drops of a foul smelling liquid, oily and highly flammable. The remnants of a maker's seal cling to the front of the flask. Identifying the maker and the content will take some legwork; see **Gortser's Pottery** (below) and **Little Clues**, p. 76. A Weaponsmith could identify the contents as coal oil with a successful Half-Magic (9) Test.

Extraordinary Result: On questioning, Rix remembers one more detail. He's not terribly sure of it, as he was more or less asleep when the arsonist set the fire, but he thinks he heard some sort of high pitched muttering. He couldn't make out any words, but the voice sounded female. Something about it severely disturbed him, and he's pretty



sure it was the goose bumps running down his spine that woke him up, not the smell of smoke.

Astral Sensing Results

Pathetic Result: Not only do you have a headache, you also have a squint from trying so hard to see something.

Poor Result: The sickness rolling in waves off Rix is so heavy you can't see anything past it. You feel nauseous.

Average Result: All you can see is Rix, and the pain he's in. You wouldn't be able to see a Horror if it was right across the room from you.

Good Result: There's something here beyond the disease and pain that Rix is suffering, something maybe unnatural. More investigation is required.

Excellent Result: The site of the fire itself smells of taint. There was a deliberate attempt to cause pain here, driven by something unclean.

Extraordinary Result: Whoever set this has spent some time in the vicinity of a Horror. They may not be corrupted yet, but it's just a matter of time.

GORTSER'S POTTERY

In the Fifth Dectant, about half way out from the park, Hurrzo Gortser's pottery works takes up about half the block. At the end of the street is Gortser's home, a two-story building of modest proportions, neat and well kept. Next to it stands the shop proper, where he sells his wares. Beyond that is the studio where Gortser, his family, and his apprentices practice their art, turning clay into useful items. The drying shed for the greenware comes after the studio, then the kilns in a thick-walled building with tall chimneys, and finally the warehouse where the finished products are stored. The warehouse is not a large building, as many of Gortser's goods are made on commission. Orks of all ages, with a scattering of humans and dwarfs mixed in, scurry through the complex like ants in a hill, carrying raw materials and goods in various stages of completion from one building to the next through a series of connecting doors.

If the player characters come by after business hours, they suffer a -2 penalty to all Interaction Tests with Hurrzo, but gain a +2 bonus to any tests involved in the investigation of the premises, due to the

absence of the workers. During business hours, neither of these adjustments should be applied. Customers and workers will distract Hurrzo though, and this should be played for the annoyance factor. Interrupt him every time he gets to something important until the players are ready to scream. Talking to one of the apprentices would be a better idea. The journeymen are busier than Hurrzo himself, but a successful Interaction (8) Test will unleash a flood of information from the usually ignored apprentices. Compare the results to the evidence chart.

Gortser can easily identify the flask from the Wobotu household, as it was made in his shop. He has no idea of the contents, but can direct the group to the person he sold the flask to, who should know. He tells the group to go see Girecheyt Ironbender, a blacksmith whose shop is located six streets out in the same decant.

Investigating the situation requires Perception (7) Tests, and Astral Sensing (12) Tests for magical evidence. The fire was more recent, but the business has been cleaned up better than the other scenes.

Gortser Home

The house has two stories, with the common room, dining room, kitchen, and bathing facilities downstairs. Sleeping quarters are all upstairs, where Hurrzo, his wife Aymoh (who paints pottery in the studio), and their children reside. Hurrzo's journeyman mostly live offsite in nearby apartments. The apprentice quarters are down at the far end by the finished goods warehouse.

Shop

The shop is large, with many pieces displayed. Some are for sale, while others are meant as samples but can be bought if a customer is insistent. There are shelves of dishes, urns, vases, pitchers, washbasins, chamber pots, and freestanding larger pieces such as decorative urns, hookahs, and the occasional bit of sculpture. Most of the items are of the useful variety, with little that is only decorative, but everything is brightly glazed and covered with intricate designs. The shop itself is painted in bright colors, with ornate designs around the tops of the walls and across the ceiling, like so many of the other buildings in this area. Upstairs is a stockroom for smaller items and the quarters of Ozalq and Peniyat, two of the journeymen from the studio.

Studio

A sprawling one story building filled with tables where greenware is painted; mixing and molding areas where clay is thinned with water and cast into various shapes; a row of pottery wheels where craftsmen throw pots, urns, and dishes; and a stockroom at the back with no door where the various supplies are kept. A faint odor of smoke underlies the rich, earthy smell of clay and glazes that permeates the room. During the day, the studio is full of people, mostly orks, making greenware, painting and glazing in preparation for firing, and preparing clays and glazes for future pieces.

Greenware Shed

This is the scene of the fire. The walls are lined with wooden shelving, and freestanding shelving units fill the main part of the room. An open space near the door to the studio holds one large urn, nearly the height of a dwarf, with room available in the shed for a few more. Across the room, by the door to the kilns, the shelving at the base of the wall is gone, and the shelving above is badly damaged. While the soot has been carefully cleaned from the remaining shelving and the walls, scorch marks remain where the fire heated the stone.

Kilns

Even at night, the heat in this vaulted stone chamber is nearly unbearable. During the day, with at least one of the ovens being loaded or unloaded and the rest firing, only the kiln masters can abide for more than a few minutes in the scorching temperatures. Five massive ovens take up most of the building, carefully sealed to keep the heat from fluctuating over the course of firing. All that can be easily seen of them, though, are the iron doors and the fire grates below, like the big ovens in a bakery. While the oven doors proper are massive, taking a full grown ork to pull them open, the fire grate hatches are small and easily opened by even the youngest apprentice.

Finished Goods Warehouse

Completed ceramics occupy the shelves and floor space, along with crates and barrels, and bales of straw for packing. Along one wall are three boxes of badly fired pots, all cracked with their glazes tessellated from uneven heat. Goods are sparse here, as most of the finished products are packed and delivered or picked up quickly.

Apprentice Quarters

The apprentice quarters are located in a low one story building behind the finished goods warehouse, with doors only into the warehouse and the sanitary facilities at the back. The Gortzers keep a tight rein on their apprentices. The windows are small and high, and the rooms are small but tidy and in good repair.

Investigation Results

Pathetic Result: Is this where you store the greenware?

Poor Result: The fire was set in the greenware shed. Coals were scattered across the wooden shelving near the door to the kilns.

Average Result: Gortser complains about the badly fired pots, saying that whoever set the fire did it with coals from one of the kilns, the one closest to the door to the finished goods warehouse. Taking out the coals screwed up the firing of the pots.

Good Result: One of the apprentices complains that he had to spend the morning after the fire sweeping up ashes all over, in a trail from the ash chute in the kiln room to the greenware shed and back. Apparently the arsonist crawled in

through the ash chute, a tight squeeze for a small human or a dwarf, and a tough bend for an elf as their bones are longer and harder to fit around tight curves. It could have been a Thief adept. The apprentice tells a story about a legendary Thief adept he heard about, who might be in the city.

Excellent Result: The arsonist smashed every item in the greenware shed in a new line featuring scenes of children at play. The apprentice who cleaned up the mess hauls out a chunk of granite she found, with bits of clay ground into it. It's of a variety that only occurs out at the southern wall of the cavern, at the edge of the dectant, at least in Oshane. "You don't think someone brought this all the way from Yistane just to break dishes with it, do you?" the apprentice asks.

Extraordinary Result: Inside the ash chute, you find Throalic sigils spelling out *VISHQUA* scratched into the metal of the chute wall.

Astral Sensing Results

Pathetic Result: There are too many people and too much going on. Trying to focus on anything gives you a headache.

Poor Result: Like most of Oshane, this is a somewhat clean area. Astral space has too much haze in it for you to be able to see anything.

Average Result: The apprentices don't like the journeymen, the journeymen don't like the masters, and the masters have too many other problems to worry about. Somehow, they all manage to get along and work together, but it's a volatile mix, and hard to see through.

Good Result: The greenware shed and the kiln room definitely need further examination.

Excellent Result: Of course the person who smashed all those ceramics was tainted. Why else would he go after that particular product line? And the ash chute stinks of Horror taint as well.

Extraordinary Result: The runes in the ash chute aren't quite a link to a Horror, but it's not for lack of trying. This is probably part of a Horror's Name. Don't move your lips while you read.

THE GRAIN WAREHOUSE

There's not much left of the warehouse. All of the other fires were at private homes, or businesses with the owners or workers living on the premises. Those blazes were quickly discovered and contained before they could do a lot of harm. This one was set at the back of a large building with only two guards. By the time the fire was discovered and help summoned, the interior was fully involved. All that remains are the crumbling outer walls, the partial shells of some of the grain bins, and piles of ash that used to be grain. The roof had been made of wood, unusual for Oshane. The company had a good deal of wood available, in the form of the bins the grain was shipped in. They took several of them

apart to build the roof, as wood is easier to cover a large space with than stone. Replacing the roof would cost almost as much as replacing the grain.

Betlak and Usiji, the *j'havim* guards, are found at a neighborhood tavern, glumly awaiting a new work assignment from the company. Assuming that it will be in a bad environment, buying the guards a *hurlg* will help, providing a +2 bonus to Interaction Tests made against them. Having Klesh or some other respected citizen along for the meeting will further increase the bonus to +3. Betlak and Usiji are reluctant to talk about the fire, and complain that the city guards already interrogated them. No, they haven't seen hide nor hair of the Baron's private guards, just those rude louts from the Oshane city watch, and they are in no mood for another go at being called idiots and told they weren't doing their jobs properly. This scene would be better roleplayed than reduced to a die roll.

Usiji and Betlak had done their usual shift change walk-through, and had settled down for a game of dice; after all, the grain warehouse was made of stone, had no windows, and was supposed to be rat proof. The bins inside were individually locked, so that even if a determined thief got in, he'd be slowed down considerably. Beyond that, who would want to steal unmilled grain? It's heavy, bulky, and fetches a low price for the amount an ork can carry. Only the truly desperate would ever try to break in. Betlak was ahead five copper pieces when both of the men heard a clunk, like wood on stone. They describe it as sounding like a plank falling to the floor. Thinking they had a rat, or a bin coming apart, they both grabbed their pikes and went poking around in the back of the warehouse. Neither of them found anything, however, so they went back to their dice game.

About a candlemark later, they both smelled smoke. This time, when they went to investigate, they immediately found something: a bin in flames, with the fire spreading rapidly to neighboring bins. They ran for the door and sounded the alarm, then went back to try and fight the fire. Unfortunately, it was way beyond them and the bucket brigade as well, and by the time an Elementalist got there, the building was a total loss.

Searching the wreckage requires Perception (6) Tests. Looking for magical evidence requires Astral Sensing (9) Tests.

Investigation Results

Pathetic Result: One of the guards has to point you to the location of the fire.

Poor Result: The place burned down. Looks like arson.

Average Result: In the ashes of one of the grain bins is a chunk of granite about the size of a dwarf's fist. It's got chisel marks down one side, but the other is clearly a natural fracture.

Good Result: The burn pattern definitely shows the use of an accelerant. Stuff was splashed around pretty heavily, including up on the stone walls. What was the point of that? Maybe to catch the wooden roof on fire?

Excellent Result: Betlak remembers seeing a blue flask on the floor near the burning bin. At the time, he didn't think much about it, being more concerned with summoning help and trying to put out the fire. He directs the player characters to the spot, where they discover fragments of blue glazed ceramic. One of the pieces bears the mark of Girecheyt Ironbender's smithy, although Betlak won't recognize it as such. See **Little Clues**, p. 76.

Extraordinary Result: Traced in a huge, looping scrawl across the back wall, visible only with a light directed at exactly the right angle to illuminate the scorch marks across the stone, are orkish letters: *VISHQUAGORCH*.

Astral Sensing Results

Pathetic Result: All that happens is that one of the guards makes buggy eyes back at you. And you get a headache. You're at a -1 penalty to all Action Tests until you leave.

Poor Result: Astral space here is no more informative than the street out front.

Average Result: There's a bit of a bad smell when you get close to the back wall.

Good Result: Oh yeah, there it is: big, nasty, slimy tendrils, oozing from the back wall.

Excellent Result: That's a Name, and no doubt about it.

Extraordinary Result: Not only is that a Horror's Name, it was put there by someone sliding over the brink between tainted and corrupted. Better get to him fast or there's going to be no saving him.

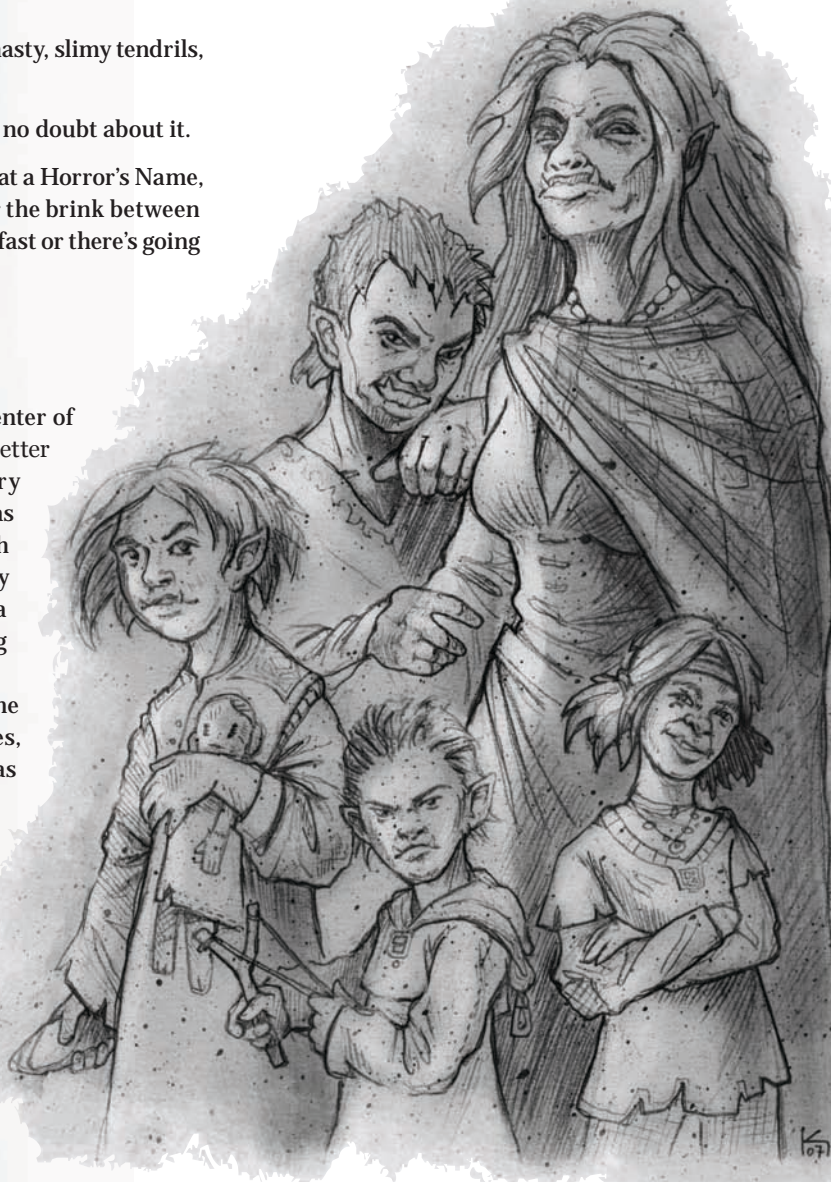
THE TIVZE HOME

In the Fifth Dectant, closer to the center of the city than the previous fires and in a better neighborhood, stands the three-story home of the Tivze family. Not as elegant as Moodri and Sethra's home, but in much better shape than Rix's, it is reasonably well kept despite the depredations of a horde of children of varying ages. Sorting out the family may take a scorecard.

Myrrarn Tivze is the matriarch of the clan, a stout woman in her early thirties, who carries her age with dignity and has held up well. Currently, her hands are bandaged and she's got a nasty burn across her left cheek. She doesn't get around like she used to, but her reach and aim with the gnarled walking stick she carries make up for a lot. In her youth, Myrrarn was an adventurer, and still keeps in practice as a Fifth Circle Illusionist.

She made a fortune on an expedition to a Horror-infested kaer in the mountains to the north, returned to Throal, invested it, and has been living off the proceeds ever since. Two of her former lovers still live in the house along with her current (and probably last) husband, some of her children, grandchildren, cousins, and affiliated relatives. Many of them also have recent burns. The family being orks, the tensions within the household sometimes erupt with little or no warning.

Family tensions, however, are restricted to shouting and the occasional fistfight. The entire clan is quite certain that an outsider, definitely not an ork, set the fire that destroyed the family shrine and the dining room as no ork would ever set fire to a shrine to Hrak Gron and the Passions. The game-master may want to bring in additional players for walk-on speaking parts as Tivze family members, to overload the players with lots of people arguing and talking all at once. All of the voices in the clamor, despite their differences with each other, agree that nobody in the household set the fire and that the group absolutely must bring the culprit to swift and terrible justice.



Investigating the scene requires Perception (7) Tests for physical evidence, and Astral Sensing (13) Tests for magical evidence, due to the heavy magical protections on the home of a magician.

Investigation Results

Pathetic Result: One of the family members directs you away from the hall closet and to the actual scene of the fire. He shakes his head sadly.

Poor Result: Yeah, they had a fire here. Imagine that.

Average Result: The fire started in the household shrine, at the altar of Hrak Gron, and spread to the adjacent dining room. The damage occurred the day before the Speaker and Recorder left Oshane to hire the group. In the intervening week a good deal of the damage has been cleaned up, but very little repair work has been done.

Good Result: The fire was started with coals from the stove. While the fire had been banked for the night, the coals had been kept going to make it easier to light the stove for breakfast. A trail of deep burn craters leads from the kitchen, through the dining room, to the shrine. During the cleanup, the ash shovel from the kitchen was found in the shrine and the stove's firebox door was open.

Excellent Result: One of the kids remembers that the door to the trash closet was open the morning after the fire. He closed it without thinking about it. However, he's sure he closed and latched it the previous night when he dumped the dinner scraps in the waste bin. The trash closet is a half-height enclosure that protrudes through the back wall of the kitchen, with doors on either side giving access to the waste bin from the kitchen and from the alley behind the house. Since the waste bin in this household has to handle a week's worth of kitchen garbage from a large clan, it's pretty big. Anyone smaller than a troll could have crept through the waste closet once the bin was moved out of the way. The fire happened the day after trash pickup, so the bin wouldn't have been that heavy and could have been easily moved.

Extraordinary Result: High on the wooden partition wall behind the shrine of Hrak Gron, someone painted a series of orkish sigils on the wall with an accelerant, something more flammable than lamp oil. The sigils charred into the wall, creating a deeper tracing than the surrounding scorch marks. With difficulty, the line of text can be read: *The dead cannot help the living.*

Astral Sensing Results

Pathetic Result: The bewildering chaos of astral space in the home of an Illusionist confounds you, giving you a headache.

Poor Result: This is the home of an Illusionist. You can't make head nor tail of astral space.

Average Result: Maybe you should check out the kitchen again.

Good Result: The shrine—no, the wall behind the shrine—stinks of corruption. Not taint, corruption. You've got a problem.

Excellent Result: Whoever burned the shrine did so out of pure, distilled hatred; the kind that Name-givers have trouble producing on their own. Besides that, the corruption back behind the shrine is pouring off the wall in waves thick enough to make you gag. The Tivze family is going to have to purify their home before they even think about rebuilding.

Extraordinary Result: You've come to recognize this stink. Your arsonist has been corrupted by the Horror. Their astral signatures have merged. It's far too late to do anything for the arsonist now. All you can do is hope you can get to the Horror before there's another fire.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the player characters meet up with the guards at any of the sites, in between sites, or as the result of deliberately seeking them out to discuss the case, and try to find out the results of the guards' investigation, they're rudely rebuffed. The guards confiscate any really obvious evidence that the group is carrying. Run **Something for Nothing**, p. 69, soon after. Getting into a fight with the guards would be a bad idea, which someone—a gamemaster character with the group if not a player character—should realize. If a fight does occur, and the characters lose, beat them up but don't arrest them. Let them off with a warning. If the characters win, especially if a guard dies, then they've got a serious problem. Play out the results and get it across to the players that attacking the guards is a bad idea. On the other hand, if the group has enough gold, the guards are willing to accept a blood price plus damages to let the matter drop.

The group has to find at least some of the evidence at the various arson scenes for the investigation to go forward. If the player characters are totally clueless, the residents of the arson sites could easily volunteer some of the information.

Irritating the populace with poor investigative and interviewing techniques will not get the characters tossed off the job. Klesh will have some strong words with them, though, and express his doubts as to their abilities. Assume that the characters don't set off anyone's *gahad* unless they're really trying to. If they engage in too much deliberate provocation, gamemaster characters can instruct the players as to a more acceptable way of getting information.

PASTIMES AND DIVERSIONS

I'm trying to get my job done, but all this Passions-cursed work keeps getting in the way.

• Margelina Trifonov, Oshane Chancellery Clerk •



This chapter consists of three scenes that can be dropped in wherever appropriate as determined by the flow of the story.

OVERVIEW

In the first part, a guard unit commander comes to talk with the group. She wants to know what the player characters have found. She's less than forthcoming in return, not wanting to give the group any chance to show up the guards. In the second part, the characters are either bribed or threatened to get them to drop their investigation and leave the city. In the third part, following up on a tangential clue leads the group to a cult of thieves. Raggok has deceived the thieves into thinking they're following Chorrolis by stealing large sums. Breaking up the gang could score the group some sympathies with the guard, as well as provide a little combat in a highly social adventure. Clever players may also see the possibility of blaming the gang for the fires.

SETTING THE STAGE

Something for Nothing, p. 69, should occur after the characters have some success in their investigation, preferably after they have completed at least two of the arson scenes. The Chancellery Guard will not take an interest in the player characters until they're making noticeable progress. **Remittance Man**, p. 71, likewise should occur after the group has completed at least three of the arson scenes, and preferably after they have made a preliminary report of their findings. **Bad Gold**, p. 73, is a diversion, a tangent for the group to be sent on, and can occur at any point after **Something for Nothing**, p. 69, has been completed.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

The following text assumes that the heroes are in a tavern. If they are not, the gamemaster must alter the text to suit the situation.

So you're taking a load off, having a beer and a meal, and talking about the investigation, when this big guard unit comes in, three times as many of them as you. All are dwarfs in fancy gear, armed and armored, with a badge you haven't seen before, and irritable, like they didn't get enough sleep last night because you were making too much noise next door. Everyone in the room looks around, and while the conversations don't all stop, the noise level drops considerably. People look at each other, then at the guards, then at each other again, wondering who the guards have come here to see. Then they all turn and stare at you. It's not a friendly stare.

The guard commander is a grizzled old woman with a scar across her face like you'd get if a drunken ork pounded you with a pottery mug hard enough to break it. She stomps up to your table and looks you over with a jaundiced eye.

"So," she says, "You're the adepts Klesh brought in, right?"

REMITTANCE MAN

This scene has four possible ways it can go, and thus four possible openings. The read-aloud text, is included with each possibility for the scene.

BAD GOLD

After the player characters have had their initial encounter with Rozerl, and when she comes back to see them, read the following aloud:

“So we’ve been investigating this thing for longer than you have,” Rozerl says, condescendingly, “and I thought you could use a tip. There’s this small-time gang out in the outer part of the Dectant. We got a tip that they’re Raggok worshippers. Haven’t had the time to look into it ourselves, yet, but hey, you want to stay friendly with us, you could go check it out and let me know what you find.”

THEMES AND IMAGES

Conflict held below the surface, a fight that neither side wants to happen. Tension in words exchanged, in the mood of the room, in the air itself. When something does happen that’s unexpected, it nearly sets the situation ablaze, like a spark into dry tinder. For **Remittance Man**, this depends on the option the storyline requires. There are two possibilities presented here.

BRIBE

Someone tries to pay the player characters to go away. This has two options: Rough and Smooth. The Rough option involves an overt attempt at bribery, with the characters being told to either take the money and leave or face the consequences. The person offering the bribe shows callous indifference toward the plight of the common folk. He has the attitude that money can solve all problems; throw enough coin at them and they’ll go away. Besides, outsiders shouldn’t meddle in these affairs. They should be grateful for what they’re offered and get on with their lives. In the Smooth option, an indirect offer of a bribe is made. The person making the offer insinuates that it would be in the player characters’ best interest to accept the offer. The person offering the bribe uses the velvet glove over the iron fist. Power corrupts in ways the Horrors can’t even get close to. After dealing with these people, the characters are going to want a bath.

THREAT

Someone threatens the player characters to make them go away. Again, this has two options: Rough and Smooth. In the Rough option, the characters are confronted with serious force, and given the choice of leaving or fighting. A showdown ensues, with tension running high, and nerves honed to a fine edge. One sneeze at the wrong moment and there could be a lot of death in the air. The characters have to ask themselves, “Are the orks worth fighting other Namegivers for?” Are the player characters honorable enough, or being paid enough, to stand up for a threatened minority? In the Smooth option, the player characters are threatened with damage to their reputations if they don’t leave. They can live down a defeat in battle, but can they live down a song about it? Who cares if it’s true? Nobody cares if the lyrics are true if the tune is catchy.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This section covers the additional material the gamemaster needs for each scene. In **Something for Nothing**, p. 69, the identity of the guard unit is revealed, and its special qualities are detailed. Advice for how to play out the scene is provided. In **Remittance Man**, p. 71, four options are provided for an attempt to make the player characters go away and quit poking around in Oshane’s business. In **Bad Gold**, p. 73, the player characters are given the impression by the watch that a local criminal gang could be the arsonists. While this isn’t true, the gang could be set up to take the blame for the arsons, or the player characters could gain a bit of credit with the watch by cleaning up a mess.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

The unit that has shown up to challenge the player characters is from the Chancellery guard, an elite force that reports directly to Marruth. The guard commander, Rozerl, is here to find out what the group has discovered, and to run the characters off the case, in that order. She has an amulet that lets her know if anyone uses attitude-changing magic. If any of the characters try to shift the odds in their favor, Rozerl will immediately know and become hostile. Use her regular Social Defense for Charisma Tests, and the higher number as a Spell Defense against talents and spells.

She’ll start off with probing questions, asking what the group found at each of the investigation sites. She knows everyone that the group has talked with in a public place, and wants to know what each person has said. She knows every building the characters have visited, and insists that they tell her what evidence they found at all of them. Initially, she’s asking for them to cooperate with the law, and plays on the typical Throalic view of the guard as someone you want to talk to. If the player characters prove resistant to this method, then she becomes more aggressive, demanding that they yield what they’ve found to the proper authorities. Eventually, she’ll get around to threatening to charge them with interfering with a guard investigation, but it’ll take a while. Have her spend a good deal of time trying the old reliable “the guards are your friends” approach before she gets nasty, and then be slow to heat up the situation.

The tension gets bad enough that small incidents happen elsewhere in the tavern common room: a barmaid drops a mug of ale; the fire hits a pitch knot; someone puts their spoon down in an empty bowl and it rattles. Each sound explodes into the situation with much more impact than it would normally have. The gamemaster could suddenly shout out “Pow!” or “Crash!” and watch the players jump, or better yet have a compatriot in another room stick her head in through the doorway and make the appropriate noise from behind the players. Any reactions or gestures of surprise should be interpreted as character actions. The guards will of course react similarly, and the only way to avoid a fight is for someone to think fast and defuse the situation with a joke or other tension breaker. If nobody

acts appropriately, Rozerl can halt the impending fight with a shout of command to her people. She'll lean close to the group member who's done the most talking and been the most assertive, and ask the character if he really, seriously wants to take on the Oshane Chancellery guard.

"You better think about it real good, there," she says, softly menacing. "You already got enough trouble tryin' t'do our jobs. You sure don't want t' try and take us on straight up. There's a lot more of us than there are of you, and we got the law on our side. Now you take whatever report you want back to Klesh, and you thank him for his hospitality, and then you get yourselves out of Oshane, you got that? Don't go messin' around in guard business." She gathers her troops in by eye and marches them out. Make sure she gets the last word. If any group member tries to say anything as she leaves, have her spin around, point a finger, and say something to the effect of "You deaf? Get out of town while you can," and leave before anyone can retort.

Talking to Rozerl

If the player characters can somehow convince Rozerl that they know what they're doing and would like to work alongside the guards, she might be convinced to part with a little information. Her Social Defense is effectively 10 because of thread magic items, and can be raised as high as 15 because of her lucky charm. Also, remember her lucky charm warns her of attempts at influence. Treat any result level less than Good as a failure, with Poor or less being a catastrophic failure. Go immediately to the threat stage.

On a Good result, Rozerl decides to let the group stay if and only if the characters report all of their findings immediately to her. She'll be dropping in on them from time to time, at inconvenient moments, to get their latest results. Once in a while she'll have a clue for them, most of which will lead not to solutions to the arsons but instead to messes the guards would like someone else to clean up: gangs of thieves, forced prostitution rings, gambling dens that aren't paying their protection money to the guards, that sort of thing. See the false leads in **Taking It to the Streets**, p. 89.

An Excellent result pushes Rozerl into a friendlier mood, and brings some useful information. Give the players a couple of the clues they missed in their investigations of the arson scenes. If they found everything already, Rozerl tells them about a sage in Yistane, just a couple of days' walk, who knows a great deal about arcane mysteries and might be able to provide the meaning of the runes found scratched at the sites. A prolonged absence from Oshane, however, would not make the characters popular with Klesh. They must work out some way to get the information without going themselves and without letting on that they're investigating the possibility of a Horror. See **Rumors and Research**, p. 101.

An Extraordinary result convinces Rozerl that the player characters are good people, and that they just didn't know how things were done in Oshane. She'll excuse their ignorance of local customs, let the group buy

herself and her troops an ale, and settle in for a talk.

"See, the guards aren't understood very well by these people," she explains. "Most of them come from outside Throal entirely, and in some places the law is regarded as trouble. Take Kratas, for example. There, you get a gang of armed people all wearing the same emblem coming toward you, it's probably one of those gangs come to extort money from you, or mess with you for being in their neighborhood without permission, or some-such. But this is Throal. Everyone born here knows that the guards are there for the good of the populace. Talking to the guards is comforting for natives of Throal. It reassures them that justice will be done, that the law is being preserved, that order is maintained, and the subjects are protected against the unruly and the dangerous. Some of these people who've moved in, well, far be it from me to question the motives of the king, Neden has done so much for so many, but sometimes you have to wonder, you know?"

Rozerl will continue in this vein for some time, eventually getting around to confiding that she's convinced it's some dwarf who's setting the fires, probably a questor of Raggok, a racist, or both. There have been race riots here before, and some people just don't like orks. The situation is rapidly growing explosive, and the Chancellery is concerned. When Bethabal had one riot too many, Varulus removed the dwarf Baron and put an ork in charge. That didn't sit well with



the old guard, who are unhappy with anyone but a dwarf in power. The same situation could happen here, or worse, if there's another riot. The king's patience is very thin these days. The fire at the Tivze home is what convinced Rozerl that the culprit was a dwarf. No ork, not even a questor of Raggok, would ever set fire to a shrine to Hrak Gron.

"You'd have to be ... well..." and she lowers her voice and leans close, "touched in some way to do something like that. And everybody knows how safe the Inner Cities are. If a rumor of one of those got around, well, that could set off a panic worse than any race riot. You understand, of course, and won't repeat any of this, right?"

Rozerl leaves without threats if the characters manage to make even a passable connection with her, although she will remind them that they have to understand the situation and work within the existing structures.

If the player characters manage to make friends with Rozerl without using magical influence, for example by providing a reasoned argument as to how they're acting within the law and the traditions of Throal, Rozerl can be mildly helpful, if a bit misdirecting. For example, she points out that the *chav'ao'ros* hall, with its large shrine to Hrak Gron, is an obvious target for the arsonist. This would also provide a lead-in to **Bad Gold**, p. 73.

No matter what the outcome of this scene, Rozerl and her bully-boys will drop in on the characters a couple more times, when it's the least convenient, and go through the same posturing and asserting of authority. If the characters even look like they're thinking of investigating the Chancellery or the regular guards, Rozerl turns up with twice as many forces as before and sees to it that the player characters get a sound thrashing as a warning to keep their noses out of city business.

REMITTANCE MAN

Each of the four options for this scene has its own read-aloud text.

Rough Bribe

While you're at your evening meal, three well-dressed dwarf men of moderate age come up to your table.

"May we join you?" one, with more gray in his beard than the other two, asks, and takes a seat. The other two don't wait for an invitation, either. About the time you're figuring this for an attempt to muscle you off the investigation, the graybeard calls the serving wench over and gives her a handful of coins.

"Their meal is on my coin tonight," he says. "Bring us your special, three of them, and stout, and let me know what the difference is."

The wench glances at the coins in her hand, a few of which gleam golden, and hastens off to make the graybeard's request happen.

"My Name is Sohaemus," says the graybeard, "and my companions here are Manushak and Yerazik. We represent a consortium with interests similar to yours: to make this problem go away."

A trio of wealthy dwarfs joins the group at dinner. They offer the player characters a large sum of silver, at least double what the orks are paying, plus a fall guy—a madman who needs to be put out of his misery—if the characters will drop their investigation and leave. They appeal on racial grounds if there are any dwarfs among the group. The characters were bought by the orks; why shouldn't they take a better offer if one comes along? After all, they're just a bunch of mercenaries.

Sohaemus will explain the situation a bit further if pressed, but won't give the Names of anyone else in his consortium or the Names of the business concerns they represent. During the course of dinner, he'll stand the group several rounds of drinks, wanting to make sure the characters are in an expansive mood and not thinking clearly. The true purpose of his group's attention won't come out until the end of the meal, at which time he'll present the case straightforwardly.

"It's in everyone's best interest that this whole situation be resolved quickly, with as little fuss as possible. We've held our own investigation, just like the orks have."

At this, Manushak makes a bit of a face, but doesn't, and won't, say anything about it.

*"We've found," Sohaemus continues without a pause, "a madman who's, shall we say, touched. We'll let you have all the credit for his capture, hand him over to you for presentation to the *chav'ao'ros* assembly, and pay you double what the orks are paying, if you leave Oshane by the end of the day after tomorrow."*

If the word "bribe" is used, Yerazik speaks for the first time.

"You're as mercenary as the next adept group," he says with a faint sneer. "You're already working for coin, don't go getting all high and mighty about it. We're making a better offer, handing you the solution the orks want on a silver platter. Be grateful for it, take the offer and leave."

There is no "or else." The dwarfs expect the player characters to do the sensible thing and accept their offer. There'll be no threats and no promises of trouble, just the sorrow of businessmen who've had a perfectly good deal declined for no good reason. They'll pay the remainder of the tab, and depart without a glance back.

If the group takes the offer, the characters can pick up their payment and the prisoner first thing in the morning, over at the edge of the Fourth Dectant. Failure to leave Oshane as agreed results in the **Rough Threat**, p. 72).

Smooth Bribe

As you're sitting down, getting your drinks and starting to compare notes, a dwarf man approaches you. He's of average height, average build, and average appearance, not dressed flashy but well enough. He'd get lost in a crowd of three.

"Excuse me?" he says politely. "Could I perhaps have a moment of your time? My Name is not important. Who I work for is. Oh so very so. You should be flattered. Your Names have become important to people who themselves are very important. Thanks to you, power has been brought to bear on this unpleasant situation from very high quarters indeed. You'll be pleased to know that there have been results."

Adepts depend on the good will of the government and the Trading Houses. That good will is partially determined by whether or not the adepts have sufficient judgment to recognize when they need to cut their losses.

An individual purporting to represent the city, a trade consortium, or a guild makes an offer to the player characters. He'll provide them with an arsonist—someone that the orks will believe is at fault—and a large purse of silver if they'll leave Oshane and never come back. Tracing him is difficult due to magical interference, illusions, and the like. Whoever he claims to represent will hotly deny having anything to do with the attempted bribe if confronted.

While taking a candlemark off in a public area, the characters are approached by a dwarf of nondescript appearance. His face is eminently forgettable. Yes, of course there's magic involved, but it's subtle and powerful, not the sort of illusion and misdirection one can readily see through. He has two blood charms implanted: a Charm of Astral Deception

in the form of an old, worn ring gives him the false aura of a calm non-adept, and a Trackless Steps blood charm implanted in his feet blocks attempts to track him when he leaves. He also possesses the thread item Mask of the Crowd with a Rank 5 thread. He has used the Faces of the Crowd ability to blend the appearances of all dwarfs in the crowd into a new, unrecognizable face (see **Rumors and Research**, p. 104, for more information on these items).

He provides little detail, except to say that the investigation has been very quiet, and involved a good deal of magical research in order to determine the truth. The only time he shows strong emotion in the entire conversation is when he describes the arsonists as a gang of racist dwarfs, his own fellow dwarfs acting in such a way so contrary to the *Council Compact* and Throalic law. His disgust with these people is clearly evident. The people he represents are willing to hand them over to the player characters and let the characters claim both the credit for their capture and a fairly large outstanding reward from the Barony.

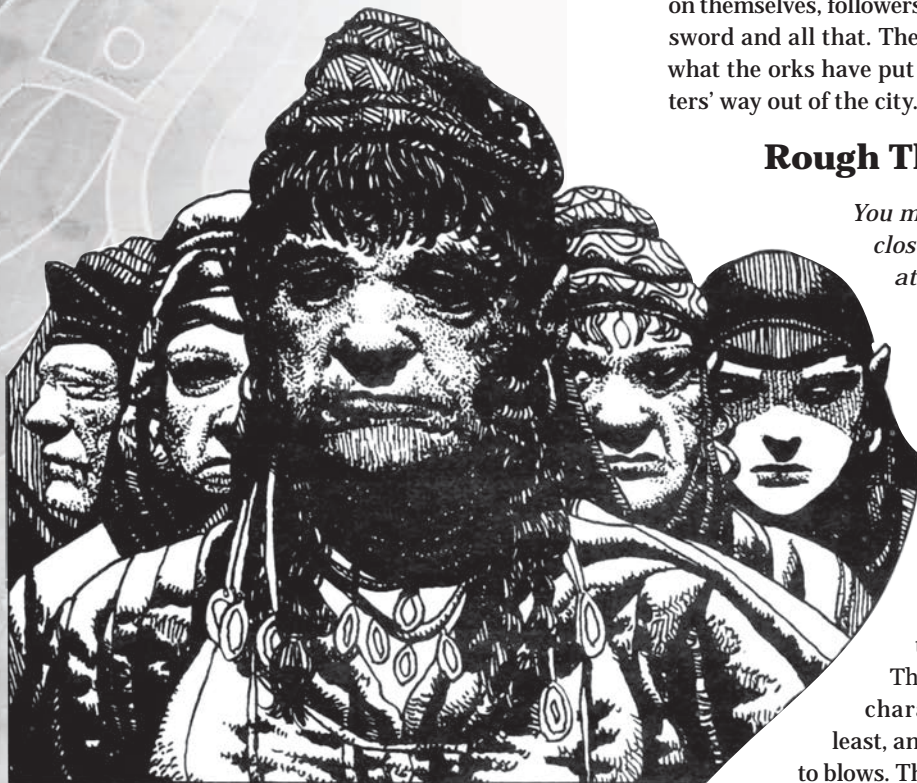
"Oh, you didn't know about that? Yes, the Baron's had a reward out for the arsonist or arsonists since well before you came to Oshane. I'm surprised the orks didn't tell you. But then, perhaps they wanted to assure themselves of whom you were working for, knowing whose coin you'd taken. Not as surprising there, after all. Well, you can claim two rewards now."

All the characters have to do is present the racist gang as the arsonists, claim their rewards, and leave the city without answering any further questions. What happens to the racists isn't really the characters' problem, now, is it? If they're torn apart by a raging mob, well, they brought that on themselves, followers of Raggok that they are. Live by the sword and all that. The reward from the Barony is double what the orks have put up, and will be paid on the characters' way out of the city. Very simple, very neat.

Rough Threat

You must be getting at least halfway close to the truth. You've attracted attention, possibly of a sort you don't want. Judging by what's approaching, the pressure that's about to be brought to bear upon you is going to make it difficult to continue with your investigations. It may make it difficult to get out of Oshane intact.

A large group of armed Name-givers, including a magician or two, confront the player characters. There are enough of them to fight the characters to a standstill, at the very least, and possibly enough to win if it comes to blows. Their spokesman gives the characters



a choice: take this purse of silver and leave, or get the stuffing beat out of you.

Uh-oh. You know there's going to be trouble when a group of armed Name-givers catches you in an alley with no witnesses. There are enough of them to give you serious trouble.

"Here's the deal," says the leader, a big squint-eyed human nearly the size of an ork. "We got a bag of coin here. You take it and you get your stuff, and we walk you to the city gate, or we beat you until you wish you'd taken the coin, then we throw you out of the city. Pick one."

Use the City Watch template, mix up the races a bit, and provide two gamemaster characters for each group member. Boost their armor and stats a bit if you feel the need. This group should be a serious challenge for the group if the situation turns to a fight, as it most likely will.

There's no negotiating with these people. The player characters either take the money and leave with their tails tucked between their legs, or fight a group of mercenaries sturdy enough to be a real threat. The mercenaries won't fight to their own deaths. If they get beaten down towards unconsciousness, they'll cut and run. Any prisoners taken won't talk much. Some dwarfs hired them; don't know their Names, just paid good coin to get rid of a nuisance. It's a living. No amount of torture or magic is going to get anything more useful out of them.

Smooth Threat

Read the following aloud:

A flashily dressed elf comes up to you. "Hello!" she says brightly. "I'm Nimlothia." She strums a chord on her lute. "You want to hear something about yourselves? Of course you would. What adepts ever passed up a chance to hear a ballad in which they figure?"

A few breaths later, the mood has changed in a very bad way. The song portrays you as cowardly, inept, and at fault for a half-dozen things that have gone wrong in recent memory.

"Stop!" you say.

Nimlothia grins wickedly. "But you haven't heard the verse yet about your lack of proper hygiene."

Injury doesn't have to be physical. Reputation is a fragile thing. It takes a long time to nurture and grow, and just a few well-placed words to shatter.

It's very simple. Nimlothia, like all minstrels, is in constant need of silver. If paid to write a song and perform it, she does just that, unless, of course, certain conditions are met. What conditions? Well, she gets paid to perform the song, but can forgo performing it if the characters leave town. They've got until tomorrow morning, and then she hits a busy tavern at the noon. No, she can't be bought off. Yes, she works for coin, but she stays bought. No, she can't be threatened. She's got the public ear – do you really want to lend legitimacy to her song? And who cares if it's true?

It's got a chorus people can sing along to, and everybody likes to hear how someone high and mighty is actually low and despicable. It caters to the baser desires of Name-givers, feeling smugly superior to someone who is ostensibly the superior one in the relationship.

So, what'll it be, the mission or your reputation? You know how songs travel. It'll be in the Halls of Throal inside a week. She's already made copies of the transcription to hand out to her fellow minstrels, to make sure of that.

Figuring this one out is up to the players. There is no troubleshooting for this encounter. There may or may not be a decent solution to it, other than trying to resolve the arsons quickly and get a counter-song out there. Weathering the storm may be the only option. Killing or threatening the minstrel will get the player characters in trouble with the watch and further damage their reputations – Nimlothia has friends who already know the song, but have promised not to sing it for anyone unless something happens to her.

BAD GOLD

The following text should be read to the players when the gamemaster is ready to proceed with this encounter.

You've followed up on the rumor of a gang of scroungy lowlifes meeting at the Sodden Dwarf. Sure enough, there they are, trickling into the back room. Must be a half-dozen already there and a handful more on the way in, all looking like they're up to something. Now what to do?

The people in the back room believe they are followers of Chorrolis, acting out their greed and passion for acquisition by stealing as much money as possible, preferably in large chunks. Raggok has deceived them in order to damage the social order of Oshane. By his order, they're not displaying any symbol of Chorrolis, supposedly to keep their order secret. They're currently planning to rob the Selrushing Hurlg Works the night before payday, when the most silver will be on the premises.

The player characters can simply break in and demand the gang's surrender, they can infiltrate the gang and either betray them to the guards or take them down themselves, or they can watch the gang and act when the crime occurs. Whatever route they take, the gang will not go down without a fight. Details of the action are up to the gamemaster, according to the route the group takes and how the players roleplay the situation.

The toughest challenge would be to prove to the gang that they have been deceived. Raggok appeared to the gang leader in the form of a fat merchant, and assured him that he was acting in the best interests of his Passion. Of course, which Passion wasn't specified. Raggok allowed the gang leader to draw the obvious, but wrong, conclusion.

All of the members of the gang have leather armor except for the gang leader, who wears hardened leather. They're armed with daggers and knives, again with the exception of their leader, who has a short sword. None of the gang members is an adept. Use the *buundavim* stats from the

Cast of Characters chapter, p. 115. Augment some of the Defense Ratings and step numbers to represent the gang's affiliation with Raggok. Because of the influence of Raggok, the gang members attack using the Aggressive Attack combat option (**Player's Compendium**, p. 403).

The leader of the gang, Almidtran, is an ork. Among his followers are Umay and Uldri, dwarf brothers; Fedet, another ork; and Nerii, a human woman who'd be attractive if she wasn't so street hardened. The rest are a mix of races and genders in roughly the same proportions.

TROUBLESHOOTING

A fight with the Chancellery guards would be bad. There are a couple of opportunities to avert a fight in the scene. If some hotheaded player character insists on drawing steel or otherwise attacking the guards, hopefully the other group members will stop him. If not, let the character who started the fight get arrested. Bailing him out will give the group something else to worry about and maybe teach a lesson.

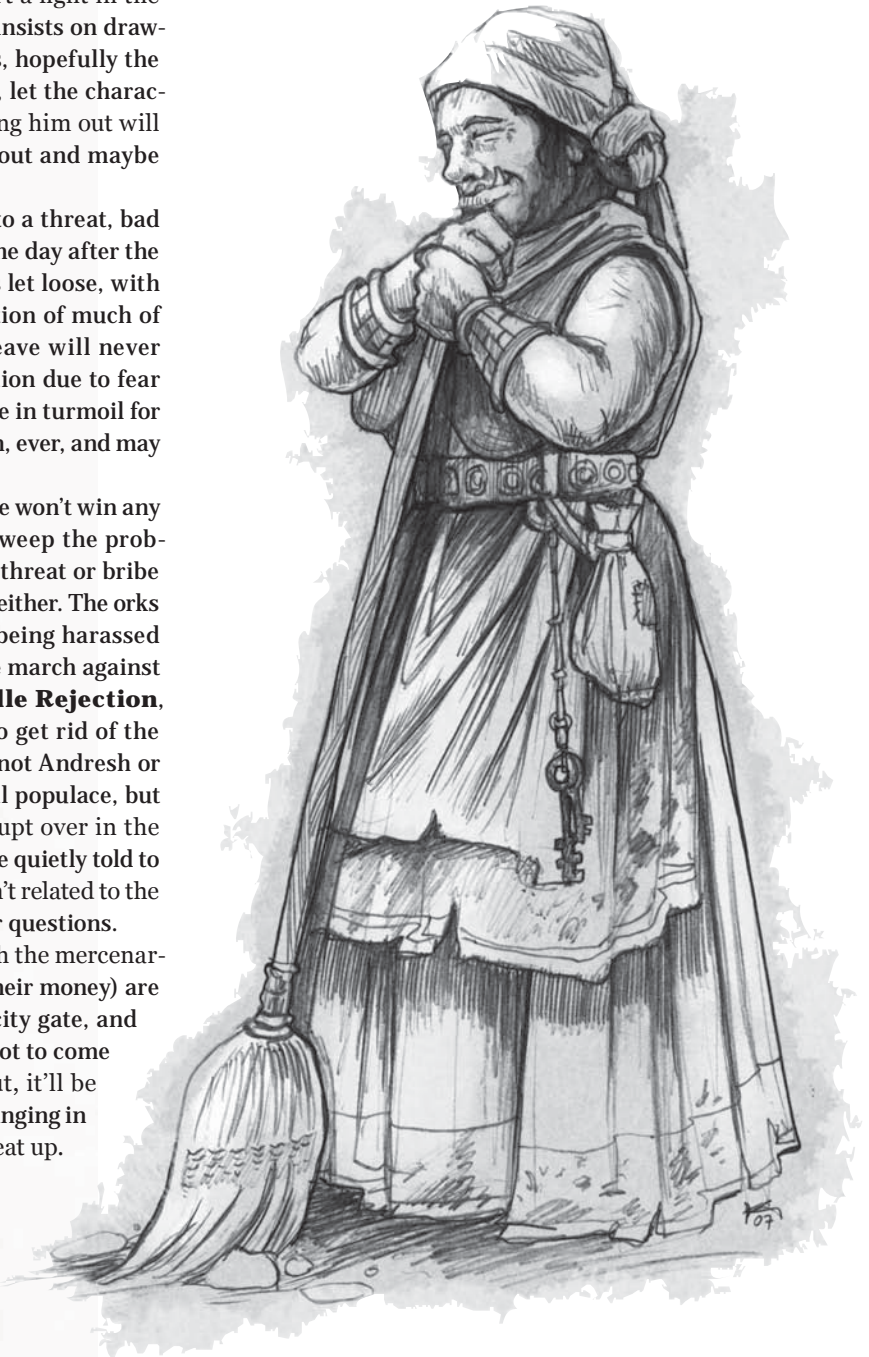
If the group takes a bribe or succumbs to a threat, bad things happen in Oshane. Riots break out the day after the characters leave the city, and the Horror is let loose, with great loss of life and the resulting evacuation of much of Oshane. Many of the Name-givers who leave will never return. All of the Inner Cities lose population due to fear of more Horrors, and the Halls of Throal are in turmoil for weeks. The group will not work for the crown, ever, and may be asked to leave Throal.

Standing up to a threat or refusing a bribe won't win any friends among the factions that want to sweep the problem under the rug. However, revealing the threat or bribe attempt to the orks may not win any friends either. The orks aren't likely to take kindly to their adepts being harassed in such a way. Push up the timetable for the march against the Baron, in **Some People Can't Handle Rejection**, p. 78, by a couple of days. If the attempt to get rid of the player characters is revealed to Klesh, but not Andresh or Moodri, word will not get out to the general populace, but actions will be taken. A fire or two will erupt over in the dwarf dectants. The player characters will be quietly told to not investigate, as it's known those fires aren't related to the case, and no, they shouldn't ask any further questions.

If the player characters lose the fight with the mercenaries, they and their possessions (minus all their money) are loaded on a wagon, hauled to the nearest city gate, and dumped, with a strongly worded warning not to come back. The next time such a fight breaks out, it'll be much more serious, with the mercenaries bringing in friends and fighting to kill instead of just beat up.

If the pack of ruffians in **Bad Gold**, p. 73, can give the group any sort of trouble, then there's something extremely wrong. The guards may be vaguely resentful of the characters doing their job yet again, if they weren't the source of the lead, but considering the neighborhood, not much so. If the characters want to spend their time cleaning up the slums, nobody's really going to object other than the brigands. If one of the gang members actually manages to score a nasty hit on one of the group, feel free to lie about the die rolls if the hit would incapacitate the character and disrupt the storyline.

If the players want to use the brigands as scapegoats for the arsons, let them. Granted, the *buundavim* will probably hang for the crimes, but it would divert attention away from Linn so the group could deal with her quietly.



COLLISION AND COLLUSION

Orkish politics is like cats in an alley. You hear them out there screaming and fighting, and you'd think in the morning you'd find a bunch of dead cats.

Instead, a few months later you've got more cats.

• **Taslin Goratriv, Leader of *Dwarfs for Oshane*** •



This chapter starts with a collection of further investigations the group can pursue at any time during the adventure. In the second part, the group meets a disgruntled group of orks coming back from the city Chancellery. The orks are about to take matters into their own hands. If the player characters don't maneuver carefully, they could have to deal with a riot. In the third part, the assembly speaker chairs a *chav'ao'ros* meeting in which the player characters present their findings thus far. They have a chance to defuse the tension or set off a riot.

OVERVIEW

The first scene is a collection of further investigations the player characters can pursue, and can be played out in pieces scattered throughout the adventure just like the other legwork of the investigation. More can be learned about their quarry if the player characters are willing to do the legwork. The group traces the accelerants. The ceramic flasks from the Wobotu home and the grain warehouse lead to a building with stout locks and a child-sized hole. The liquor bottles from the Traoken home (**Alarums and Excursions**, p. 81) lead to the Yellow Eye, the tavern where Linn's father lives.

In the second scene, the group meets a disgruntled group of orks coming back from the city Chancellery. The orks are about to take matters into their own hands. If the player characters don't maneuver carefully, they could have to deal with a riot.

In the third scene, Klesh chairs a *chav'ao'ros* meeting in which the group presents its findings thus far. The characters have a chance to defuse the tension or set off a riot.

SETTING THE STAGE

This text can be used any time after the discovery of the blue ceramic flask, when the player characters are getting ready to set out for the next phase of their investigation. Read the following aloud:

You've finally got physical evidence, something you can hold in your hand and show to people. If you can trace it to its source, you just might learn who the arsonist is. Should be simple enough, right?

You ought to know by now that nothing in this mess is simple.

THEMES AND IMAGES

This chapter brings disturbing revelations. What looked like a straightforward question turned up answers the group didn't necessarily want.

Unrest among the orks is reaching crisis levels. As the group progresses from one scene to the next in this chapter, the sense of pressure grows. By the time of the *chav'ao'ros* meeting, one spark and a crowd of angry orks will flash into a mob.

The pot's boiling over. The lid can't be kept on any longer. People are on the edge of riot. All this anger is looking for a direction, and if the player characters aren't careful they could become its target.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This section is divided into three scenes: **Little Clues**, below, **Some People Can't Handle Rejection**, p. 78, and **Stage Fright**, p. 78.

LITTLE CLUES

This section covers identifying the blue flasks found at the Wobotu home and the grain warehouse, and tracing the liquor bottles from the Traoken home.

The Blue Flask

A Weaponsmith could make a Half-Magic (9) Test to identify the fluid as coal oil. It's used to light forges and for alchemical lamps when a fierce heat is required beyond that available from animal fat or seed oils. Locating a supplier will take a successful Streetwise (4) Test. See the results below for the length of time it takes to find such a merchant.

Pathetic Result: Obviously this flask was imported from another of the Inner Cities, as the air pollution here is far too bad for the city government to allow a coal-oil processing facility in Oshane.

Poor Result: There doesn't appear to be any such merchant in the city.

Average Result: You are able to locate a merchant, but it takes most of a day.

Good Result: Locating the coal-oil seller takes half a day.

Excellent Result: Finding the coal-oil seller is easy. It only takes two hours, and most of that is spent walking to his place at the edge of the cavern.

Extraordinary Result: The first merchant you talk with, in trying to locate a coal-oil seller, tells you, "He's my cousin. I can get you a nice discount."

Once a coal-oil seller is found, he'll direct the group to Girecheyt Ironbender, telling the player characters that the flask bears the mark of Ironbender's smithy. Apprentices from the smithy come over on a regular basis, about once every two weeks, to have the flasks filled. They never leave them at the shop, but take them back to the smithy straight away.

If the group takes the flask to Girecheyt Ironbender's smithy, read the following aloud:

Girecheyt is a great bear of an ork: huge, barrel chested, and with a lot more body hair than the usual. He wears leather trousers and heavy boots, no shirt, and a rag tied about his head to keep the sweat from his eyes. There's a whacking big hammer stuck through the rope he uses for a belt. He seems annoyed at being called away from the forge and tries to answer your questions as quickly as possible. If the journeyman and apprentices rushing about are anything to go by, business is booming.

He immediately identifies the flask as his and stomps off into the smithy, bellowing for Ritsna, his lead journeyman. Before you can even take a step to follow, he beckons you in, saying, "Well, come on, let's get to the bottom of this."

Ritsna turns out to be a well-muscled ork woman in a leather apron and trousers, who comes up with her fists on her hips. "What?" she demands, matching her mentor's attitude. "I've got three apprentices over there who'll beat the metal against the folds if I don't stand right over them."

Girecheyt waves the bottle at her. "This is ours. How did it end up at the fire at the Wobotu house?"

Ritsna takes the bottle from him. "I don't know, but I'm sure as Dis going to find out."

Ritsna leads the player characters through a rapid investigation. They discover in quick succession that the forge has fewer of the extract flasks than the records indicate and that one of the apprentices has been falsifying the record sheets when he does inventory. She's ready to beat the poor lad within an inch of his life. He swears that he hasn't been stealing the flasks; after all, what would he do with them? But they've been coming up short by one or two the last several inventories, so he just corrected the sheets to match what he found rather than earn extra work for himself by reporting the shortage.

Investigating the Storage Room

An investigation of the storage room will turn up the truth of the matter. A Perception (4) Test should be compared to the Investigation Results below. Any result includes all information available at lower results.



Pathetic Result: You're too distracted by all the apprentices running about and the clutter of the storage room to notice anything. Ritsna has to point out the clues to you, and doesn't seem impressed with your investigative abilities.

Poor Result: It's a storage room. What else is there to say?

Average Result: There's the shelf with the extract flasks. They're disordered, not in neat rows, so it's hard to tell how many there are.

Good Result: You feel a draft from somewhere above you.

Excellent Result: There's a ventilator grille in the wall, right below the ceiling and above the shelves. It's a bit small but might be useful as a way in.

Extraordinary Result: The grille is loose and can easily be removed and shoved back into place. It's too small for

an adult of most of the Name giver races to fit through, but a windling or a child of any race other than troll could manage it easily enough. There's a chunk of granite on the roof that was used to batter open the grille. A rock that size, of that stone, would have to have been brought from a natural cave.

If the damaged grille is found, Ritsna wants to know what the characters make of it. "You think one of our apprentices has been slipping out that way?" Questioning the apprentices, however, seems to deny that possibility. Have the questioning player character make an Interaction (Insight) Test against a Difficulty Number of 8, or a Detect Falsehood (4) Test. On a Good or better result, the character is convinced that the apprentices are telling the truth when they say they didn't realize the grille could be removed, and are too tired to go sneaking out at night anyway.

Talking to the Coal-Oil Seller

The reducing furnace where coal oil is made is located out at the edge of the cavern, due to chimney fees. If the manufacturers didn't vent their fumes directly into a natural chimney leading to the surface, they'd have to have True Air filters, or pipes to run the smoke through water, which would then have to be carted off at great expense.

The merchant, an ork in sooty but well-made clothing, Named Vaynian, can tell the player characters that he supplies a lot of businesses and tradesmen with coal oil. It's used for starting fires, burning in lamps when one needs intense heat, that sort of thing. On being told it is being used for arson, he is shocked, and is happy to direct the group to every one of his two-hundred-and-fifty-seven customers.

Taking the Liquor Bottles to the Yellow Eye

Getting the tavern mark on the bottle identified isn't that hard; a successful Interaction Test is all that is required. Run the characters through a liquor distributor or distillery before sending them on to the tavern if it seems appropriate and won't delay the game. Sending them through an intermediary gives Rozerl (see **Something for Nothing**, p. 69, a chance to crop up at an annoying time, confiscate the evidence, and harass the characters about drinking on the job. The Yellow Eye is a grubby two-story building in a neighborhood of one-story hovels out near the edge of the Fifth Dectant. Its sign features a large, bloodshot yellow eye, and no words. Apparently some of its clientele are less than literate. The proprietor, Rutne the Fat, is a greasy ork of immense girth, dressed in poorly made clothing and a stained apron. He insists the player characters buy a drink before he'll answer any questions at all. If they just want to put down a few silver and not take the drinks, that's fine. Yes, that's his bottle. Where was it found?



When told his bottle was at an arson scene, his eyes grow wide and he shushes the characters, escorting them into a storeroom before he'll talk further about it. He kicks awake a shabby drunk who's sleeping in a pile of rags in the corner and orders him out of the room. Once alone, Rutne will talk further about the bottle, insisting that he's not responsible for what people do with his products. No, he doesn't keep a list of whom he sells bottles to. What barkeep does? If somebody brings him an empty bottle with his mark on it, Rutne pays him the deposit without asking him where he got the bottle. It's not like he numbers each bottle anyway.

If reassured that he's not under suspicion, and helped to remember with a few more silvers, Rutne acknowledges that his stock has been coming up short lately, but he just thought Edred was stealing from him. He was about to kick the man out. Charity only goes so far, you know? Yeah, so the guy lost his wife and kids, all but Linn, who's a creepy little girl. She comes around every so often to spit at him. Even with all the hard luck Edred's had, though, there's only so much you can put up with, you know? No, he doesn't know where to find Linn, but he thinks she lives somewhere out near the wall, because she's always tracking up his floors with gray dust, and has it caked in the folds of her rags. What, you think she...? The group had better reassure Rutne that Linn is not a suspect, or Horror fear will begin spreading through the poor neighborhood the instant the characters leave the tavern.

If the player characters question Edred, they find that he's burned out too much of his brain with bad liquor to remember more than his own Name. He cries if his wife or children are mentioned, clasping a locket around his neck and becoming incoherent for the rest of the scene. No useful information can be gained from him, no matter what methods are used. He's been an alcoholic for too many years.

If Rozerl has confiscated a liquor bottle from any of the arson scenes, have her show up somewhere along the line, browbeat Rutne, and publicly threaten to arrest him for the arsons, and have her bravos take Edred out back for "questioning." She screws up any chance the group has of getting further information from this connection. Her methods are ineffective, leaving her frustrated and ready to take it out on the characters if they don't cough up what they've learned.

If Rozerl shows up, and the group doesn't disavow a connection with her, or worse, publicly cooperates with her without being threatened, the player characters suffer a -1 penalty to further Interaction Tests in the poor end of the dectant. If she noticeably coerces the characters, they gain a +1 bonus in dealing with the poor, but suffer a -1 penalty when dealing with Rozerl.

SOME PEOPLE CAN'T HANDLE REJECTION

When the player characters are traveling through the city after sufficient investigation to suspect a Horror's involvement, they stumble upon an unruly crowd, ready for violence. Read the following aloud:

"As you're heading down the street, you hear a commotion up ahead: many voices raised in angry tones. Through the street traffic comes a large group of orks, all dressed in prosperous fashion and arguing amongst themselves. Finding out what's got them angry shouldn't be hard; they're letting the entire neighborhood know how they feel."

The Chancellery turned away the crowd, comprised of Speakers and Recorders from other Fifth Dectant assemblies, when the crowd requested an audience with the baron. Other attempts to meet with Marruth or Olowey have also been rebuffed, and the orks are tired of *chav'ao'ros* being slow and not producing results. Andresh is with the crowd, leading the argument for taking matters into their own hands and smashing open the chimneys. Other orks in the crowd want to take the dectant apart and slaughter all the Theran sympathizers.

By now, the characters should have an idea that there's a Horror involved. They've got to stop this from turning into a mob. With a few good Interaction Tests, assuming a base Social Defense of 9 and a group of fifteen or twenty people, the group may be able to convince the orks to let the system have one more chance.

Klesh shows up within a round or two. He calls for calm, whereupon Andresh confronts him.

"We've been calm long enough!" Andresh snarls. "We've been through meetings and delegations and all that. We're going to handle this like orks!"

Klesh shakes his head. "Are we no better than the dwarfs say we are?" he asks.

Andresh is having none of this. "You're a fine one to ask that," he retorts. "You're more dwarf than ork yourself."

It's up to the gamemaster whether this sets off Klesh's *gahad*, and how the crowd reacts to such an inflammatory comment. Bear in mind that this is a mob really wanting to happen. The situation should go bad in a nasty way.

If attempts to calm the crowd fail, the group can try to direct the mob against lesser targets, like the baron. Better an insurrection than a Horror on the loose. Taking a stand between the mob and the chimneys would certainly give the orks pause, but might lead to questions that the group doesn't want to answer. Telling a large group of angry orks that there's a Horror just down the street is not a recipe for a quiet afternoon.

STAGE FRIGHT

Klesh has called another *chav'ao'ros* meeting to calm the populace by allowing them to question their hired adepts. When the player characters return to the hall, read the following aloud:

As you come into the hall, the angry voices settle down into a sullen murmuring. Every citizen in the district and many from other assemblies are present.



There's not a seat left, and the standing room is gone too. Dozens of faces turn toward you expectantly, and now you know how a cow feels when the farmer picks it out of the herd for slaughter. Suddenly you're just a collection of meat cuts that hasn't been disassembled yet.

Klesh bangs his gavel and calls for order. Just as you think this might not be so bad, Stangya stands up and levels a hand at you.

"We want to know what's going on here!" he booms. "Is there any truth to the rumors of a Horror?"

Dis's bloody dagger! That sets off a storm of arguments. Andresh wants to know why the ventilation problem hasn't been settled. His oldest child has lung problems. Stangya continues to shout about a Horror. Zorrler blames the dwarfs for everything, and demands that these people act like orks: quit griping and do something. Klesh slams his gavel down so hard it breaks with a crack like thunder, and in the moment of stunned silence that follows, turns to you.

"Well?" he says. Everyone in the room looks to you for the truth of the matter. It's time to earn your silver.

If the Player Characters Talk About Children

One of the logical conclusions that the group could present is that the fires are the work of a child. Saying this will not raise the player characters' popularity, and could start more threads of Horror fear running through the populace. The characters may find themselves trying to head off a lynch mob, especially if they let a Name slip or if someone in the audience brings up the Name of some peculiar and annoying street kid or other (not necessarily Linn).

If the Player Characters Suggest a Dwarf Might be the Culprit

Unless the player characters present a specific dwarf in custody, the angry mood flashes into a full riot, and the audience, now a mob, pours out looking for the nearest guards. Congratulations, you've just touched off a race riot. Now the players get to try and clean up the mess. If someone is already in custody, the group must make Interaction Tests against heroic Difficulty Numbers to keep the orks from lynching the suspect (see the **Gamemastering** chapter of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 87, for more information on Difficulty Numbers). They have no faith in the Throalic justice system.

If the Player Characters Refuse to Specify Names

The player characters can trade on their reputations as adepts and heroes to protect the investigation. By claiming to have a suspect, but refusing to divulge the identity until they're certain of his guilt, they stake their honor on the outcome. The orks will respect that, and may agree to wait for the final outcome of the investigation. It had better be soon, though. If the characters don't produce definitive results in another day or two, they may find themselves the target of a lynch mob.

If the Situation is Going too Smoothly

Rozerl and her bravos barge in, dragging along a couple of bound and gagged scroungy looking humans. Rozerl loudly announces that they've captured the Theran agents responsible for the fires, caught red handed pouring accelerant around the back of the *chav'ao'ros* hall. They just saved

everyone's lives. Rozerl offers to turn the humans over to the orks for immediate justice, since she knows they have no faith in the Throalic court system.

If the players protest: Rozerl confronts the player characters before the crowd.

"Who," she asks the assembly, "are you going to believe, the Chancellery Guard of Oshane, or a bunch of sell swords? After all, we get paid whether or not we solve this crime, but they only get paid if they come up with a solution. Who's more likely to falsify a suspect? Here are your arsonists," she says, pointing her sword at the two humans. "Go ahead, take care of them."

If the players go along with Rozerl's plan: Klesh and Andresh are disappointed in the group. The orks are unhappy with the watch having solved the crime, after being uncooperative and incompetent for so long. The group is paid its expenses thus far, but not a coin more, and asked to leave. The humans are taken out and hanged immediately, with large signs proclaiming them as Theran agents provocateur. If the characters decide to stay and continue investigating, they receive no support of any kind from the *chav'ao'ros* assembly, suffer a penalty of -6 to all Interaction Tests made against the orks, and suffer a -4 penalty to all Interaction Tests made against the watch due to having lost all shreds of official status. A few days later the next fire occurs. The orks receive very little cooperation from the watch, and are publicly reminded of the lynching, with the intent of embarrassing them into silence. Another adept group is contacted to finish the investigation. The player group's reputation suffers whether the characters stayed in the city or not.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If none of the player characters spot the ventilator, Ritsna does. She points it out, then asks what the characters make of it. The player characters haven't seen many windlings since arriving in Oshane. Ritsna can tell them that the city's windlings tend to keep to the Honeycomb, over in the Third Dectant. They can either investigate the windlings or start thinking about children.

If the heroes try to strong arm Rutne in the main room of the bar, or otherwise cause him to loudly object to their questions, several big orks rise up out of their seats.

They sit down if Rutne reassures them, at which point he escorts the group into the back room. If a bar fight starts, play it out, and the player characters will have to get their information somewhere else, but hopefully the players will take the warning to be subtle. If the group gets into direct conflict with Rozerl, see the **Troubleshooting** section of **Something for Nothing**, p. 74.

As for the mob, nobody in the crowd wants bloodshed. If the player characters draw weapons, that'll stop the orks cold. While the shock will halt their physical advance, however, it won't stop their minds from working. There will be questions as to why the heroes are so set on turning the mob aside; questions that could be awkward to answer. Resolution depends on good roleplaying here. If that fails, the players better hope somebody has a talent or spell that'll help clear up the situation, or the player characters will have to deal with Horror fear loose in the populace. There's no easy fix for that; you'll have to play it out. Suggesting that the heroes present their findings at the meeting Klesh has scheduled for that evening after dinner might head off the worst of it.

If the worst happens, and the mob manages to find tools and start smashing open chimneys, the player characters should be standing by and ready to make short work of such a physically weak Horror. The repercussions of a Horror being slain in one of the Inner Cities, on the other hand, will drag the player characters kicking and screaming into Throalic politics. Play that out as a loose end (see **Loose Ends**, p. 98).

There's really only one way out of the *chav'ao'ros* meeting without a serious mess, and that's to stand firm and refuse to compromise an ongoing investigation. Considering that the Adventure Goal is to find and slay the Horror, however, freeing Linn from its hold, any outcome that leaves that goal achievable is acceptable. Part of the story involves the previous race riots in the city. If there's another riot, that'll fit right in.

If a lynch mob forms, and the player characters are unable to deter them from going after Linn or some other likely street kid, or any handy dwarf, have Rozerl and the Chancellery guards show up in force. If they can get in a few shots at the heroes who are no doubt behind all this unrest then so much the better. Turn the mob into a small riot out in front of the hall and have a big fight scene. End it with the player characters being in trouble with the guards, maybe even hauled off for a round of questioning by the Chancellor. The shock of that will end the disturbance.

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

Have a care, apprentice. The only thing in the world both more beautiful and more destructive than fire is a love gone wrong.

• Adarin Velochik, Human Elementalist •



This scene should be run when the player characters are past the halfway point in their investigations. They need to have built up a reputation, for good or ill, with the orks. Use this scene before **The One that Got Away**, p. 84. It can come before or after **Something for Nothing**, p. 69, and **Bad Gold**, p. 73, as the flow of the story requires.

OVERVIEW

Another fire erupts in the middle of the night. Four children are trapped on the third floor of a burning home. The group has an opportunity for heroism in front of an audience. If the player characters succeed in rescuing the children, they can win serious advantages in dealing with the orks of the quadrant. Of course, the possibility of catastrophic failure is also present.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the player characters are resting, read the following aloud:

It's been a rough few days. After the tension of dealing with angry people on all sides of you, exploring a Horror-infested kaer begins to sound like a vacation. Dinner passed with little notice. You can't even remember what it was you ate. You fall into your beds and are asleep within a breath.

But your rest is cruelly interrupted. Shouts in the street awaken you, and you peer blearily out the window to see the glow of flames only two blocks away. A passerby spots you, and calls up: "Fire! The Traoken house is going up!"

You remember that family. You met them at the assembly. They have a lot of children.

Grabbing your boots as you charge out, you thank the Passions you didn't undress before going to bed.

THEMES AND IMAGES

A house fire is a terrifying event. The dominant emotions are confusion and panic. While some level of organization is possible, such as the bucket brigade, most of the crowd mills about like ants from an anthill that's been kicked over. The event carries the possibility of grim tragedy and the opportunity for extremes of bravery.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Two streets away from wherever the group is staying is a three-story home belonging to a prosperous bookseller, Diornn Traoken, and his wife, Winta, who imports leather goods. Three generations of orks live in the sprawling building, including at least a dozen children. Feed this to the players in breathless gasps from the passersby en route. When the group arrives, a bucket brigade has already been set up, passing water from a tank on a cart to the blaze. An Elementalist has been sent for, but is still several blocks away. Flames are leaping out of the first-floor windows on the right side of the home. Some of the family are hurrying out of the building's front door, carrying children and possessions. Others are gathered across the street, being seen to by the healers, or assisting in fighting the fire.

With a great crack, the second story floor collapses over the main entrance, stone and burning wood collapsing in a shower of sparks and a fresh gout of flames. An elderly ork woman screams and points up. "The children!" she cries. "My grandchildren are still up there!"

"By Astendar's mercy!" Klesh exclaims, then turns to the player characters. "Do something!"

GOING AFTER THE CHILDREN

All Perception Tests incur a -4 penalty due to the smoke and flames. Heat Sight is not only useless, but trolls and dwarfs are at an extra -1 penalty to Perception Tests due to the overload. Talents and spells such as Safe Path can be used to find a way through the fire to the children upstairs. Damage from the flames ranges from Small Campfire to House Fire depending on the characters' location within the structure and how long they spend there (see p. 108 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information on **Fire Damage**).

The main room on the first floor is partially engulfed. The kitchen and dining rooms are fully involved. Upstairs, the second floor is suffering breakthroughs from the burning lower level, especially in the very front and back of the building where the ceiling has collapsed, and has a couple of rooms partially involved. The third story is full of smoke but has no active flames yet. That changes rapidly. The group has 4 rounds before the second floor is involved, and another 6 rounds after that before breakthroughs start on the third floor. After a further 5 rounds, the third floor begins to collapse, with the entire structure tumbling in on itself 3 rounds later. Bookshelves are scattered throughout the building, and burst into flames at unpredictable intervals. Any adept next to a shelf when it goes up takes Step 6/D10 fire damage. Physical Armor protects against this damage. When the shelves go up is determined by the gamemaster.

A Climbing (9) Test is required to ascend the remains of the stairs. The second floor is not sound, and collapses under an incautious character. Each round the player characters move forward without checking the floor, they may painfully find out that the floor ahead is badly weakened and collapses easily. A Perception (4) Test may be made to probe the floor ahead for safety, with a Good result needed to determine if it will hold the character. An Excellent result is needed to judge whether or not it will hold anyone else. Treat a Pathetic result as a false positive. Falling damage is doubled due to wreckage landing on the character, and fire may also damage the character at the gamemaster's discretion.

Four ork children remain in the house, up on the third floor. Three of them are in the front right bedroom, with two (ages five and four, equivalent to humans of ten and eight) hiding under the bed and the third (age three, equivalent to a human of six) in a recently emptied wooden toy chest. The fourth, a toddler of barely over a year (two in human terms), is in the back left bedroom, hiding inside the clothes cupboard. The gamemaster may resolve the search for the children however he sees fit, with dramatic description being preferable to dice rolling. Remember that the rooms are filled with smoke.

Clear vision is only possible at floor level. Increase the penalty on the Perception Tests by -1 or -2 if the player characters have taken considerable time getting to the third floor. Heat sight is useful on the third floor until the breakthroughs start, after which the penalties described above are again in force. Successful Interaction (6) Tests or brute force are needed to get the kids out of their hiding places.

Finding the children will be tough; getting out with them may be nearly impossible. By the time the player characters have located the kids, the second floor may be fully engulfed in flames and the third floor threatening to collapse. The neighbors can stretch a blanket to catch the children if the player characters think to toss them to the people below. This won't help the characters much, though, as adults of any race larger than a windling or dwarf are too large for the blanket available. They're going to have to come up with something clever and hope it works the first time.

IN THE AFTERMATH

If the children are rescued, Klesh will hug and neck-bite all of the player characters in a fit of manic glee. He insists on escorting them off to a nearby tavern and buying them each a mug of *hurlg*. After all, they can't investigate the site until the fire is out and the embers have cooled. He has a few too many, rants a bit about the pressures of his office as Speaker and the bind he's in, caught between the citizens and the guards just as badly as the characters, and falls over in a sodden stupor. If any of the player characters have been injured or died in the fire, he'll laud them as great heroes, and accord them the best treatment or funeral the decant can afford.

A couple of members of the Traoken clan stop by before Klesh passes out, at least one with fresh bandages and reeking of burnplant sap, to thank the characters and buy them each a mug as well. Roleplay the effects of too much *hurlg* if any of the group take advantage of the situation and overindulge. Injuries are worth a $+2$ bonus to Interaction Tests made against the populace. A group death is worth a $+8$ bonus. Interaction Tests made against the guards will not be affected by this outcome.

If one or more of the children die in the fire, Klesh breaks down in tears. He gathers up the survivors and they all have a good wail. Afterwards, he's not interested in the group's further plans. "*I'll be in the tavern down the street,*" he says. "*If there's anything I can do for you there, let me know.*" If the player characters rescued any of the children, especially if they were injured or a group member died in the process, they'll be invited along for the wake. Once there, Klesh drinks himself senseless, delivering the same rant as above if anyone goes

If the Group has an Elementalist

Using a summoned water elemental's Engulf power against the structure could put out the fire in sections. The elemental takes fire damage every time it engulfs the flames. The decant's Elementalist arrives when the second floor is fully involved. He spends one round conjuring, and sends his elemental to attack the fire on the next round. He can send another elemental two rounds later if there's a need for it.

to see him. The group suffers a -4 penalty to Interaction Tests made against the populace, nullified if any members of the group were injured or killed in the attempt. The player characters gain a +1 bonus for injuries and a +4 bonus for a death. Interaction Tests made against the guards are at a -3 penalty regardless of group injury or fatality.

INVESTIGATING THE SCENE

Finding clues requires a successful Perception (7) Test. Interviewing the Traokens about the fire is difficult, requiring at least one successful Interaction (11) Test. There may not be much point to an interview; the Traokens don't know much, as they were asleep when the conflagration broke out. Canvassing the neighborhood is pointless, as everyone else was asleep as well, and there were no members of the City Watch on the block, but as with the investigation of the Daamehok home in **Poking Through The Rubble**, p. 52, failing to do so results in a -1 penalty to Interaction Tests during the investigation.

Pathetic Result: It must have been a professional arsonist. Maybe the family has enemies. You doubt this fire is connected with the case you're working.

Poor Result: Wow, this was a bad one. The whole place is trashed.

Average Result: The fire started in the central hallway and moved outward from there. One of the children heard someone moving around downstairs, but assumed it was one of the adults.

Good Result: From the burn marks, you see that a lot of accelerant was dumped in the hallway, then a trail of it was laid from the hall back into the kitchen. As in the Tivze home, the trash closet door is hanging open. Winta swears she latched it before going to bed.

Excellent Result: There are three distilled liquor bottles, damaged by the fire, stashed under the remains of the stairs. This is a lot more accelerant and a different methodology than has been used in any previous fire. The tavern marks on the bottles are still legible.

Extraordinary Result: Among the looping burn marks are the orkish words *DIE BAD DADDYS, NOT ALONE ANYMORE*, and *MY BEST FRIEND*.

A note should be made of the fate of the two humans from **Stage Fright**, p. 78. If they were taken away to the magistrate, or hanged, or otherwise rendered incapable of setting this fire, somebody should mention it. Stangya could make a point of it if nobody in the group does, using the fact to bolster his argument that the guards are hiding the real arsonist for some reason.

TROUBLESHOOTING

It would be nice if all the kids were rescued, but sometimes tragedies happen. If the player characters don't find all the kids before the building goes, they'll have a much stronger reason to resolve the situation, and another mess to handle. Guilt, even though nobody in the crowd faults them for a partially successful rescue, is a powerful motivator. Put the players through the emotional wringer. Consider this an opportunity for intense roleplaying.

If the player characters are trapped, however, that's another problem entirely. If they die in the house fire, the adventure is over. Have the dectant Elementalist summon a water elemental to quench the flames, and an air or earth elemental to help the characters escape. Get them out right before the building collapses for dramatic effect. If they stayed until their own deaths were imminent, and had to be hauled out by someone else, that helps take some of the curse off a partial success.

If the player characters won't go into the building, remind them via the crowd's reactions that they're supposed to be heroes. Send the kids' mother in to provide extra motivation. If the characters still won't attempt a rescue, Klesh fires them on the spot. He rants about their lack of heroism, their lack of success in the investigation, and the damage they've done to his own reputation as a judge of character. He forms the focus of a riot that sweeps out into the neighborhood, attacking the player characters and the guards, and going after the chimneys. See **Panic in the Streets**, p. 92.

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

I've heard it said that the truth will set you free. That's a load of stable sweepings. The truth binds you more closely to the situation. Once you know the truth, you can never be free of it.

• Davresh Kegamian, Questor of Mynbruje •



The events in this chapter take place after most of the investigation has been completed, when the players know what they're looking for in terms of a suspect. Play it out when the group is ready to confront the real arsonist and deal with the true nature of the crimes.

OVERVIEW

The player characters go to the edge of the cavern to check out the rock dust and stones found at the arson scenes. They spot a little girl playing in the rubble—Linnhail Zerefanck, the arsonist. Odds are she gets away from them, knowing the territory better than do the characters, and is able to get help from Vishquagorch if pursued or cornered. In this case, additional legwork will be required, and there will be opportunities for further side issues. If the group captures her, the nature of the adventure will change, going from investigation to containment and resolution. Either way, the group has a chance to find out about the Horror.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the characters travel to the edge of the dectant, read the following aloud:

There's only one place near the fires where that sort of stone would be found: out at the edge of the dectant, along the cavern wall. You hike out through progressively less wealthy neighborhoods, until you're passing through the outer ring of slums. There are rows of identical one-story homes, most in need of repair; children in threadbare clothing playing in the streets; and the odors of cheap food and cheaper

fuel. It's depressing, but typical of life in a large city. The poor are always with us.

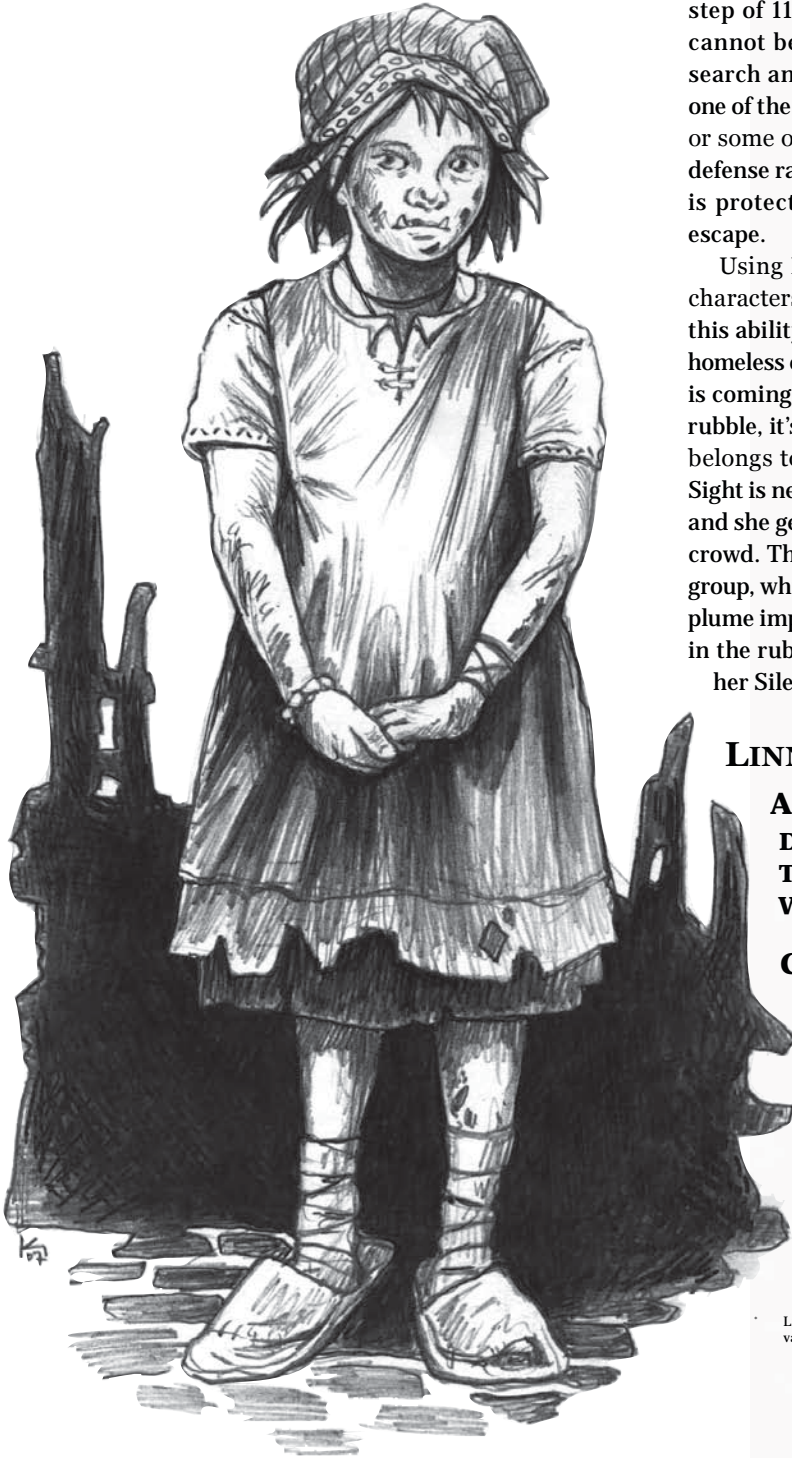
Finally, you pass beyond even the poorest of hovels and into the undeveloped area at the edge of the cavern. You know that in some parts of the Inner Cities the buildings go right up to the wall, but not in this part of Oshane. The rock strata are unstable here, prone to cracking, and nobody wanted to build where small rocks would patter off his roof at odd hours. There's a good two city blocks of rubble between the last habitation and the wall proper, with the fallen stones growing larger the closer you get to the wall. The roof mud is particularly bad here, where it's oozed down the curve of the cave ceiling, and everything is slick and bad smelling. Getting past the first part will be a casual stroll over gravel. If you want a look at the farthest section, be prepared to do some serious climbing over the jumbled boulders. Hope you brought torches or lanterns; the last streetlight was back in the slums.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Flitting shadows and half-seen visions in the dark haunt this scene. The truth is elusive, hard to pin down, and uncomfortable when found. The player characters must come face to face with the nature of corruption, with what it is that Horrors actually do. Repulsion and disgust are natural reactions. A strong sense of pathos should also ring through the encounter, though, as the corrupted Name-giver is a child. Loss of innocence is tragic under the best of circumstances. What this child has suffered is beyond the boundaries of sanity. It should haunt the player characters for months afterwards.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Playing in the rubble is the arsonist. Linnhail Zerefanck is the only survivor of a difficult birth that killed her brothers, her sister, and her mother. Linn's father, Edred, took to drinking heavily after his wife's death, and now sweeps up at the Yellow Eye for room and board. Linn has been left to her own devices since she was old enough to halfway care for herself, becoming one of the small army of street kids that roam the fringes of the dectant. Being an only child made her an outcast. Being depressed about it made her vulnerable. She came within range of Vishquagorch one day, and the rest is history.



CHASING THE GIRL

While poking around in the rubble, the player characters can make Perception (8) Tests to spot Linn playing nearby. If they see her, she flees with an Initiative step of 8/2D6 and a Movement rate of 46/92. She can spend Vishquagorch's Karma on Avoid Blow Tests and Resist Taunt Tests, using the Karma Boost the Horror has given her, but the players don't need to know that. Just tell them that for a little girl, she moves like an Archer using Sprint. Linn also knows the area extremely well and will attempt to go to ground as soon as she's out of sight of the group.

To find her once she's hidden, have the character doing the hunting make a Perception (13) Test (Linn's Silent Walk step of 11 + 2 bonus; see Linn's **Commentary**). If Linn cannot be found, then she has slipped away during the search and further probing of the area will be useless. If one of the player characters uses Direction Arrow, Tracking or some other locating talent to find her, use the Horror's defense ratings instead of the girl's. Remember, the Horror is protecting her, as she represents its best chance for escape.

Using Heat Sight to find Linn and track her gives the characters a +3 bonus to finding her, but she knows about this ability, and will dart through a community of a dozen homeless orks to disguise her trail, screaming that the watch is coming. With a dozen other orks running around in the rubble, it's going to be a lot harder to tell which heat plume belongs to Linn, so the +3 bonus to finding her via Heat Sight is negated as long as she remains in the crowd of orks, and she gets a +3 bonus to her Dexterity step to hide in the crowd. There are a couple of younger orks in the homeless group, which makes trying to differentiate by size of the heat plume impossible. With so many other orks moving around in the rubble making noise, Linn also gains a +3 bonus to her Silent Walk skill to silently leave the area.

LINNHAIL ZEREFANCK

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10

Toughness (8): 4/D6

Willpower (5): 3/D4

Strength (10): 5/D8

Perception (9): 4/D6

Charisma (6): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 **Initiative:** 6/D10

Spell Defense: 6 **Physical Armor:** 0

Social Defense: 4 **Mystic Armor:** 0

Death Rating: 28 **Recovery Tests:** 2

Wound Threshold: 7

Knockdown: 5/D8

Unconsciousness Rating: 19

Combat Movement: 32 (46)*

Full Movement: 64 (92)*

Linnhail's Movement rates have been increased by Vishquagorch to the values in parentheses.

THE HORROR'S INFLUENCE

If Linn is captured, consider how far the adventure has progressed in determining her behavior. Three options are provided for various stages of her corruption.

Stage 1: Marked Linn

This stage occurs well before **Alarums and Excursions** (see p. 81), and preferably before all the arson scenes are investigated. Use this option if the group is really on the ball. When captured, Linn is a quiet, spooky little girl given to fits of panicky crying and digging at her head with her fingernails. She doesn't respond to questioning very well, gasping out disconnected words like "wall" and "words" and "burn" in Oshane-accented Throalic between hiccups and wails. Bringing up her father's Name is a bad idea. She tries to crawl into the nearest small, enclosed space, screaming hysterically and shielding her head with her arms. Getting her Name out of her is tough; getting the Name of her tormentor is impossible. She can't even write the entire Name of the Horror without a terrific struggle, which is why she's been leaving pieces of it at the arson scenes. If left unguarded even for a second, she tries to escape, spending Karma on some of her actions if it looks like she has a chance to get away and hide. If restrained, she bites and scratches, but does not spend Karma on combat actions.

Stage 2: Tainted Linn

This stage occurs around the time of **Alarums and Excursions** (see p. 81). When captured, Linn goes catatonic: completely limp and unresponsive. A slight odor of cheap booze rises above the unwashed body smell. She refuses to cooperate in even the slightest way with the characters. If physically released, she sits down right where she is and begins rocking steadily, never taking her attention off her captors. She fixes her questioners with a peculiar stare, her head tilted to one side with hair falling across one eye, as if she doesn't understand the language they're speaking and isn't sure whether or not they're edible. When the fires are discussed in her presence, a slow, creepy smile spreads across her face, never quite touching her eyes. If she's confronted with Vessna's death, she tells the group "her daddy'll never hurt her," speaking in heavily accented Throalic mixed with orkish, but refuses to say more. If anyone mentions the Name of her father or the Horror, Linn goes

berserk, scratching, biting, and doing her best to make the characters let go of her. She fights to disengage and retreat, spending Karma on actions most likely to get her away from the group.

Stage 3: Corrupted Linn

This stage occurs after **Alarums and Excursions** (see p. 81), before or after **Fire at the Yellow Eye** (see p. 91). If approached, Linn talks to the group briefly before running away. Her eyes are wide and glassy, and a fanatical, feral grin permanently bares her teeth. She smells more of cheap liquor than of unwashed ork. In orkish (she flatly refuses to understand Throalic) she forthrightly admits setting the fires, saying that her best friend told her how. The bad daddies will all have to go away soon, and nobody will ever hurt any more. She's not alone anymore. She's got magic of her own now, and the player characters better not mess with her. Fire is good. Fire makes her warm. Fire sends the babies away so the bad daddies can't hurt them. Fire sends the bad daddies away so they can't hurt anybody else. She's mad at herself 'cause it took her so long to figure it out. She's mad at herself for being stupid. Burn the bad daddies and she can have a home all to herself and her best friend. Who's her best friend? She smiles shyly, a child about to share a secret. She looks down, and pulls her shirt open to reveal the Name Vishquagorch seared into the skin of her left upper chest. The brand is a physical link to the Horror. If Hrak Gron is mentioned, she spits to the disrespectful side. What good is a dead woman, she asks, to the living? Remembering dead people doesn't make things better. Making bad people dead makes things better. When captured, Linn fights like a wildcat, spending Karma on every combat action and on initiative, doing her best to savagely mutilate the characters with no regard whatsoever for herself. If she's gravely wounded, Vishquagorch will shift her damage to itself then spend Recovery Tests to blow it off. After all, she's the Horror's only link to the world right now. It has to protect her. She'll break off and run away after that, though, because she has to set more fires. She has to burn all the bad daddies. Linn carries a bottle or two of accelerants, and will set fires or splash the characters, or both, if needed to cover her retreat. If finally brought down, she'll have to be bound in order to restrain her. Given the slightest chance, she'll injure the characters and try to escape.

Skills

Artisan:

Acting (2): 5/D8

Knowledge:

Games of Chance (2): 6/D10

General:

Avoid Blow (2): 8/2D6

Climbing (2): 8/2D6

Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6

Read and Write Language (1): 5/D8

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Resist Taunt (2): 8/2D6

Silent Walk (2): 8/2D6

Speak Language (2): 6/D10

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Streetwise (2): 8/2D6

Surprise Strike (2): 7/D12

Throwing Weapons (2): 8/2D6

Unarmed Combat (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

2 × Bottles of *Hurlg*

2 × Flasks of Oil

Flint and Steel

Peasant's Garb

2 × Large Sacks

2 × Torches

Trail Rations (1 week)

Waterskin

Loot

None

Legend Points

85 Legend Points

Notes

Linnhail Zerefanck possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

Commentary

Add +2 to Linn's Defense Ratings and step numbers for Marked Linn; add +3 to Linn's Defense Ratings and step numbers for Tainted Linn; add +4 to Linn's Defense Ratings and step numbers for Corrupted Linn.

IDENTIFYING LINN

Getting Linn identified by the residents of the area requires them to make at least one successful Interaction (8) Test. Use the following information for result levels. As usual, any level of success includes information available at lesser result levels.

Pathetic Result: Go bother someone else. I barely have enough time for my own kids.

Poor Result: Never saw her before. Feed her and clean her up and somebody else might recognize her.

Average Result: Don't remember her Name; begins with an L though.

Good Result: Linn something or other. Never see her with any other kids. Don't think she's got any family to speak of. I think her father's the drunk that sweeps up at the corner tavern.

Excellent Result: She's an only child, did you know? It was a difficult birthing and her siblings all died.

Extraordinary Result: Her mother died in the birthing as well. After that, poor Edred took to drink. Her relatives tried to raise her as best they could, but being an only child, well, it's unnatural, and no small wonder nobody wanted much to do with her. I've seen her going off into the rubble almost every day for the past few years, almost as soon as she could walk.

FINDING LINN'S HIDEOUT

Examining the area where Linn was found requires a Perception (8) Test.

Pathetic: The adept stubs his toe and is too busy cursing about it to notice anything.

Poor: The rock here is cracked and crumbling, just like the Name-givers in the city said it was.

Average: There's a faint smell of damp stone, but the adept can't quite locate where it's coming from.

Good: The investigating character notices a crack in the wall nearby. There's a faint whiff of cool air coming from it.

Excellent: There's a bad feeling about the place. Something here is very wrong. The character got the same feeling at the arson scenes, especially the later ones.

Extraordinary: The orkish sigils *VISHQUAGORCH* are seen scratched into the rock near the crack in small, childish writing.

Examining the area astrally requires a successful Astral Sensing Test against the Horror's Spell Defense to spot the lurking monster in the crack in the wall. Digging it out is another matter entirely, see **Down the Chimney**, p. 94, for details of the chimney and the Horror's situation.

Vishquagorch will try to use Linn to distract the player characters away from the task. The Horror wants to be let out of the chimney. It does not want adepts coming into the chimney after it. If Linn has been captured, she throws a fit, screaming and kicking and biting, and generally being too much of a handful for the player characters to pay attention to anything else. If Linn has not been captured, she pops up out of her hiding place, throws a stone at the player characters, calls them something horrid in *Or'zet*, and runs away.

If the player characters investigate further, they can find Linn's hiding place in the jumbled rocks on a successful Perception (8) Test. Her hideout is a hollow formed by three massive blocks of stone that fell against each other,

leaving a crack wide enough for a small child to wiggle through. Inside the hollow are a pile of rags she uses as a bed, two blue ceramic flasks half full of accelerants, a couple of bottles of cheap liquor stolen from the Yellow Eye (one of them partially consumed), a dried-out crust of bread, and a badly mutilated ragdoll.

Scrawled across the rock walls are layers of graffiti. The oldest writings are in orkish and read *WHY?, ALONE,* and *MOMMY.* Newer writings in a firmer, clearer hand are in Throalic and read *HE'S IN THE WALL, VISHQUAGORCH,* and *HELP ME.* In larger, broader strokes, the newest writings overlap the older in many places, proclaiming in orkish *THEY'LL ALL PAY, WON'T EVER BE ALONE AGAIN, DIE ALL BAD DADDYS,* and *FIRE.*

What to Do With Linn Once Captured

If the orks find out that Linn has been captured before the Horror is killed, they'll turn into a lynch mob. Go to **Panic in the Streets**, p. 92.

If Linn is presented after the Horror is killed, she'll be an object of pity instead of hate. She ends up at a temple of Garlen, although the questors don't hold out much hope for her.

Contacting Officer of the Court Azakis can result in Linn being smuggled out of Oshane, to be tended to by crown agents. Whether

that involves healing or an unmarked grave depends on whether or not the Horror is dead when she's handed over.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the player characters spot the Horror and manage to somehow dig it out of the wall, this is not a problem. Slaying the Horror or realizing that Linn is Horror-marked at this point may very well head off a lot of further trouble and make the group look a lot more professional. Managing to close out the situation quietly will please Klesh to no end. If the characters end the adventure here, go ahead and give them the full Legend Point awards for the adventure. You can always reach into the **Loose Ends** section, p. 98, to continue play in Oshane.

Totally missing Linn could lead to frustration on the part of the players. Don't tell them the numbers for the Perception Tests. That allows you to fudge the situation if they all blow the dice rolls. Give them a brief glimpse of Linn somewhere off in the distance, and let them roll again after a round or two of running in that direction. The same applies for finding evidence of the Horror. If the players desperately need a clue, let them have it. Just tell them that they made the dice roll and give them the information you want them to have.



TAKIN' IT TO THE STREETS

Did you ever have the feeling that you'd just lost control of a situation that you didn't really have a grasp of in the first place?

• Leavy, Troll Wizard •



This chapter has scenes that may or may not be needed, depending on how the adventure is going. Each can be dropped into the adventure where appropriate. They do not need to be run in the order presented. The customary sections of **Setting the Stage**, **Themes and Images**, **Behind the Scenes**, and **Troubleshooting** are provided with each scene, as the scenes require individual set-up.

In the first scene, **Legwork**, the group chases down further leads regarding Linn. Play this out if the group members decide to do more background investigation before going after Linn herself. The second scene, **Fire at the Yellow Eye**, p. 91, takes place at the tavern where Linn's father sleeps, and where the bottles at the Traoken home came from. This scene can be dropped in whenever the group goes to the tavern. If the player characters don't go there, they should hear about a fire in which an elderly drunk died.

In the third scene, **Panic in the Streets**, p. 92, a riot erupts as the result of the group either mishandling the situation or not moving quickly enough. The group has one last chance to try to set things right, but it's going to be an uphill battle.

LEGWORK

This scene only takes place if the player characters spot Linn but lose her. If they've identified her, skip through the first part of this scene and go straight to the in-depth information. The characters have to interview the street kids and homeless people to find out about Linn. They're going to meet with limited success. Even if they can get people to talk, nobody knows where Linn is squatting, and besides, she's creepy and the kids don't like to associate with her.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following text assumes that the characters have lost track of Linn and are looking for her. The gamemaster should alter the text to suit the situation.

So how to find out about a street kid? The obvious method is to talk to other street kids, and the poor and homeless in general. So off you go, into the poor section of the dectant, hoping the kid is from this neighborhood and not all the way across the city. That'd be just your luck, wouldn't it?

People get out of your way so fast and give you such bad looks that you begin to wonder if your body odor is offending them. Approaching these folks is not going to be easy.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The poor of the neighborhood, nearly without hope, contrast strongly with the comparably well-to-do adventurers. The group has traveled. Most of these people have never left their neighborhood. It's almost like dealing with a small village out in the plains, being met with suspicion and expectations of trouble, except that these people have at least seen others since the Scourge. The possibility of change that the player characters represent is grasped at like a drowning victim clutching at a possible rescuer.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Initially, the player characters should be met with suspicion. After all, they're strangers to the neighborhood, and strangers usually mean trouble, especially ones walking around armed. The guards are definitely not seen as a friendly presence here. Once the player characters have

revealed themselves as adepts, however, treat them as having Legendary Status one level higher than their actual level, due to the reverence with which adepts are regarded by the poor and downtrodden. Besiege them with requests for help, preferably of a sort that they can't possibly give. The contrast between the characters' lives and the plight of the urban poor should be brought out as sharply as possible. Remember Rix Wobotu? His situation wasn't nearly as bad as these folks. At least there was money coming in, if not much. Typical encounters and requests include:

- A young woman missing the lower part of her left leg and scarred badly by old burns asks the player characters if they can heal her face or put an illusion on her so she can find a mate.
- A small child suffering from half a dozen dietary deficiencies that have left his legs twisted and his body covered in open sores asks the player characters if they can find a mommy for him.
- An old and filthy drunk tells a rambling and disjointed tale of having been an adventurer himself until he came into conflict with the worldview of his Discipline. He lost his abilities in a Talent Crisis and was never able to resolve it. Could the group spare some silver for a fellow adventurer down on his luck?
- Two human women approach from opposite sides, both claiming injustice in a civil matter. They talk at the same time, calling each other bad names and hurling imprecations while telling of how they both ended up married to the same man, who traveled regularly between Oshane and Bethabal on business. When they discovered the truth, and took the matter to the civil authorities, their husband was conscripted into the Arm of Throal and sent off into dangerous territory. All of his property was confiscated, leaving both of his wives homeless and poverty stricken. Both blame the other for exposing the situation and ruining their lives. The truth is up to the gamemaster, but it's recommended that there be no clear solution. Both women are exaggerating the situation and avoiding their own parts in the mess they're in.
- An elderly ork wanders up to the group and asks them if they can help find his spouse, or children, or mother. The ork has lost too much memory to old age to be properly coherent, and wanders off again if the player characters don't pay continuous attention. Finding a relative to take care of him will require some serious time, as the ork has wandered very far from his home.

Investigating Linn

Getting information on Linn is going to require good roleplaying and judicious use of talents. First Impression could net the group some information, as could use of Detect Falsehood, Emotion Song, and Winning Smile. Care should be taken with Bribery or Interrogation skills, as the inhabitants tell the group anything they think the player

characters want to hear if too much money is flashed or too much pressure is applied. The gamemaster should use judgment in handing out the information.

The same information is available as listed in **The One that Got Away**, p. 84. This is another chance for the group to find out some important things about the arsonist. Additionally, the group can discover the following:

- Linn started talking to herself about six months ago, and got a lot stranger about the same time. She started asking people what it would be like to be dead, why people died, and what happened to you when you died. Nobody brought up Horror influence at the time. The possibility of such, this deep into Throal, is something that everyone wants to avoid considering. If the player characters bring it up, they could easily start fear racing through the populace, culminating in a riot and a mass emigration from Oshane.
- Because of the circumstances surrounding her birth, and her being an only child as a result, Linn is considered to be bad luck. The group should consider the possibility of this belief incorporating itself into her pattern.
- Linn's mother was ill during the last part of her pregnancy. She had savage headaches, saw spots, and suffered swelling all over. Edred couldn't afford to have a midwife come visit, and Taorinn was too ill to travel to go and see the midwife. When the birthing came, Edred had to go and beg the local midwife to come, and by the time the woman arrived, the birthing was already too difficult. Taorinn had gone into convulsions, and of the four babies only Linn could be saved. It was all the neighbors could do to keep Edred from slaughtering the midwife out of grief and rage.

Other Investigations

Other information is available that sends the players down dead ends and tangents. What would an investigation be without a few false clues? These don't have to be handed out during this scene. The gamemaster may use them whenever the group needs some misdirection.

- There's a small group of unpleasant-looking people that have been meeting regularly in the back room of the Sodden Dwarf, a disreputable drinking house in the poor outskirts of the dectant. At least two of them have been recognized as career criminals, *buundavim* who are surely up to no good. If the player characters follow up on this lead, send them to **Bad Gold** (p. 73).
- There was another suspicious fire in the poor area that didn't get investigated by the guards, or even reported to the authorities. It turns out to be an abandoned building set ablaze by a couple of homeless alcoholics who were trying to build a campfire.
- The proprietor of the tavern where the group is staying, or Moodri, makes a fuss about someone having painted *BURN OSHANE BURN* on the back wall. He believes

it's because of the group's presence. The graffiti is about the height of the arm's reach of an adult dwarf, which the gamemaster character points out if nobody in the group notices. There's not enough evidence to find the culprit, but working on it could keep the group running in circles for quite a while.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Taking a bad approach and offending the people they're trying to interview could leave the player characters without the information they need to solve the mystery. After they've insulted someone from whom they could have gotten the information for free, have a street person shuffle up to them and offer to sell them the information for a bottle of wine or a few silver pieces. If the player characters apply too much pressure or pay too heavily (more than a handful of silver pieces), give them some of the bad leads above and run them around the city. Eventually they'll get the hint and adjust their methods.

FIRE AT THE YELLOW EYE

Linn sets her father on fire while he's passed out drunk, burning down the tavern in the process. She sticks around to watch this one, more interested in seeing her father go up in flames than escaping detection.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following text informs the characters about the fire in the tavern. The gamemaster should alter the text to suit the situation.

By now, you're used to watching the rooftops for signs of flame, and you understand that when people pass you in the street with their noses in the air, they're not being arrogant, they're sniffing for smoke. So it is that you spot the newest blaze down in the poor end of the decant before the shouts of "fire" reach you. What a way to start the morning.

You make haste out to the slums, joined by a throng of volunteers and curious onlookers. Finding the building is easy enough. Not only is it on fire, with flames leaping out all the windows and a massive plume of smoke going up into the haze, it's the only two-story building for a couple of blocks. Once upon a time, this was a cheap tavern, a place for the poor to get a mug of watered beer or a shot of rotgut liquor. Now it's a pyre. The bucket brigade is concentrating on putting out the flying sparks, to prevent the blaze from spreading. Across the street, a portly ork in a stained and greasy barkeep's apron is down on his knees, loudly beseeching Chorrolis for an explanation of this tragedy.

And from somewhere nearby, you hear a high, manic giggle...

THEMES AND IMAGES

This scene should feel surreal, as if the player characters are viewing the world through a badly made window that distorts the familiar. The characters are seeing from a peculiar angle that renders the world nearly unrecognizable. They should stay somewhat off-balance throughout the scene. Horrors and monstrous creatures are one thing. Even a Horror-crazed madman is within the realm of experience of an adept. A little girl who's been corrupted by a Horror and driven thoroughly mad is something else again. The player characters should feel torn between pity and loathing; between being sorry for Linn for what has happened to her, and rage for the deaths she has caused. What was once a cute puppy has become a rabid dog, threatening everything around it. But can the characters bring themselves to attack a child, even one who has been corrupted by a Horror?

BEHIND THE SCENES

A little girl gleefully clapping her hands and laughing merrily at the spectacle of a burning building ought to upset the players. Linn's finally gone over the edge. Her corruption by Vishquagorch is complete. She no longer resists the Horror's urgings, and in fact has come to enjoy setting fires. This one was mostly her idea. Sneaking into the Yellow Eye for another load of booze, since her accelerant supply is getting low, she found her father sleeping off his previous night's pay in the storage room. She poured a bottle of cheap booze over him and set him afire. The pain roused him, and he started screaming for help and trying to put out the flames, so Linn doused him with more liquor and splashed some around the room, then threw the empty bottle at the barkeep to distract him while she made her escape.

There's nothing that can be done for the Yellow Eye or for Edred. Within a few minutes, the building burns itself out, collapsing with a loud crash, and the bucket brigade finishes putting out the stray sparks. A small crowd has gathered, mostly regulars at the tavern. They surround the barkeep to commiserate. No Elementalist shows up; this is too poor a neighborhood to merit magical assistance. If any of the player characters is an Elementalist, all he can do is to make the job of the brigade easier, preventing the fire from spreading. The Eye is a total loss.

Anyone making a successful Perception (6) Test can spot Linn when they hear her giggle. She's across the street, standing at the front of the crowd of onlookers. See **Corrupted Linn**, p. 86, for pursuit rules. If the player characters capture her at this point, they're going to have to deal with an ork girl who's flatly turned evil, and fights as dirty as possible with no regard for her own safety whatsoever. Capturing her without spreading fear of Horrors is going to be almost impossible. On the other hand, if this scene occurs, then the situation is bordering on being out of control anyway.

Investigating the wreckage of the Eye does not require any Action Tests; what can be found is obvious. Edred's

body is in the doorway between the storeroom and the main room. He's charred down to the size of a large dog and curled up tight. See the visit to the mortician in **Poking Through the Rubble**, p. 52, for more description if you need it. Clutched in the corpse's right hand is a cheap locket, its hinges and clasp partially melted. Prying it open without destroying it requires a Dexterity (5) Test. Inside is a miniature portrait of a young ork woman, and the inscription "All My Love, Taorinn." The group should recognize the Name as that of Edred's wife.

TROUBLESHOOTING

There's not much that can go wrong here, considering that this scene is the culmination of several things going wrong with the adventure. If the player characters take off after Linn and do not investigate the fire scene, they don't miss anything they really need. If they don't spot her in the crowd, or she gets away, the barkeep can give a pretty good description of her, having recognized her as Edred's daughter. He can also give them the information in **Little Clues**, p. 76, if the characters don't already have it. Casting an Experience Death spell on Edred would also provide the same information, albeit at a much greater cost.

If word of the Horror gets out to the crowd, go straight to **Panic in the Streets**, below. The crowd that goes out to the chimneys has serious weapons, not just tools, and is firmly convinced that they can win against Vishquagorch through sheer numbers.

PANIC IN THE STREETS

The group has to head off a potential riot when an angry mob decides to open the chimneys, preferably without touching off a panic by revealing that there's a Horror involved.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following text assumes that the characters spot the mob marching towards the Chancellery. The gamemaster should alter the text to suit the situation.

You really would have liked for this to come down to a quiet ending: to tell the orks what their problem is, collect your silver, and walk away. But no.

You've got a full-scale riot on your hands. They've got shovels and rakes and implements of destruction, and they're heading for the Chancellery. And the poor quarter. And the chimneys at the edge of the decant.

Which do you try to stop?

THEMES AND IMAGES

There should be a feeling as of wagons out of control, dams bursting, and volcanoes erupting. The pressure has

built for far too long, and the *gahad* of the populace is aroused. The player characters are out of their depth, and should feel like it. There are too many things going on all at once for them to get a handle on everything. Phrases like "sweeping back the tide" and "holding back the dawn," and words like "tsunami" and "avalanche," would be useful for describing the situation.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This scene occurs only if the players have failed to solve the mystery and resolve the situation earlier. Several of the preceding scenes potentially end in riot. This is where you go if that occurs.

Give the player characters several distractions. Riots are not single minded. They're seething masses of rage that strike out in all directions. Not all of the people involved head directly for one of the three objectives listed above. Many take advantage of the opportunity to vent their *gahad*. Use a few of the following suggested encounters as the characters try to stem the tide. Not all of these encounters occur. Use the sequences appropriate to the way your campaign has developed.

- A guard unit is getting stomped. There are a half-dozen armed and armored dwarfs, but there are two dozen angry orks with whatever they could pick up: forge tools, brooms, spare lumber, broken bottles, and the like. Treat blunt objects as clubs, and sharp objects as knives or daggers, depending on size. If the player characters can rescue the guards, they can make some much-needed allies. Doing so without maiming or killing the citizens may be difficult. Leaving the guards to their fate could be inconvenient, if any survive.
- Klesh is found bleeding in a doorway. If treated, he regains consciousness sufficiently to tell the group that Andresh clubbed him when he tried to stop Andresh from leading a mob to the chimneys.
- Looters, enough to give the group trouble, are sacking the home and shop of an elven weaver. She's already been injured and can only sit and watch while holding pressure on her wounds, as her livelihood is destroyed and her worldly goods are carted away. No motive of revenge is involved, just greed seasoned with a little racial hatred. The looters each fight or run on an even chance. Use the stats for ork *buundavim* on p. 115 of the **Cast of Characters** chapter.
- A cart loaded with barrels of *hurlg* comes thundering down the street, the four horses pulling it in total panic. There are many people in the way, including children. The driver is nowhere to be seen, only a bloodstain on the seat giving mute testimony as to what might have happened.
- A crowd with torches is marching on the Chancellery. While there's a heavily armed line of guards between the rioters and their target, the outcome is not certain.



Many people will be killed, and if the guards get reinforcements, it could turn into a massacre. If the player characters interpose themselves, they might be able to turn the tide, although they won't be able to stop the slaughter entirely. With a bold entrance and a good speech, they might be able to prevent the battle from being joined. One thing is for certain: if the characters stand by and do nothing, the gutters will run red to overflowing.

- Dogs are being set loose in the poor quarter. The street kids are being hunted like rabbits. Some are cornered, with crossbows being brought out to bring them down. Others have been seized and are being brought before a Nethermancer for examination. Not all of the orks have lost their minds so completely as to slay children out of hand. In the middle of it all, Linn is flushed from her hiding place. The Nethermancer's attention is suddenly on her, and though he says nothing, some of the people

around him pick up on the cue. A cry goes up and the hunt has new quarry. See **The One that Got Away**, p. 84, for rules on catching Linn and how she reacts.

- A large number of orks, 40 or 50 at least, led by Andresh, with picks and shovels and other excavating gear, are attacking the wall of the cavern. They intend to open the chimneys and provide better ventilation, since the Chancellery won't do anything about the increasingly bad air. One group of about a dozen is digging busily at the crack where the runes spell out the Horror's Name. In about 6 rounds, they'll break through into the cavity where the Horror is stuck and it'll be loose among them.
- A gang of children is going down the street and breaking all the shop windows. As the player characters discover them, one of them finds a lantern and debates throwing it into a shop to set the shop on fire.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This is a riot. If the player characters can come up with any way at all to bring the situation back under control, go with it. Otherwise, the guards are going to be busy for the next day quelling the disturbance. The Chancellery is burned down, and a lot of people on both sides die, unless the player characters intervene. Many children die in the hunt for Linn unless the characters do something drastic. Vishquagorch is set free if the group doesn't stop the orks from cracking open the chimneys. The characters can't be everywhere at once. This scene exists as a way of handling an unsuccessful outcome to the adventure. Whatever happens happens, and there is no easy solution. The situation is out of control. Run with it.

If the player characters did not handle themselves well in **Something for Nothing**, p. 69, there's a good chance of trouble during the riot. A small group of guards may just refuse to help the characters at a bad moment, or set them up to get into a worse situation. A larger group may very well use the opportunity and the confusion to try and eliminate the player characters. Rozerl and her bravos certainly will. Even if the player characters have dealt well with the guards, if they're too close to solving the situation and making the Chancellery look bad, the guards may attack, or fire crossbows from a distance. The gamemaster should use careful judgment. If the group is already having a hard time dealing with the rioting, interference from the guards may make a satisfying resolution impossible. On the other hand, if the player characters are walking through the mess with no trouble at all, give them a challenge.

DOWN THE CHIMNEY

All the fancy philosophy and argument about the ethics of combat comes down to one thing: which of you is still breathing afterwards.

• **Karina Mokoyan, Dwarf Warrior of the Arm of Throal** •



This is the climactic scene of the adventure, when the group takes the fight to the Horror. Everything else in the adventure leads to this scene. Everything that comes afterwards is wrap up, picking up the pieces, collecting the reward (if any), and saying goodbye.

OVERVIEW

The investigative part of the adventure is over. The group has determined the underlying cause of the problem: a Horror—a weak one, but a Horror nonetheless. Vishquagorch has Marked Linnhail Zerefanck, and has been using her to set fires in the hopes of getting the populace to break open the natural chimneys and let it out into the city. The group has to go into the cavern wall after Vishquagorch. Either the player characters win the fight with the Horror, or a little girl is irrevocably corrupted and an entire city may be doomed.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the characters are ready to face the Horror, read the following aloud:

Enough is enough. You've got the Horror located, and now you're going in after it. There are two ways to go about it. Both of them have serious drawbacks. If you break open the wall and go straight in, you're going to attract attention, a lot of it. That could easily start a run of Horror fear. Next thing you know, the whole city of Oshane is emptying out, with riots at the tunnel entrances, Name-givers killing each other to be the first to escape. Going down inside the chimney means climbing up through Throal, into the wild

caves above, until you can find an entry point, or a place far enough away from civilization that making an entrance won't be noticed. Then you'd be climbing down a previously unexplored vertical cave onto a frustrated, angry, and very hungry Horror. How tight is it in there? Will your larger team members be able to fit? How many characters can get at the Horror at a time? You don't know.

So you get your gear together, you screw your courage down to the sticking point, and you make your decision. Either way you go at it, it's going to be hard.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Whichever way the player characters go, the feeling of being eaten should be present. If they tunnel in through the wall, the opening looks like a mouth with jagged teeth. If they go down the chimney, it feels like being swallowed, going down the throat of something huge with a nastier fate at the end. Describe in lurid detail the growling and snarling of the Horror, waiting to do battle; the echoes of the fight heard by the rest of the team; the darkness; the claustrophobic environment; and the desperate struggle against a hideous monster in the depths of the mountain. This is a major turning point of the story. It should be dramatic.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This scene takes place in two parts—the approach to the Horror, and the fight. Getting to the Horror requires either tunneling into the wall or climbing down the chimney.

DIGGING IN

If the player characters decide to break through the wall, they have three challenges. One, they have to find a way to tunnel through three feet of rubble and mortar, reinforced with iron rods. Two, they have to tunnel in fast enough that the Horror can't eliminate them during their approach. Three, they have to either hide their activity from the general populace, or explain it in such a way that they don't start a panic.

This part of the cavern wall is weak and crumbling, which is why there's nothing built out here. Cracks ranging from hairline fractures to gaps a troll could put his fist into run through the stone. Many of the larger gaps have been mortared shut, blocked up with whatever rubble was at hand and cemented in place. Nethermantic sigils have been placed on the patches, symbols from the Rites of Protection and Passage, to bar Horrors from coming through. Vishquagorch's chimney is one of these. While there's thirty feet of cracked and broken rock between the Horror's chamber and Oshane's cavern, the gaps are big enough for a troll to squeeze through, and only the last three feet are actually blocked. With proper tools, someone trained in excavation could break through in four candlemarks, five if they're taking extra safety precautions. With three more Name-givers, one to haul away rubble and two to put up bracing, the job could be cut down to two candlemarks. Of course, the Horror will Mark the workers within the first few minutes. If the workers have the Mining skill, or a comparable skill, they can make an appropriate Action Test against a Difficulty Number of 8 to open the chimney safely, with a cave-in occurring on a Poor or worse result. If nobody in the group has the appropriate skill, have the team leader make a Dexterity (12) Test, with the

same results. See the **Gamemaster's Compendium** p. 116, for the rules for cave-ins.

Vishquagorch will notice the digging efforts immediately. It will take no action initially, since it wanted the Name-givers to dig it out in the first place. However, once it makes a Perception Test against the highest Spell Defense in the group, it realizes that these are adepts, and will start trying to Horror Mark them. Once it has half the group Horror-marked, it will use Thought Worm to redirect the group's efforts, so that the digging will free the Horror instead of just allowing the characters in to fight it. When the group enters the chimney and gets within ten feet of the Horror's prison, it will turn at least one of the Horror-marked characters against their unmarked companions, so that the Horror can free itself without having to deal with being attacked.

The homeless Name-givers in the area will take immediate notice of any work being done on the wall. They may even caution the characters against tunneling efforts, warning them that the wall is unstable. Unless the player characters have a good explanation for their actions, or can use talents or spells to calm the onlookers, someone will run for the watch. Having Klesh or someone of equal authority present will go a long way toward making the explanation good enough. Every candlemark or so, more onlookers will arrive, more frequently if the method being used is noisy, and will themselves require convincing. Word will spread, and within four hours, half the dectant will know that something is going on out at the cavern wall. At that point, the rumors will start. Unless the player characters can have some kind of official pronouncement made, people will start to whisper about Horrors, with panic and riot soon to follow. This is also the point where the Chancellery will take notice of the activity. A large contingent of the watch



will be sent, with a baronial representative. The group will not be allowed to continue unless they can talk their way past the city government.

The final problem deals with the boulder that pins down Vishquagorch. It's leaning up against the wall of the chamber in such a way that tunneling in will probably dislodge it. The group must make a Mining (or other appropriate) Test against a Difficulty Number of 14 to work their way around the boulder and gain entrance to the chamber without freeing the Horror in the process. If nobody in the group has an appropriate skill or talent, then the test cannot be made against a raw Attribute, such as Perception. The Horror is automatically freed when the tunnel breaks through into the chamber.

GOING DOWN

If the player characters decide to climb down on the Horror from above, they must spend at least two full days hiking to get out of Oshane and up over the Inner City's cavern, through the wild caves that surround it, to a point where they might find an entrance to the chimney. Allow a Mining (10) or Geology (10) Test to locate the right spot for beginning the descent. On a Pathetic result, the characters begin the descent in the wrong place, and lose half a day discovering this and climbing back up for another start. The group can find a natural access point in the fragile, cracked rock at the southern end of Oshane, or make one. See the previous section for concerns regarding tunneling. If the characters cause a serious cave-in, they block the chimney so thoroughly that they either have to go back down and tunnel through the wall, or spend a full day unblocking the chimney.

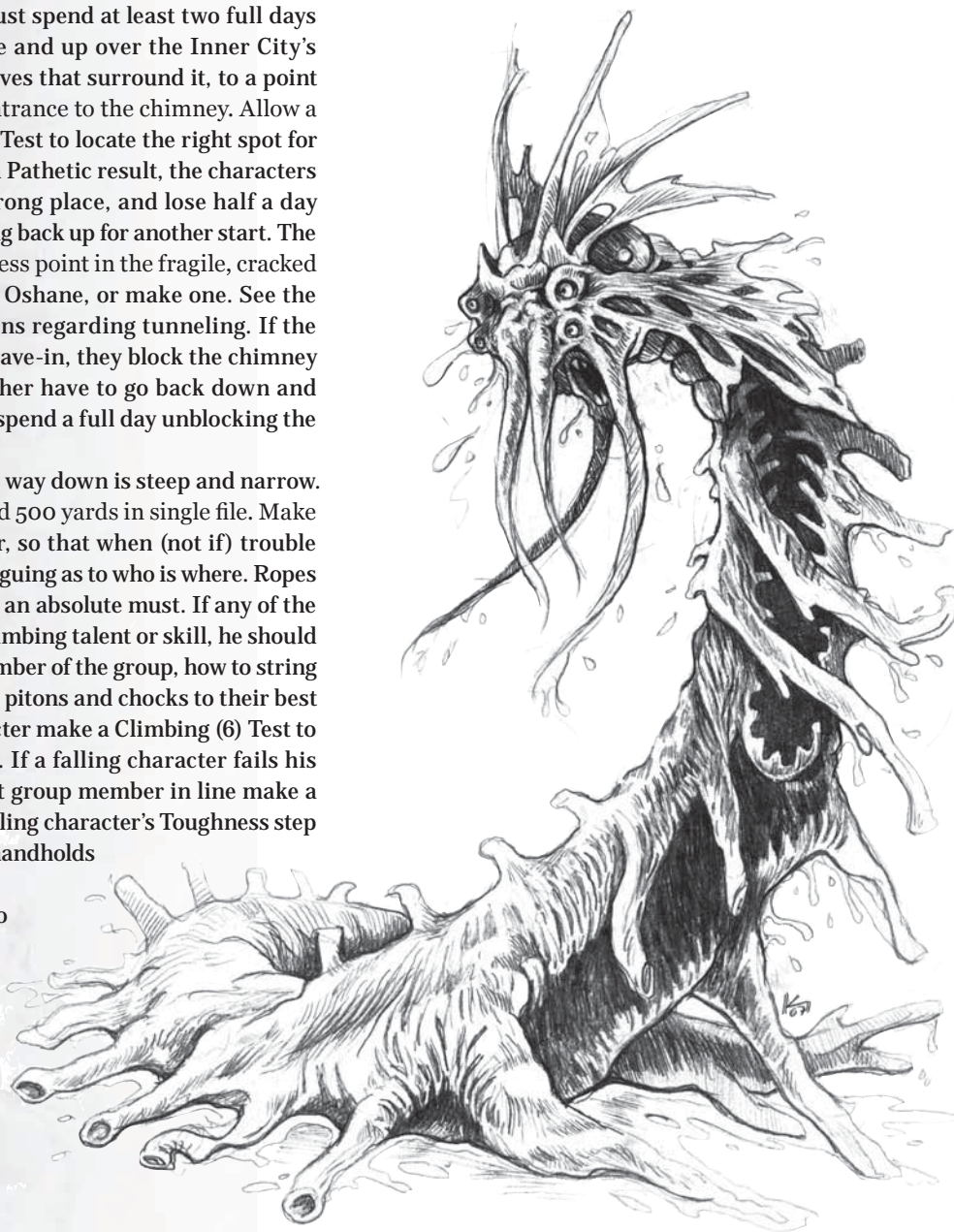
Once in the chimney, the way down is steep and narrow. The characters must descend 500 yards in single file. Make sure to get a climbing order, so that when (not if) trouble arises, there's no time lost arguing as to who is where. Ropes and other climbing gear are an absolute must. If any of the player characters has the Climbing talent or skill, he should know how to tie off each member of the group, how to string a safety line, and how to use pitons and chocks to their best advantage. Have this character make a Climbing (6) Test to set up the descent properly. If a falling character fails his recovery save, have the next group member in line make a Strength Test against the falling character's Toughness step to see if he is yanked off his handholds or can stop the fall.

The chimney takes a jog to one side and then the other about 10 yards above the final chamber. Below that, it's a straight shot down into the Horror's prison. Anyone above the jog has no line of sight into the chamber. The Horror will attack anyone who gets within its

reach. Climbing down onto the chamber floor will take at least one full combat round. Vishquagorch takes a Harried penalty (**Player's Compendium**, p. 408), unless a character descending earlier has moved the boulder and freed the Horror. Alternatively, the characters can let go of their ropes and drop straight down, but will suffer falling damage for 4 yards if they drop from the base of the chimney, where it opens out into the chamber, and up to 14 yards if they drop from the base of the jog.

THE HORROR'S PRISON

At the bottom of the chimney, in a chamber roughly 7 yards across and 4 yards high, is the Horror, trapped under a massive boulder twice its size that has wedged it in tightly. The boulder lies against the crack that leads through the wall into the Oshane cavern, such that it must be removed to get through going in either direction. While



Vishquagorch is not in pain, it can't leave its present location, preventing it from climbing up out of the chimney. In practical terms, the Horror cannot maneuver and is considered Harried (**Player's Compendium**, p. 408). If the boulder is dislodged as a result of player or gamemaster character actions, these penalties go away immediately. Due to the close confines of the chimney, no more than three human-sized characters, or one human- and one troll-sized character, can attack the Horror at a time. Magicians should be cautious with area effects in confined places. Archers will have trouble targeting the Horror from above, as the **Firing Into A Melee** rules apply (**Players' Compendium**, p. 412), and a miss is likely to hit a friend. If the player characters are fighting from above while suspended on ropes or clinging to the sides of the chimney, they will also take the Harried modifier to all actions.

Climbing back out should be allowed without Action Tests, unless you're feeling particularly cruel. Alternatively, the characters could opt to break through the wall into the cavern of Oshane. If the player characters take this route, have them met at first with alarm, then relief when the citizens realize it's the characters, and not some terrible monster coming out of the wall. Announcing that they've cleared a chimney and opened it for ventilation will stand the characters well with the people, although not with the Chancellor.

VISHQUAGORCH

DEX: 11 **STR:** 12 **TOU:** 15
PER: 14 **WIL:** 13 **CHA:** 12

Initiative: 13 **Physical Defense:** 15
Number of Actions: 4 **Spell Defense:** 18
Attack (4): 15 **Social Defense:** 15
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 15
Bite (3): 15 **Mystic Armor:** 9
Tentacle (1): 13

Death Rating: 74 **Recovery Tests:** 7
Wound Threshold: 21 **Knockdown:** 14
Unconsciousness Rating: 67

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

Karma Points: 25 **Karma Step:** 12/2D10

Powers: Damage Shift (4): 17, Dream Shape (4): 17, Horror Mark (4): 18, Karma Boost (4): 18, Thought Worm (4): 18

Legend Points (4): 11,900

Equipment: None

Loot: Fanuukh's Talisman, Phatus Disc

Commentary

A very minor Horror that's just barely powerful enough to have a Name, Vishquagorch has severe limitations on its abilities. Its Horror Mark and Thought Worm powers have a range limit of 70 yards, which includes most of the deep rubble, but does not reach to the hovels at the outskirts of Oshane. In appearance, a grayish-green slug the size of a

cow, Vishquagorch has four tentacles surrounding its mouth. In combat, it uses these tentacles to grapple, dragging any victim held by two of them close enough to bite while using the other two to fend off attacks.

Rules

Vishquagorch possesses the following Horror powers and abilities:

Damage Shift: This power only works on Horror-marked individuals, but can transfer damage either direction, line of sight not required.

Dream Shape: This power can only be used on Horror-marked individuals.

Horror Mark: Vishquagorch's Horror Mark power has a maximum range of 70 yards.

Thought Worm: This power can only be used on Horror-marked individuals.

Tentacles: Vishquagorch can make an Attack Test for all four tentacles. If two of the tentacles successfully hit, the Horror has grappled the victim and can deliver automatic crushing damage in each subsequent round. The Horror will continue this until the victim stops struggling. To break the grip of the Horror, the hapless victim must make a successful Strength Test against the Horror's Strength step. Trapped characters can also escape if they hack through the tentacles. Each tentacle has an Armor Rating of 13 and a Death Rating of 18.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If one of the player characters gets killed in the fight, well, this *is* a Horror they're facing. If a character gets killed on the way down, however, that's bad. If someone fails a Climbing Test, allow the person falling and anyone around them a Dexterity or Strength Test to stop the fall. Meeting your end battling a Horror in the depths of the earth is heroic. Meeting your end falling down a crack in the ground isn't.

If the characters don't have climbing gear, have a gamemaster character offer to give them rope and pitons and such before they set out. If you're annoyed with the players, have the gamemaster character offer to sell them the gear, pointing out the perils of attempting such a descent, and the impossibility of making the climb back up without it.

If the characters feel outclassed, or are forced into a retreat, they can contact Officer of the Court Azakis for help. He will send a team of Horror Stalkers who kill the Horror. (Of course, the player characters get no Legend Points for slaying the Horror if this happens.)

If the Horror manages to get out of the chimney without being slain by the characters, it flees at its full movement, injuring the first few Name-givers it comes across to slow the characters down, then grabs a large one to use as a shield. At this point, all bets are off. See **Panic in the Streets**, p. 92, for the results of the Horror getting loose.

LOOSE ENDS

*It doesn't matter how well you think you have things tied up.
There's always something that will come back to bite you.*

• Ranush Vogtrizian, Ork Cavalryman •



This chapter answers open questions and provides some suggestions for using characters and story elements of this adventure in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

There are several possible resolutions to the story. Each has its own impact on further campaigns. No matter what the resolution, the Eye of Throal eventually knows all the details. The four most likely resolutions are described below.

NO WITNESSES

The group finds the Horror and deals with it quietly. Linn is freed of her Horror Mark and the fires stop. Klesh pays off the player characters, adds a couple of barrels of *hurlg* from Andresh's private stock, and writes them a letter of recommendation. Word spreads through the ork community of Throal that the player characters are good and trustworthy people, competent at what they do. Having earned their trust may garner the player characters further work either for the orks or for the government as representatives to the orks.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Word of the Horror gets out, but the player characters manage to dispatch it before it gets free. Linn is freed of her Horror Mark and the fires stop. Klesh pays off the agreed amount. Oshane suffers a population drop as those who can afford to, move out. The player characters may be hired by the Throalic government as exterminators to check for further Horror infestations in the mountains,

but are instructed to do so with as little contact with the populace as possible.

HORROR TROUBLE

The Horror is freed during a riot, but the player characters dispatch it before it can cause any more trouble. The shock sends ripples all the way up to the crown. Oshane's government is turned upside down by the investigation that follows, revealing the corruption in the Chancellery. Once unseated, the former Chancellor will send assassins after the player characters. Klesh pays the player characters, but asks them to please leave as they remind the orks of events they'd like to forget. Work is hard to come by within Throal.

CHAOS IN OSHANE

The riot sweeps out of control. The player characters are unable to prevent the slaughter of Linn and other poor children, the burning of the Chancellery, and the release of Vishquagorch. The Horror is slain, but not necessarily by the player characters. If Klesh can be found in the aftermath, he tells the player characters to leave Oshane before they're recognized, and refuses to pay them. The player characters probably have to leave Throal due to the radical drop in their popularity.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

The following section provides guidelines for awarding Legend Points to the player characters. As recommended in the **Introduction** chapter, p. 8, the gamemaster should award Legend Points at the end of each game session as well as at the end of the adventure.

The following guidelines for Legend Awards suggest the points to be awarded for each task accomplished or goal reached in a game session.

GAME SESSIONS

Burning Desires is intended to be played over the course of at least four game sessions. Use the following suggestions to organize your game sessions, depending on where the player characters hail from.

Session One

Gamemasters are encouraged to start **Burning Desires** with any of the adventure outlines provided in **Into the Fire**, p. 37, before starting with the main adventure. These scenarios can be run in any order, or even simultaneously. The session goal is to resolve these scenarios. Gamemasters are encouraged to add their own ideas to the ones provided and allow the unsuspecting player characters to get an overview of Throal and its Inner Cities.

Session Two

The main adventure should begin with a new session and the events described in **The Road to Oshane**, p. 41. The group becomes involved in the adventure and gets through the initial investigation, as described in **Smoke and Ashes**, p. 50, and **Scenes of the Crimes**, p. 58. The session goal is to enmesh the player characters in the situation and to get them well into the story. By the end of the session, the group should care about what happens to the orks of Oshane, and be invested in solving the arsons.

Session Three

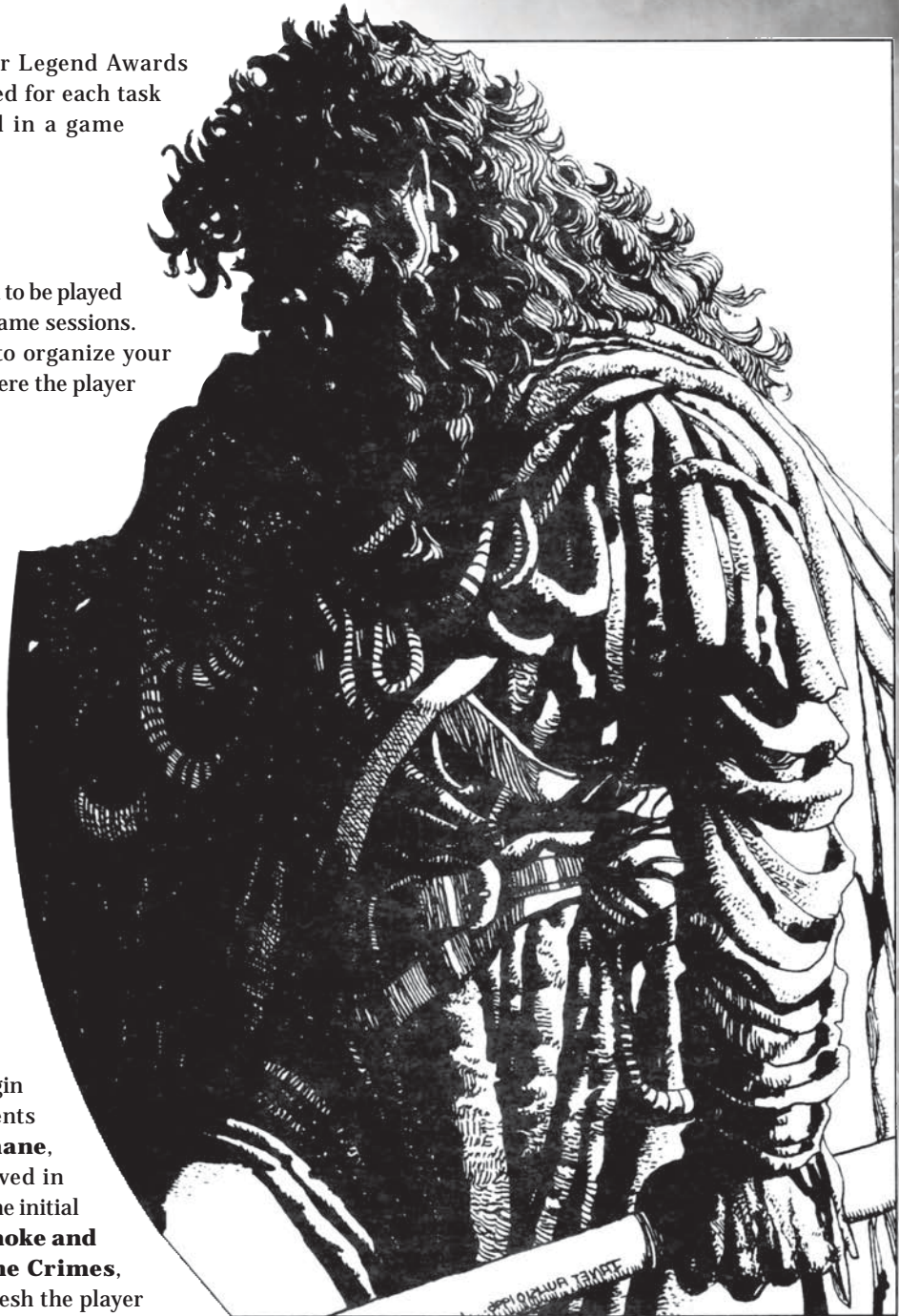
This session covers the rest of the investigation, as well as any side plots that are introduced, as described in **Pastimes and Diversions**, p. 68, and **Collision and Collusion**, p. 75. The group should have a chance to see Linn, and perhaps capture her, in **The One that Got Away**, p. 84. The session should culminate with the opportunities for heroism found in **Alarums and Excursions**, p. 81. The group should end the session with a renewed determination to finish the adventure and deal once and for all with the root cause of the problem.

Session Four

The last game session will be dominated by the confrontation with the Horror in **Down the Chimney**, p. 94. It may also include **Takin' It to the Streets**, p. 89, depending on how well the group has resolved the plot threads in the earlier sessions. **Loose Ends**, p. 98, concludes the adventure and also provides the adventure goal.

LEGEND AWARDS

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 94, each game session in **Burning Desires** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. The potential number of Legend Awards each character may earn in each game session should



take the following elements into account: completing the game session's goal (1 Legend Award), defeating creatures and opponents (award the number of Legend Points listed with each creature or gamemaster character), individual deeds and roleplaying (1–2 Legend Awards), and acquiring magical treasure (as listed with the magical treasure).

A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Sixth Circle character receives from 900 to 2,700 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of 2–5 Legend Awards per game session. In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

Published **Earthdawn** adventures are designed to fit into an existing campaign with little or no extra work on the part of the gamemaster.

Adventures do not exist by themselves if run in a campaign. The world of **Earthdawn** is dynamic and changes over time. For example, when using the events from this adventure to change the overall course of a campaign, the players can watch the changes as they happen and play an active role in them. This adds a sense of reality vital to good roleplaying. No matter how you use this adventure, it is likely to make your **Earthdawn** game more interesting; whether you use it as written or only by drawing on the ideas and information given in this book to enhance your own stories.

Many of the situations and gamemaster characters presented in this book provide hooks for further stories, and can be used to supplement a longer campaign. Feel free to use them in your ongoing **Earthdawn** campaign in whatever ways you see fit, and find some additional ideas below.

THE TEXTILE WARS

The player characters become involved in the union versus non-union clashes between the city's mercenaries and the Weavers' and Dyers' Guild. They may be hired as extra muscle to protect Rhostislav's shop from the guild thugs, or may be enlisted by the guild to help free the workers at the Holota textile works from their indentured slavery. In the process, the player characters are drawn into the city's politics, giving rise to further adventure possibilities.

CHIMNEY SWEEPS

Assuming a successful outcome to the adventure, with the Horror dispatched and no riots, the Chancellery or the *chav'ao'ros* assemblies enlist the player characters to clear out more chimneys, and help resolve the ongoing problems with ventilation. A wealthy merchant could also hire the player characters for such work in order to avoid the city's chimney tax by relocating his business next to a newly opened natural chimney. This could lead the group on an extended exploration of the caves of the Throal Mountains, and perhaps even down to Braza's Kingdom.

TAMMANY RING

The group has made connections with Name-givers investigating the corruption rampant in the Chancellery and throughout Oshane. The player characters are asked to help gather evidence to present to a kingdom officer. This leads into an espionage-based campaign, with a lot of clandestine meetings, sneaking around in other people's homes and offices, and quietly violent encounters in back alleys with forces who want the investigation stopped at any cost. If successful, the player characters come to the attention of the kingdom government as being honest adepts willing to take risks to ferret out illicit doings. The Eye of Throal itself may even take interest in them for future work.

RUMORS AND RESEARCH

“Don’t believe a word of this, don’t believe a single word you hear!”

• Chorus of *The Merchant Thief*, a Popular Throalic Song •



This chapter describes information that the player characters may learn from the various gamemaster characters presented in this book. It also includes detailed descriptions of the magical treasure the characters may come across.

O SHANE

■ The following tidbits of information can be heard from people on the streets of the town or along the road to Oshane. No test is needed to hear them; the gamemaster can use them as he deems fit.

“The orks are trying to take control in Oshane—and of the whole kingdom in the long run! Don’t be a fool, look at the evidence: they’re breeding, breeding, breeding—like rabbits. Not long and there will be more orks in Throal than dwarfs. And I’m sure they’re gonna demand more political power. Ha! Guess one day they will overthrow the king’s house and we’ll live under an ork king!”

“The merchant houses are paying orks good money when they leave the city and settle elsewhere. Outside the kingdom, of course. Heard of ol’ Chabraka and his family? Left Oshane two weeks ago, after they sold their house to a dwarf for twice its worth. Strange, isn’t it? But by far not the only incident. Many ork families left our city after they sold most of their goods to throalic merchants. Said they gonna settle in Cara Fahd, wanna live among orks only. Don’t know what to think of this...”

“Shadowswift has control over the Baron. An assassin sneaked into the Baron’s chamber and poisoned him. Shadowswift is the only one who has the antidote and he uses this to influence him. I have a bad feeling about this.”

“The Baron is taking money from the city’s coffers into his own pockets. Have a look around: many streets are in a state of disrepair, many public buildings are lacking maintenance and every month a couple of clerks are left off the Baron’s service. Wonder where all the money goes that isn’t spent on these duties.”

“A whole bunch of thieves and mercenaries are hiding out in Oshane hiding from the guards of Throal. Those cowardly guards of Oshane still haven’t done anything about it. If things continue as they are, we’ll have another Kratas—right within our beloved kingdom!”

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

Characters hearing about Oshane for the first time can use Knowledge skills or Research to associate the following information with the town. Especially useful are the following Knowledge skills: Throal History (5) and Dwarf Lore (7). (The Difficulty Number for the Skill Test is shown in parentheses.)

Average Result

The Kingdom of Throal includes several massive cities built in huge caverns throughout the Throal Mountains. City architecture differs considerably from the building style of the old kaer, reflecting the present-day variety among Throal’s citizens. When King Varulus III invited people of all races from across Barsaive to take up residence in the Kingdom of Throal, the officials in charge of housing the anticipated influx of people decided that the newcomers would adjust to their homes more quickly if their new residences resembled the homes they had left. Accordingly, Throalic engineers set about building roads, towers, and storied residences on the wide floors of the vast caverns. As

was common in the kaers, these areas are illuminated by a magical, glowing moss that lines the roof of the caverns, supplemented by light-quartz crystals around the outer walls of each city.

Oshane, like all the Inner Cities, is laid out in a circular pattern. In the center is the Circle, where people can meet, celebrate holidays, and listen to speakers. In the center of the Circle are the baronial estate and the chancellery. A bazaar extends around the Circle, and a park surrounds the bazaar. Due to the eccentric shape, many of the city's residents refer to the city center as the Oblong. The rest of the city is divided into ten dectants, divided by wide lanes that radiate out from the city center to the edge of the cavern. Another lane runs around the outer perimeter of the city, leading to tunnels that connect Oshane with the rest of Throal. The richest city residents have large estates close to the Circle. The most prosperous businesses ring these estates. The main part of a typical dectant is the *wedshel*, a Throalic term for a middle-class neighborhood. The outermost portion of a dectant is its *dahnat*, a Throalic term referring to the least desirable area where the poor live.

Neighborhoods are most likely to be racially segregated in the outermost reaches of a dectant. The barons of the Inner Cities try to discourage this pattern of segregation because it often leads to trouble. Race riots have erupted repeatedly in Bethabal, Oshane, and Tirtaga over the past forty years, and less serious incidents have occurred in Yistane and Wishon. Despite the objections and efforts of chancellery officials and magistrates, however, people of the same culture strongly prefer to live together, and so racial neighborhoods continue to thrive.

Good or Better Result

Oshane's baron is Stann Olowey, known unflatteringly as "Stann the Quaverer." A middle-aged human, Olowey has a speech impediment that gives his vowels a peculiar, shaky quality. He became Baron of Oshane as heir to his father, a popular and dynamic leader. Stann Olowey, by contrast, is a timid man ruled by self-doubt. He is afraid of his own officials, who easily manipulate him into following their agendas. Persistent rumors claim that Oshane's chancellery is terribly corrupt—exemplified by Oshane's public spaces, which are in a poor state. Oshane's guards are badly paid and poorly motivated, and the city's crime rate is higher than usual for Throal.

THE FIRES

Outside Oshane, no one knows details about the fires. There are a number of rumors making the rounds, some of the far from the truth. Again, no test is needed to hear them, the gamemaster can use them as he deems fit.

"The orks sure love to eat in Oshane. There are so many cooking fires going that the whole Inner City is filled with smoke. The wee dwarfs never ate that much and didn't build enough smoke chimneys to get rid of it all."

"The newest craze in Oshane is smoking. So much so that there is smoke all over Oshane. If we got some pipes and something from the Servos Jungle to smoke, we could probably make a fortune."

"Fires have burned places down in Oshane seemingly out of nowhere. Seems to be a Passion's judgment to me. Prakarool is trying to tell those orks who have settled to travel once again. Caves are no place for an ork; our place is the open plains."

NEW BLOOD CHARMS

Blood charms are magical items that draw on the power within the wearer's blood. See the **Player's Compendium**, p. 443, for details on how these charms work. The following blood charms make an appearance during the adventure. They are used by gamemaster characters, but are also available from specialist vendors.

CHARM OF ASTRAL DECEPTION

Cost: 700

EDN: 14

Weight: Neg.

Depatterning Rating: 2

Availability: Rare (see text)

The charm of astral deception disguises its wearer's aura so as to not reveal the true aura to others who employ astral sensing to discern it. The charm is most often disguised as a moderately elaborate ring, as it is essential its existence is kept secret. Implanting the charm causes the character 2 permanent Damage Points, and the charm binds itself to his body—conveniently, this charm looks like an old ring worn so long it doesn't come off any more. The wearer's aura is disguised in a manner decided upon by the charm's creator, though it is common to fake a normal, non-adept aura. Astral deception charms that fake another Name-giver's aura have to be custom-made or have an Availability of Very Rare. A successful Astral Sensing (15) Test is required to discern the character's true aura.

TRACELESS STEPS CHARM

Cost: 900

EDN: 15

Weight: Neg.

Depatterning Rating: 2

Availability: Very Rare

Traceless steps charms regularly come as a pair of small pieces of living crystal, most often implanted in the feet, which cause 2 permanent Damage Points to the wearer. It is not required for them to be implanted in any specific part of the body; implanting them on the feet seems to be based on a habit, on the need for certain charms to be implanted at locations important to its effect. The charm works like a

continuous Conceal Tracks spell (**Player's Compendium**, p. 331) on the character using it, whose steps are now hidden by an illusion with a Sensing Difficulty of 15.

MAGICAL TREASURES

The following magical treasures can be found during the adventure. Each of them is in the possession of a gamemaster character, who generally won't give their items away.

FANUUKH'S TALISMAN

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 18

Location: Visquagorch's hoard. See the **Down the Chimney** chapter on p. 97.

Legends speak of rare occasions when a Liferock would reward one of its brothers for an exceptional service done, or support the greatest of obsidimen heroes by gifting them with items helpful in their quests—items powered by the elemental magic of the Liferock itself. But once created, these items would be accessible to anyone—while still requiring some sort of service to the Earth to reach the peak or their power.

Obsidimen Troubadours claim Fanuukh of the Nehem brotherhood received one of these items in the decades prior to the Scourge, but scholars who have had a chance to examine it in before the Scourge determined that, while his talisman has some exceptional abilities, it was created by Fanuukh's own elementalism magic, inspired by insights gained through the Dreaming—but perhaps this is just the kind of gift the Troubadours speak of: knowledge and inspiration.

Fanuukh was a Messenger and Elementalist, bringing the Rites of Protection and Passage as well as other helpful elemental enchantments to kaers throughout Barsaive. Then one day, after Fanuukh helped complete the enchantments for a small kaer near the Alidar River, a Horror tried to work its evil magic to corrupt them, rendering them useless. Fanuukh discovered the Horror's influence just in time, but faced it alone and had no chance to defeat it with normal means. Calling upon the power of the Earth that gave birth to him, he flung his magic Talisman at the rock above the Horror, using the entire energy of his life to enhance its magic.

The ceiling collapsed, burying the Horror, and Fanuukh fell dead beside the pile of rocks. After the Scourge, when the rocks were lifted, the dead Horror was discovered—along with Fanuukh's Talisman. However, instead of the talisman being destroyed during Fanuukh's Dying Curse, the obsidiman, in giving up his life, had created a legacy, one tied to the powers of the Earth itself, being so central to his people.

Fanuukh's Talisman is a piece of gray stone the size of a hen's egg, streaked with red veins with a marble-like appearance. While not as smooth and round as an egg, it is not as jagged as to cause any danger to its wearer.



Thread Rank One

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the item.

Effect: The wearer gains a +1 bonus to his Knockdown Tests.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 800

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Wound Threshold.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 1,300

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn what Liferock is associated with the talisman.

Effect: The wearer gains the ability to become one with the talisman for a brief period of time. For 4 Strain Points of damage, the talisman melds into the wearer's chest, but is still identifiable as an individual item, similar to a blood charm. The talisman has to be worn directly on the skin for this to work. The melding temporarily floods the wearer with the power of Earth, his skin takes on a faint appearance of stone, similar to that of an obsidiman, in a color scheme resembling that of the talisman. He receives the benefits of the obsidiman Natural Armor racial ability (**Player's Compendium**, p. 50) for a number of rounds equal to the thread rank woven to the item. This Natural Armor can be combined with any other types of armor.

Obsidimen using this ability stack it with their normal Natural Armor, gaining them a combined Physical Armor Rating of 6, as their bodies readily accept this kind of magic. As their skin already has the appearance of stone, the change is not as evident, but other obsidimen might notice it more easily than energy wasters.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 2,100

Effect: The wearer now gains a +2 bonus to his Knockdown Tests and adds +2 to his Wound Threshold.

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 3,400

Deed: The wearer must protect Nature, Earth, or Life from a source of harm. The magnitude of this harm must be similar to that posed by the Horror that Fanuukh sacrificed his life to destroy.

Effect: The wearer gains the **Earth's Wrath** ability. When taking a number of Strain Points equal to his (now increased) Wound Threshold, the wearer can use a Standard Action to call upon the power of the Earth to aid him. The degree of help the Earth will render is at the gamemaster's discretion, and the player need not specify it, but can make suggestions. If called in a situation of desperate need, the Earth should provide greater assistance than in a situation that could be resolved by other means. Typical help can be given by an Earth elemental appearing, the Earth itself changing in a certain area (for example creating a land-

slide, a bridge, or a cave for shelter), or creating the effect of an Earth-based elementalism spell (trapping opponents on Uneven Ground, granting the wearer Metal Wings, or dropping a Shattering Stone from a cliff).

This ability can only be used in the vicinity of living earth or rock, not while on a wooden airship or inside a house that contains only worked materials.

MASK OF THE CROWD

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 16

Location: An unknown messenger. See the **Pastimes and Diversions** chapter on p. 72.

This mask appears as an ivory mask with a blank expression with two hollowed-out eye sockets and hollowed, still lips. This amazing item was originally created by an Illusionist/Wizard performer who loved to make daring entrances, but wanted a way to avoid his loyal fans after the show so he could do research. Although one mask, the item seems to be able to accommodate two characters, one the stage performer, and the second the understudy.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the mask.

Effect: For 2 Strain Points of damage, the wearer may use an ability mimicking the Best Face spell to look like any other member of a crowd he is currently in. Treat this as if using the spell, with its duration based on the wearer's thread rank.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 500

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Spell Defense.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 800

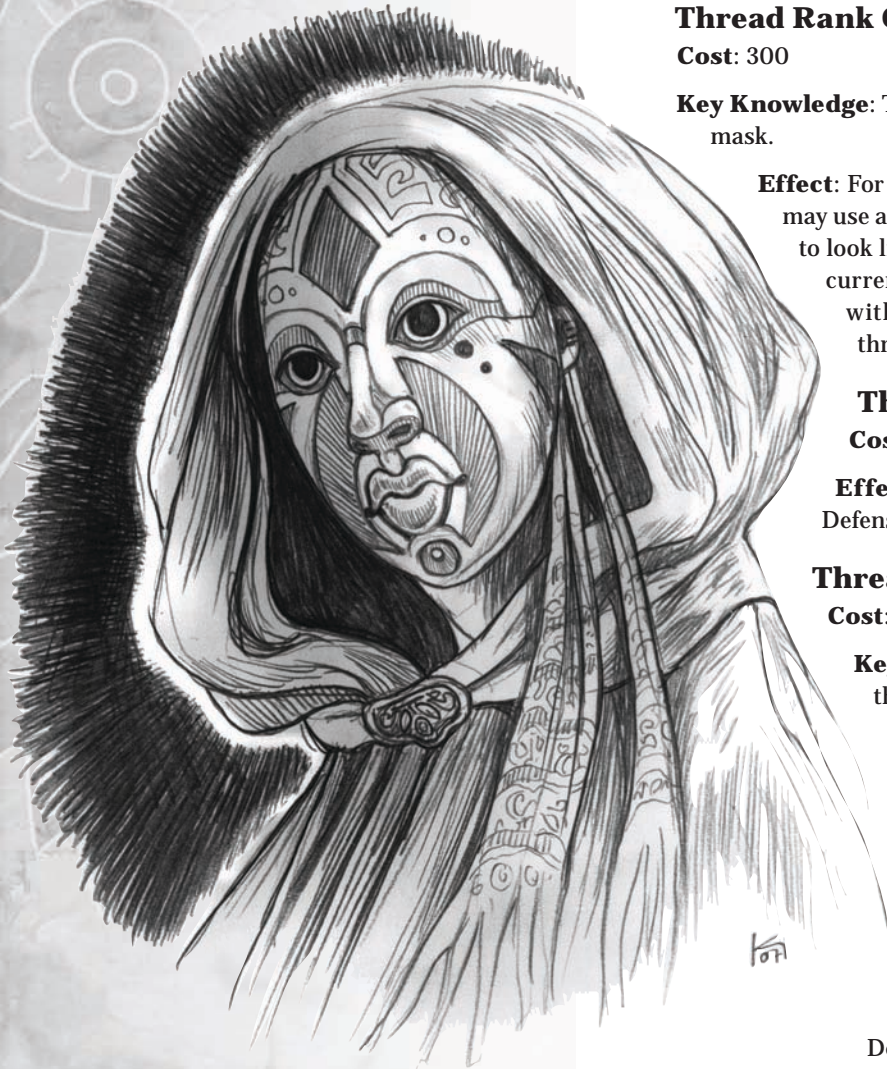
Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the creator of the mask.

Effect: The wearer can mimic the voice of any other member of a crowd he is currently in. The wearer gains a +1 rank bonus to the Mimic Voice talent when using this ability.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 1,300

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Social Defense.



Thread Rank Five

Cost: 2,100

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the understudy who stole the mask from its original creator.

Effect: For 5 Strain Points of damage, the wearer may use the **Faces of the Crowd** ability. This ability is much like the One of the Crowd spell (**Player's Compendium**, p. 342); however, the wearer's features become an amalgam of the faces of the crowd he is currently in rather than any particular face. The wearer makes an Effect Test using Willpower+5 against the highest Spell Defense among the members of the crowd. If the test succeeds, the wearer's face becomes almost unidentifiable, gaining the features of all the members of the crowd; the cheekbones of one person, the jaw-line of another, the eyebrows of one person, the eyes of another, someone's nose, another's mouth and lips, and so on. The more people in the crowd, the more variable the features can be. This ability lasts for 6 hours. The Sensing Difficulty of this ability is 21; the Disbelief Difficulty of this ability is 11.

SCARLET SENTINEL

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 15

Location: This axe is wielded by Rozerl. See the **Cast of Characters** chapter on p. 111.

Scarlet Sentinel is a battle-axe mounted on a three-and-a-half-foot long wooden shaft, reaching most dwarfs to the shoulder. The only remarkable feature of the axe is its bright crimson leather grip. Its style suggests it is of early throalic design, dating back to Throal's 'Golden Age' of Braza's Dynasty (see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 150). To protect the entrances to his underground kingdom, Braza I had created the Sentinels, a group of well-trained dwarf

fighters, led by adept officers. Each of the officers was given a threaded weapon befitting his capabilities and style of combat, although later officers were expected to use the weapon created for the unit's first commander. Each weapon would be decorated in another color, which would also be featured in the colors of the unit the officer was leading. With the eventual downfall of Braza's dynasty, the Sentinels disbanded, splitting up to fight on different sides in the conflict for the throne. After the decisive battle of Jalasa, some of the weapons were taken as spoils of war, while some remained in the hands of their bearers.

Scarlet Sentinel is the weapon of an officer who chose to fight for House Ueraven, and was killed in the battle of Jalasa. Scarlet Sentinel was taken to a vault of House Avalor, and later transferred to a Royal Guard armory. Marruth was able to lay hands on the axe in a 'business deal' with an armory officer, handing it on to Rozerl as a gift to ensure her loyalty.

Without a thread attached to it, Scarlet Sentinel is treated as a standard battle-axe.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the weapon.

Effect: The weapon is now Damage Step 7.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 500

Effect: The weapon is now Damage Step 8.



Thread Rank Three

Cost: 800

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the first Captain of the Scarlet Sentinels.

Effect: The wielder gains the **Palace Guard** ability. When taking actions to protect the person or estate of a dignitary he has sworn to serve, the wielder may spend 1 Karma Point on any Action Test made against a threat to the dignitary or his estate. He still cannot spend more than 1 Karma Point per test, except where another rule allows it.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 1,300

Effect: The weapon is now Damage Step 9. The wielder gains a +1 bonus to his Physical and Social Defense.

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 2,100

Deed: The wielder must protect Braza's Kingdom from a source of harm. This Deed must result in enough Legend Points to cover the cost of the thread.

Effect: The wielder gains a +3 rank bonus to his Life Check talent and a +2 bonus to Knockdown Tests.

Thread Rank Six

Cost: 3,400

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the fate of the last Captain of the Scarlet Sentinels.

Effect: The wielder gains the **Stand at Jalasa** ability. When surrounded in one way or another, for example by being in a besieged city or by being attacked by 4 or more opponents, the wielder gains a +3 bonus to his Physical, Spell, and Social Defense Ratings, and an additional +2 bonus to Knockdown Tests.

PHATUS DISC

Location: Visquagorch's hoard. See the **Down the Chimney** chapter on p. 97.

A small stone disc wrapped in silk, the Phatus Disc is an oddity in several respects. It measures about five inches in diameter, and both sides are covered with magical symbols. Each side contains an incised spiral, containing groups of different glyphs. Each group is sepa-

rated by incised lines crossing the spiral. The glyphs don't seem to resemble any known language, and appear to be very ancient (they can be identified and deciphered, however, see below). The silk cloth bears intricate insignia, likely of Theran origin. Both items are apparently very old, probably from before the Scourge.

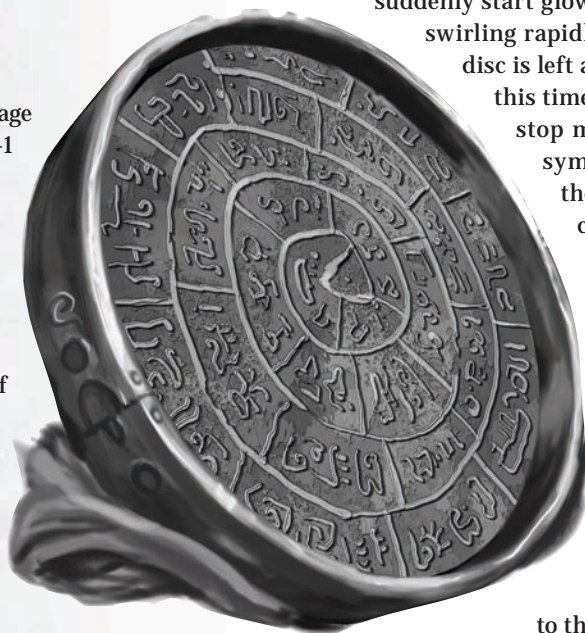
For astral sensing purposes, the disc has a Spell Defense of 12. Astral sensing reveals that the Phatus Disc is an enchanted item holding a powerful spell of unknown origin. That the disc is enchanted becomes obvious when a character unwraps and touches the disc: the spirals and glyphs suddenly start glowing with an amber-colored light, swirling rapidly about the disc's surface. If the disc is left alone or wrapped up again during this time, the glyphs and spirals instantly stop moving and glowing, leaving the symbols scattered randomly across the disc. If the disc is held over the course of several minutes, however, the motion on the disc slows down until the glyphs end up in a certain formation. While the new formation differs from that when the disc is found, it will always end up the same if the process is repeated.

Examining the Disc

If the characters take the disc to the Great Library, the glyphs can be identified by the resident scholars. The writing makes no sense if the disc was touched and the glyphs scattered across the surface, but some insight can be gathered if the disc was held long enough for the symbols to appear in their final position. The scholars are able to discern that the glyphs are Theran in origin, but don't follow the structure one would find in a regular text. The scholars suggest that it might be a cipher of some kind, which is useless without the proper key.

The silk cloth the disc was wrapped in can clearly be identified. It bears the sigil of Overlord Ersh Wearg, the former Theran ruler of Barsaive. Ersh Wearg fled Parlainth before it vanished and sought refuge in Throal (see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 19, for more information). Unfortunately for him, the power of the spell that made Parlainth disappear also wiped the memory of everything connected to it. As a result, the Name-givers of Throal forgot who Ersh Wearg really was. The Theran died in an unfortunate cave-in his quarters in 1055 TH, and there are many rumors as to what could have caused the accident (including that it was a conspiracy set up by the dwarf king).

The secrets of the Phatus Disc will be revealed in future **Earthdawn** products.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

You are who you know, and it always pays if people know you. I never heard of you, but I'm sure you heard of me. No? Come on...

• Pjietrov Kokor, Orktown Resident •



This chapter presents game statistics and additional information on the gamemaster characters of **Burning Desires**—presented in order of appearance.

KLESH

Taller and thinner than the average ork, Klesh is a bookkeeper for a prominent moneylender. In the dwarf tradition, he is a former *j'havim* who married into the family. The financial security of the dectant is his personal business. He feels a threat to his own livelihood when commerce in the area suffers. His *gahad* is triggered by insults to his wife and to his truthfulness, but not by challenges to his figures, as all bookkeepers check each other's work for accuracy.

Klesh wears the colors of the J'Kistir family—burnt orange and dark green, with no jewelry other than a single gold loop in his left ear. He does most of the talking, only referring to Andresh when he needs to check specific facts.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Willpower (11): 5/D8

Strength (13): 6/D10
Perception (17): 7/D12
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 9

Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 34
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 6/D10

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

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman: Bookbinding (1): 7/D12
Storytelling (3): 10/D10+D6

Knowledge:

Dwarf Lore (2): 9/D8+D6
Finance (5): 12/2D10
Mathematics (5): 12/2D10
Ork Racial Lore (4): 11/D10+D8
Throal History (3): 10/D10+D6

General:

Conversation (5): 12/2D10
Etiquette (4): 11/D10+D8
Evaluate (2): 9/D8+D6
Haggle (5): 12/2D10
Read and Write Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Streetwise (5): 12/2D10
Trading (5): 12/2D10

Equipment

Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Adventurer's Kit
Abacus
Bookbinding Tools
Mountain Boots
Merchant's Breeches
Embroidered Shirt
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit



Loot

Gold earring (worth 25 silver pieces)

Legend Points

65 Legend Points

Notes

Klesh possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

ANDRESH

Short and stout, Andresh is a quietly intense ork who fidgets restlessly throughout the meetings. He is caught between his desire for action and the restrictions of his office as recorder, wanting to do something personally about the situation but being held to silence.

Andresh is a brewmaster at the Selrushing Hurlg Works, and while bad times mean better sales in the short term, people will stop buying *hurlg* if lean times continue. Bad drinks, especially *hurlg*, set off his *gahad*, but he ignores insults to his work, figuring that some people just don't know what good *hurlg* is like.

In his early thirties, his hair has gone mostly gray, and his face carries the lines of a short but intense lifetime. His clothing is less influenced by dwarfen fashions than his companion's, and he carries an aroma of yeast, grease, and half-brewed *hurlg* that only an ork could love.

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8 **Strength** (18): 7/D12
Toughness (19): 8/2D6 **Perception** (11): 5/D8
Willpower (14): 6/D10 **Charisma** (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7 **Physical Armor:** 0
Social Defense: 5 **Mystic Armor:** 2
Death Rating: 43 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown:** 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 35
Combat Movement: 24 **Full Movement:** 48

Skills

Artisan:
 Brewing (8): 12/2D10
 Craftsman: Cooper (3): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Barsaive History (2): 7/D12
 Botany (1): 6/D10
 Creature Lore (1): 6/D10
 Dwarf Racial Lore (1): 6/D10
 Ork Racial Lore (3): 8/2D6

General:

Bribery (4): 8/2D6

Haggle (4): 8/2D6
 Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12
 Read and Write Language (2): 7/D12
 —Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
 Speak Language (2): 7/D12
 —Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
 Streetwise (2): 7/D12
 Trading (4): 8/2D6
 Unarmed Combat (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Club (Damage 10/D10+D6)
 Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6;
 Range 9–15–18)
 Adventurer's Kit
 Craftsman Tools
 Merchant's Breeches
 Mountain Boots
 Trail Rations (1 week)
 Traveler's Garb
 Writing Kit

Loot

None

Legend Award

90 Legend Points

Notes

Andresh possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

M^{OODRI}

Tall, rotund, and expansive, Moodri is the current (and longest-lasting) husband of Sethra Quamedchik, a prominent dealer in gems. Moodri himself is a goldsmith of good repute. He wears the symbol of Chorrolis as a ring on his right hand, and dresses in orkish fashions, with lots of bright colors.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10 **Strength** (14): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10 **Perception** (13): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8 **Charisma** (12): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7 **Physical Armor:** 0
Social Defense: 7 **Mystic Armor:** 1
Death Rating: 35 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Wound Threshold: 9 **Knockdown:** 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 27
Combat Movement: 28 **Full Movement:** 56

Skills

Artisan:
 Craftsman: Goldsmith (8): 14/D20+D4
Knowledge:
 Ore Appraising (6): 12/2D10
 Ork Racial Lore (2): 8/2D6
General:
 Bribery (3): 8/2D6
 Conversation (3): 8/2D6
 Etiquette (3): 8/2D6



Evaluate (2): 8/2D6
 Flirting (2): 7/D12
 Haggle (5): 10/D10+D6
 Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
 —Dwarf (Throalic)
 Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
 Streetwise (2): 8/2D6
 Trading (5): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
 Courtier's Quality Hat
 Gold Brooch
 Goldsmithing Tools
 Leather Gloves
 Merchant's Shoes
 Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

Gold Signet Ring (with symbol of Chorrolis) worth 50 silver pieces)

Legend Points

50 Legend Points

Notes

Moodri possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

STANGYA

Well muscled, broad of shoulder, and plain of feature, Stangya is your average working-class ork. In the scene in which the player characters first meet him, he's wearing a plain shirt of unbleached cloth, wool trousers, and a carpenter's apron stained with rubbing oil and powdered lightly with sawdust. He carries no emblems other than his Woodworkers' Guild pin on the left strap of the apron.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10 **Strength** (16): 7/D12
Toughness (15): 6/D10 **Perception** (11): 5/D8
Willpower (11): 5/D8 **Charisma** (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7 **Physical Armor:** 0
Social Defense: 6 **Mystic Armor:** 1
Death Rating: 38 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 10 **Knockdown:** 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 30
Combat Movement: 28 **Full Movement:** 56

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman: Woodworker (4): 10/D10+D6
 Wood Carving (4): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:

Botany (1): 6/D10
 Legends and Heroes (1): 6/D10
 Ork Racial Lore (1): 6/D10

General:

Haggle (1): 6/D10
 Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
 Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
 —Dwarf (Throalic)
 Speak Language (2): 7/D12
 —Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
 Streetwise (1): 6/D10
 Trading (1): 6/D10
 Unarmed Combat (2): 8/2D6



Equipment

Quarterstaff (Damage 9/D8+D6)
Apron
Brass Brooch (with Woodworkers' Guild emblem)
Carving Tools
Felt Hat
Merchant's Breeches
Merchant's Shoes
Traveler's Garb
Woodworking Tools

Loot

None

Legend Award

55 Legend Points

Notes

Stangya possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

SETHRA

For a description of Sethra, see p. 55. Play her grandly, expansively. She's very wealthy and determined to enjoy it, putting on big dinners, lavishing gifts on her family, and dressing up just to come down to breakfast. She can knock windlings over with the sheer force of her personality.

Even the dourest troll is going to have trouble standing up to Sethra, when of course they really want to go along with her. If Sethra makes a suggestion that a character objects to, have her make a Charisma Test with a +4 step bonus against his Social Defense to sway them to her will.

Attributes

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

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9	Initiative: 7/D12
Spell Defense: 7	Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 8	Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 32	Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8	Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 24	

Combat Movement: 34 **Full Movement:** 68

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman: Gem Cutter (6): 13/D12+D10
Poetry (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:

Gem Appraising (7): 12/2D10
Ork Racial Lore (3): 8/2D6

General:

Bribery (5): 11/D10+D8
Conversation (5): 11/D10+D8
Etiquette (5): 11/D10+D8
Flirting (4): 10/D10+D6
Haggle (6): 12/2D10
Read and Write Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Speak Language (4): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, Troll
Streetwise (3): 8/2D6
Trading (6): 12/2D10

Equipment

Courtier's Quality Hat
Courtier's Quality Shoes
Embroidered Robe
Gemcutting Tools
Gold Brooch
Leather Gloves
Scarf
Silk-Lined Cloak

Loot

Small gems (worth 150 silver pieces)

Legend Points

75 Legend Points

Notes

Sethra possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

ROZERL

Rozerl is a Fifth Circle dwarf Warrior. A tough, grizzled old woman who's lacked the opportunity to rise in either her Discipline or her profession, Rozerl has become bitter and jaded over the years. She's slipped into the corrupt ways of the Oshane City Guard out of disillusionment. Now she answers directly to Marruth, having settled for political power over personal advancement, and spends most of her time strong-arming people the Chancellor dislikes.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10	Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (21): 8/2D6	Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (14): 6/D10	Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 [9] ^L	Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 11 [12] ^L	Physical Armor: 6
Social Defense: 10 [15] ^{De}	Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 43 (88)*	Recovery Tests: 4
Wound Threshold: 13	Knockdown: 6/D10**
Unconsciousness Rating: 36 (71)*	

Combat Movement: 24 **Full Movement:** 48

^L Numbers in brackets [] apply when Rozerl's lucky charm is active.
^{De} Numbers in brackets [] apply when Rozerl's Detect Deceit ability is active.
^{*} These values have been adjusted for blood magic.
^{**} Rozerl knows the Wound Balance skill.

Karma Points: 21 **Karma Step:** 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

- Acrobatic Strike (5): 11/D10+D8
- Air Dance (6): 11/D10+D8*
- Anticipate Blow^D (5): 11/D10+D8
- Avoid Blow^D (5): 11/D10+D8
- Down Strike^D (5): 11/D10+D8
- Durability (9/7) (5): 5/-
- Gliding Stride (5): 11/D10+D8
- Karma Ritual (5): 5/-
- Melee Weapons^D (6): 12/2D10 (Deflect Blow)
- Swift Kick^D (5): 11/D10+D8
- Thread Weaving (War Weaving)^D (5): 11/D10+D8
- Throwing Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8
- Tiger Spring (5): 5/-
- Unarmed Combat^D (6): 12/2D10 (Pin Down)
- Wood Skin^D (5): 13/D12+D10

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.
^{*} Modified for -1 armor Initiative Penalty.

Skills

Artisan:

Weapon Runic Carving (2): 6/D10

Knowledge:

- Ancient Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8
- Dwarf Racial Lore (3): 9/D8+D6
- Ork Racial Lore (1): 7/D12
- Throal Politics (5): 11/D10+D8

General:

- Detect Weapon (2): 8/2D6
- Disarm (2): 8/2D6
- Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
- Riposte (3): 9/D8+D6
- Speak Language (4): 10/D10+D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, Troll
- Spellcasting (2): 8/2D6
- Tactics (3): 9/D8+D6
- Wound Balance (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

- Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)
- Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)
- Scarlet Sentinel (Rank 4; Damage 15/D20+D6; PhysDef +1; SocDef +1; Palace Guard ability; cannot be used with buckler; see **Rumors and Research**, p. 105, for more information)
- 2 × Bolas (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 12–20–24; Entangle 9)
- Club (Damage 9/D8+D6)
- Dwarf Sword (Forged +2; Damage 11/D10+D8)
- Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
- Desperate Blow Charm (3 Damage Points)
- Lucky Charm (see below)

Thread Amulet (Rank 4; SpellDef +2; SocDef +2)

Thread Ring (Rank 4; SpellDef +2; SocDef +2)

Adventurer's Kit

Booster Potion

Carving Tools

Dwarf Winternight Cloak

Cloaksense Brooch

Gold Brooch (with Guards of Oshane symbol)

Guards of Oshane Uniform

Merchant's Breeches

Mountain Boots



Lucky Charm: Rozerl wears a lucky charm, valued at $2D6 \times 20$ silver pieces. Each attempt to activate the charm causes her 1 Strain Point of damage and requires a Spellcasting (6) Test. If the test succeeds, she gains a +1 bonus to her Physical and Spell Defense for a number of rounds equal to the Spellcasting Test result.

Loot

80 silver pieces

Legend Points

840 Legend Points

Notes

Rozerl possesses the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability and the unique Detect Deceit ability (see **Rules**, below).

Fourth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests.

Fifth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests.

Rules

As a dwarf guard, Rozerl possesses the following special ability:

Detect Deceit: Whenever someone tries to deceive Rozerl, she makes a Spellcasting Test against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, her suspicions are roused, although she does not determine the character's true intent. Rozerl gains a +5 bonus to her Social Defense for a number of days equal to the Spellcasting Test result, making her unlikely to fall for the character's scam. This bonus only applies against the character who Rozerl is suspicious of.

UMAY AND ULDRİ

"All these normal entrances like doors and windows will probably be well protected. What about we try and find another way, the chimneys for example?"

"Throalic housing designs are very similar. Despite all the Throal laws passed to keep things ubiquitous, the orks have varied the designs though. It might take a few more days to case a joint here in Oshane."

"We're casing a brewery? Too bad it's all hurlg and no dwarf stout, eh brother?"

Umay and Uldri started out as masons like their father before them. They soon tired of this hard work of building houses and became miners hoping to strike it rich through finding a vein of precious metals, gems, or elemental kernels. After several failed expeditions, their father cut them off completely, leaving them poor. They turned to thievery at this point, using their knowledge of architecture and stonework for casing buildings. Umay and Uldri are experts at planning entrance and escape routes, determining possible trap locations, picking locks, and finding and disarming

traps. Use these statistics for any other dwarf *buundavim* in the gang.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10

Toughness (18): 7/D12

Willpower (11): 5/D8

Strength (16): 7/D12

Perception (14): 6/D10

Charisma (6): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 8

Social Defense: 4

Initiative: 6/D10

Physical Armor: 3

Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 42

Wound Threshold: 12

Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Recovery Tests: 3

Knockdown: 7/D12

Combat Movement: 24

Full Movement: 48

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman: Mason (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:

Architecture (2): 8/2D6

Geology (2): 8/2D6

Mining (2): 8/2D6

General:

Avoid Blow (5): 11/D10+D8

Climbing (2): 8/2D6

Conceal Weapon (4): 10/D10+D6

Detect Trap (5): 11/D10+D8

Disarm Trap (4): 10/D10+D6

Lock Picking (4): 10/D10+D6

Melee Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8

Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Silent Walk (4): 10/D10+D6

Speak Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Streetwise (4): 10/D10+D6

Surprise Strike (6): 13/D12+D10

Throwing Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8

Trap Initiative (4): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)

Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)

Knife (Damage 8/2D6; Range 6–10–12)

2 × Throwing Daggers (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 15–25–30)

Adventurer's Kit

Climbing Kit

Leather Gloves

Masonry Tools

Mining Tools

Thieves' Picks and Tools

Trail Rations (1 week)

Traveler's Garb

Loot

6 silver pieces, 18 copper pieces

Legend Points

195 Legend Points

Notes

Umay and Uldri both possess the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

NERII

"Ok, I'll distract the guards, while you two sneak in."

"Whatcha watchin' there boys?"

"Can I interest you in watching something else?"

Use these statistics for Nerii, a human female in the gang. Nerii had a hard life growing up on the streets of Bartertown. As a young child she lived by petty thievery. As a young woman she became a courtesan, and lived somewhat of a better life as a dancer and escort until Clystone hired her one night for a party. Clystone broke the code of the courtesan, forcing himself upon her and when she fought him back, he had her beaten by his guardians. She fled to Throal, and was healed of her physical wounds at a Temple to Garlen. After that, she vowed to never be that powerless again and honed her skills to become a thug and eventually have her revenge on Clystone.

Nerii uses her charismatic skills to distract guards, allowing the dwarf brothers free reign to enter locations discreetly. She plans to take over the gang after their leader, Almidtran, perishes or goes to jail, and to grow the gang powerful enough to leave Oshane and return to Bartertown, possibly allying with Shadowswift against Clystone.

Use these statistics for any other human *buundavim* in the gang.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12

Toughness (12): 5/D8

Willpower (13): 6/D10

Strength (12): 5/D8

Perception (11): 5/D8

Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 8

Initiative: 7/D12

Physical Armor: 3

Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 34

Wound Threshold: 9

Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 5/D8

Combat Movement: 32

Full Movement: 64

Skills

Artisan:

Dancing (4): 10/D10+D6

Knowledge:

Court Dancing (4): 9/D8+D6

General:

Avoid Blow (5): 12/2D10

Blade Juggle (3): 10/D10+D6

Bribery (5): 11/D10+D8

Conversation (3): 9/D8+D6

Conceal Weapon (5): 12/2D10

Disguise (5): 10/D10+D6

Engaging Banter (5): 11/D10+D8

First Impression (3): 9/D8+D6

Flirting (4): 10/D10+D6

Melee Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6

Picking Pockets (5): 12/2D10

Read and Write Language (3): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*

Silent Walk (3): 10/D10+D6

Slough Blame (5): 11/D10+D8

Speak Language (3): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*

Streetwise (4): 9/D8+D6

Surprise Strike (5): 10/D10+D6

Throwing Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)

3 × Daggers (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

3 × Knives (Damage 6/D10; Range 6–10–12)

3 × Throwing Daggers (Damage 7/D12; Range 15–25–30)

Adventurer's Kit

Disguise Kit

Quiet-Fingers Gloves

Thieves' Picks and Tools

Trail Rations (1 week)

Traveler's Garb

Loot

25 silver pieces

Legend Points

185 Legend Points

ALMIDTRAN

"I started this gang, and I'll lead it as long as I live."

"Fedet, I want you to be the next leader of the gang, because an ork gang in Oshane should be led by an ork."

"It took seven dwarfs on a hach'var team to wear me down, do you think I'm afraid of a couple of ujnort guards?"

Almidtran grew up as an ork in the Inner City of Bethabal, where he made a lot of money off of betting and cheating on *hach'var* tournaments. He eventually joined a *hach'var*

team himself. At first he was terrible at it, and he bet on the other team. When he became better at the game, he bet on his own team. After his gambling crimes were discovered, he fled to Oshane and started up the current gang. Since his crimes have led to a warrant for his arrest from Throal guards, if discovered by them, and Nerii can't use her charms to dissuade them, he will fight to the death to keep from being captured.

His *gahad* tends to be set off when his freedom is threatened or he is accused of crimes, and especially when he is the target of thievery himself. He almost never has a *gahad* attack when people insult him personally or his leadership, as he is too self-confident and arrogant about his own abilities to listen to such insults.

Almidtran is teaching Fedet his skills so that he can be the next leader of the gang, angering Nerii—anger that she directs at Fedet, causing internal strife in the gang.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10 **Strength** (19): 8/2D6
Toughness (17): 7/D12 **Perception** (13): 6/D10
Willpower (9): 4/D6 **Charisma** (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 **Initiative:** 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7 **Physical Armor:** 5
Social Defense: 6 **Mystic Armor:** 0
Death Rating: 40 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown:** 8/2D6*
Unconsciousness Rating: 32
* Almidtran knows the Wound Balance skill.
Combat Movement: 32 **Full Movement:** 64

Skills

Artisan:

Acting (3): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Games of Chance (5): 11/D10+D8
Hach'var Tactics (5): 11/D10+D8
Throal Sports (5): 11/D10+D8

General:

Avoid Blow (5): 11/D10+D8
Conceal Weapon (5): 11/D10+D8
Fast Hand (5): 11/D10+D8
Fence (3): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (6): 12/2D10
Picking Pockets (6): 12/2D10
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Second Weapon (4): 10/D10+D6
Silent Walk (5): 11/D10+D8
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Streetwise (5): 11/D10+D8
Surprise Strike (6): 14/D20+D4
Swift Kick (4): 10/D10+D6
Throwing Weapons (6): 12/2D10

Unarmed Combat (6): 12/2D10
Wound Balance (6): 14/D20+D4

Equipment

Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)
Dagger (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Knife (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 6–10–12)
2× Throwing Daggers (Damage 10/D10+D6;
Range 15–25–30)
Short Sword (Damage 12/2D10)
Adventurer's Kit
Quiet-Fingers Gloves
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

50 silver pieces

Legend Points

505 Legend Points

Notes

Almidtran possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

ORK BUUNDAVIM THUG

“We can do it your way, but mine is less painful. For you.”

“The last person who said something like that to me spent two weeks and a lot of silver at the healer's before he could eat again.”

“You mess with me, you mess with all of my associates.”

While the term “*buundavim*” is native to Bartertown, the sort of person it describes can be found anywhere. From smuggling to protection rackets, illicit gambling to prostitution; if it makes money from somebody else's labor and avoids taxes, this person is into it. When enough people take up a trade, even an illegal one, they tend to organize, and that's how criminal gangs form.

The *buundavim* thug is not an independent operator—keep in mind that “*buundavim*” is plural. The thug is part of an ongoing criminal enterprise with a diverse income base. One day, the thug may be shaking down street vendors, the next standing watch while smuggled goods are moved, and the day after that, roughing up somebody who short-changed a prostitute. While the thug runs a lot of risks, with fines and jail being the least of them, he also stands to make a lot of money quickly and with little effort.

Successful *buundavim* can afford flashy clothes, jewelry, attractive members of their preferred gender, and the bribes necessary to keep away the tax collector and the Watch. Less successful gang members take bigger risks doing the grunt work, in hopes of rising through the ranks and enjoy-

ing what they see as the good life. If they have to kill a few people to achieve that goal, well, that's the cost of doing business. Use these statistics for Fedet and other ork *buundavim* in the gang, as well as the ork *buundavim* in **Panic in the Streets**, p. 92.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Willpower (8): 4/D6

Strength (14): 6/D10
Perception (8): 4/D6
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 7

Initiative: 7/D12
Physical Armor: 3
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 34
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 6/D10

Combat Movement: 34 **Full Movement:** 68

Skills

Artisan:

Acting (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Games of Chance (4): 8/2D6

General:

Avoid Blow (5): 12/2D10

Conceal Weapon (4): 11/D10+D8

Melee Weapons (5): 12/2D10

Read and Write Language (1): 5/D8

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Silent Walk (3): 10/D10+D6

Speak Language (2): 6/D10

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Streetwise (4): 8/2D6

Surprise Strike (3): 9/D8+D6

Throwing Weapons (5): 12/2D10

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)

Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)

Knife (Damage 7/D12; Range 6–10–12)

2 × Throwing Daggers (Damage 8/2D6; Range 15–25–30)

Adventurer's Kit

Leather Gloves

Trail Rations (1 week)

Traveler's Garb

Loot

D4 silver pieces, D10 copper pieces

Legend Points

185 Legend Points

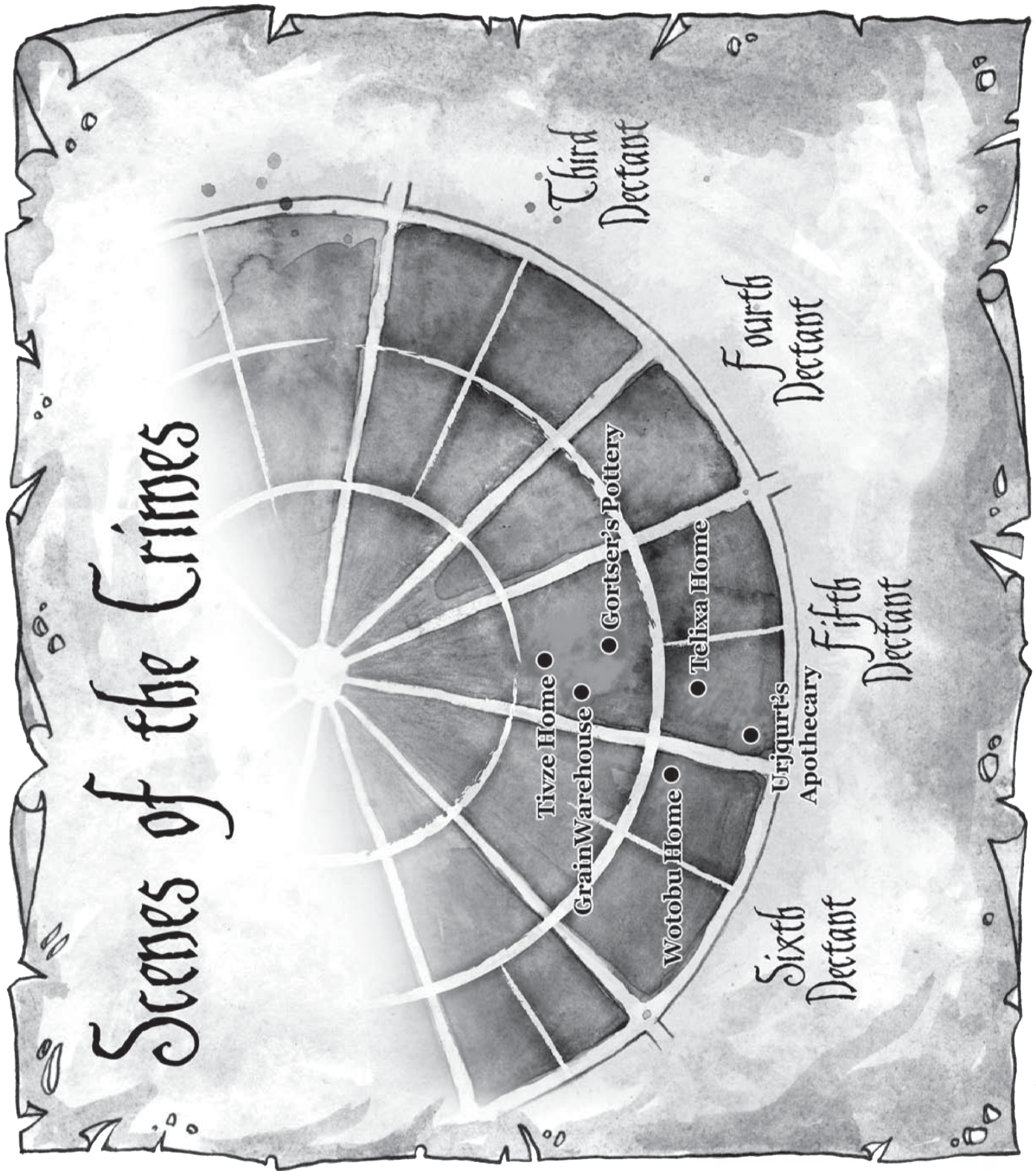
Notes

Buundavim thugs possess the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.





Scenes of the Crimes





• **FIN** •

OSHANE IS BURNING!

Deep under the mountains, in vast caverns hollowed out by skilled dwarf craftsmen, lie the Inner Cities of the Kingdom of Throal. Far removed from the halls of the dwarf kingdom in terms of travel time and political control, the Inner Cities provide a home for thousands of Name-givers. The other races, slowly beginning to outnumber the dwarfs, want more voice in their governance. The *chav'ao'ros* process, that organizes the neighborhoods into assemblies and provides a means for ordinary people to send their concerns up to the government, provides a small measure of democracy, but not enough to satisfy all of the demands.

Plagued by arson, and with the city watch either unable or unwilling to find the culprit, the *chav'ao'ros* assembly of the Fifth Dectant of the Inner City of Oshane turns to a group of adepts for help. The heroes walk straight into the ongoing conflict between the dwarf-led city government, rumored to be corrupt, and the primarily ork Dectant assembly, whose *gahad* has been collectively roused. Are the fires the work of someone trying to start another race riot? Or is there a more sinister cause? Can the heroes sort it out before one side or the other takes matters into their own hands?

Some days it's not good to be a hero.

Burning Desires is an adventure supplement for **Earthdawn**. Intended for Journeyman characters of any Discipline, this adventure takes place in the Kingdom of Throal. Requires use of the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**.



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