

Tradetalk

The Chaos Society Magazine

#6

Glorantha
Hero Wars
RuneQuest
Cthulhu
Elric!
Penelragon
Nephilim
Hawkmoon
Elfquest
Mythos



IN THIS ISSUE

Kingdom of Night • Alchemy rules for RQ
Cult of Lanbril • Thief cults • Istakux
Tower of Xud • Adventures in Bakshiaan

PRESS RELEASE:
OAKLAND, CA -- 9 MAY 2000

HERO WARS IS OUT!

Issaries, Inc. is very pleased to announce the release of Hero Wars

Hero Wars is a new roleplaying game designed by Robin D. Laws. It is a game of high fantasy and mythology set in the world of Glorantha. It is a story-telling system, not number crunching. It is fully scalable, has four different competing magic systems, and features an array of gods and monsters to support or harass hero characters.

"**Hero Wars** isn't RuneQuest," says Greg Stafford, President of Issaries, Inc. "This is an entirely new system that Robin has made for Glorantha. To me, it is closer to the real Glorantha than previous game systems." Glorantha has been known in gaming for over two decades, and this is the fifth game to be released about it.

Hero Wars is true to the established materials, but still has lots of new information about the already rich fantasy world.

"It is going out the door," says Stafford. "**Glorantha Trading Association** copies have been mailed, and wholesale orders are being shipped this week. It'll be in Europe in a week."

The line of books are all in a trade paperback format (8.25" x 5.25"), with illustrations by Lee Moyer, Marc Moreno, and Simon Bray.

Hero Wars, Roleplaying in Glorantha is 256 pages and retails for \$19.95. This core rule book explains all the basics you need to play.

Narrator's Book, Game Mastering in the **Hero Wars** is 176 pages and retails for \$14.95. These are narrator's rules, especially to oversee the larger scale of interactions, and explain the Otherworlds of the spirits, gods and of sorcery.

Deluxe Hero Wars is a complete boxed set which includes both **Hero Wars** and the **Narrator's Book** (which are also available separately), as well as the 112 page **Visions of Glorantha** (fiction and mythology), and handouts, which include glossary, character sheets, sample starting characters, rules synopsis, and maps. It comes in a sturdy box and retails for \$44.95.

To see more, see <http://www.glorantha.com>



Tradetalk

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Publisher: RuneQuest Gesellschaft, Köln e.V. - The Chaos Society - c/o Ingo Tschinke & André Jarosch, Schevemoorer Landstr. 33, D - 28325 Bremen, Germany; Telephone: +49/421/402634 Email: Tradetalk@t-online.de or Osentalka@aol.com

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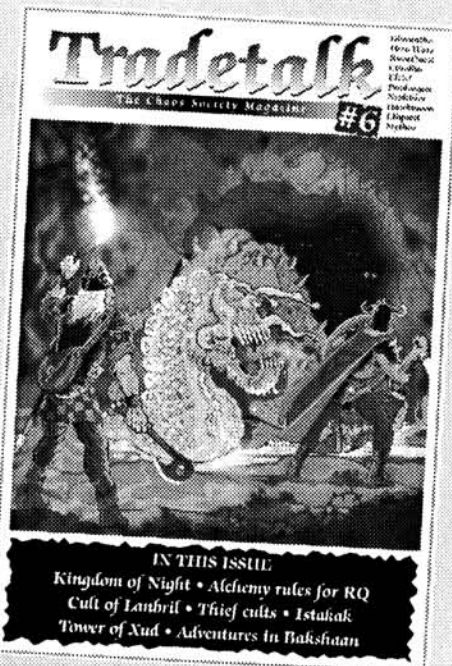
Subscriptions: A subscription of Tradetalk is valid for five issues 43,- DM, 22 EURO, 14 £ or 21 US\$. You can order directly in Europe. Send a postal order, international bank draft or eurocheque. Make it payable to RuneQuest-Gesellschaft e.V. We will make it possible to pay also with credit cards in the near future (Visa, American Express and MasterCard). For money transfer use the following bank account: RuneQuest-Gesellschaft e.V., Postbank Hamburg # 20010020, account # 103489-201. For subscriptions, or orders, please get into contact to:

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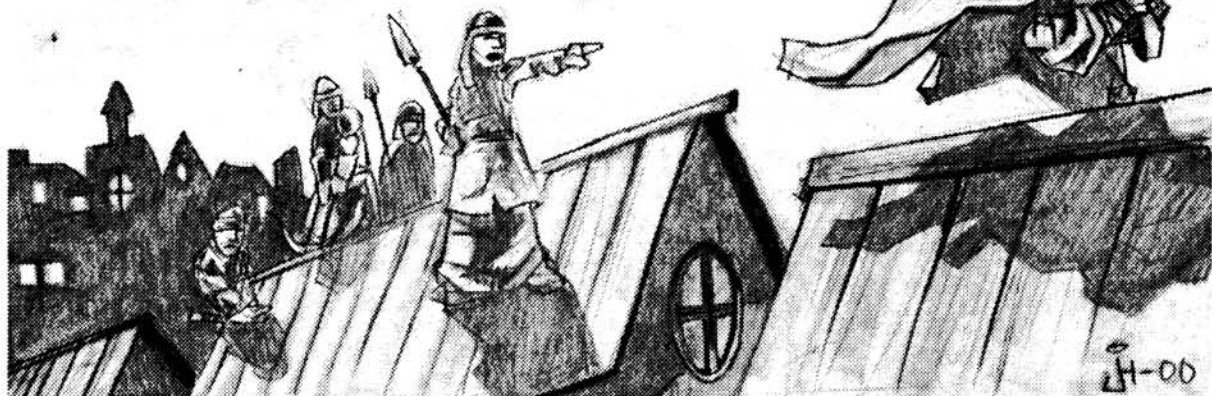
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EDITORIAL ...

Hi Fellows,



WELCOME! It is now time for our catch up issue, where we can publish some excellent material that did not fit into our *Ralios* (TT 2-3) and *Holy Country* (TT 4-5) issues. In this issue you will find the last part of Shannon Appel's "Kingdom of Night" an extensive write-up of the thief cult of Lanbril and its function in the community of Kethaela, and some material set in Safelster and east *Ralios*.

• NEWS •

Issaries has finally published its new *Glorantha* roleplaying game. *Hero Wars*, Role Playing in *Glorantha*, a 256 page paperback sized rulebook, is the future of *Glorantha*. It is intended to be of interest to narrators and players alike.

Narrator's Book, Game Mastering in the Hero Wars provides additional rules, scenarios, and further information for narrators.

Deluxe Hero Wars. Epic Roleplaying in Mythic *Glorantha* is a boxed set that contains the two books described above, a third book entitled *Glorantha Visions*, Insights into *Glorantha* with fiction and myths, two colour maps, blank Character Sheets, ready to go Characters, an extensive Glossary of Terms, and a Rules Synopsis. It's the ideal start for playing *Hero Wars*.

Also available is ***Glorantha, Introduction to the Hero Wars***, an updated, completely rewritten version of the Genertela boxed set. It is useful for narrators and players alike. It contains no game stats et al, but is the ideal starting supplement for people who want to learn more about *Glorantha* and the *Hero Wars*. Reviews of all of these products will be available in one of the next Issues of TT.

Also available since the last Issue of Tradetalk was published:

Tales of the Reaching Moon #18, the long awaited Lismelder special, with plenty of Orlanthi information.

MIG II - The Meints Index to *Glorantha*, the updated and revised Second Edition of the famous *Glorantha* Index, now in digest sized format.

Ye Booke of Tentacles Vol. II, 136 pages full of articles about *Glorantha*; including several on the Orlanthi, Sandy Petersen's Shaman rules, and some Elric!, *Call of Cthulhu*, and Nephilim bits.

King of Sartar, Issaries reprint of the Chaosium book about the Sartarite hero to come.

Glorantha Classics Vol. I: Pavis & Big Rubble, Moon Design Publications' reprint of the Chaosium boxed sets. Available as a limited edition, huge soft-cover book, and in an even more limited hardcover edition.

King of Dragon Pass, the wonderful computer game, set in the years of the resettlement of Dragon Pass.

Rumors at Chaosium tell us that there might be two new Elric! supplements in the future. **Corum** and a new Edition of **Hawkmoon** will be produced as Print on Demand Projects.

Call of Cthulhu 5.5th Edition is back in slightly revised hardcover format. Beyond the Mountains of Madness (with the Miskatonic University Antarctic Expedition Pack) is the biggest CoC campaign ever. Other scenario books have been published as well, with more *Cthulhu* Now scenario books to follow. Three *Cthulhu* Fiction books were published last year, as well as a *cthulhuid* plush doll.

Green Knight Publishing has published *Tales of Chivalry & Romance*, and *Tales of Magic & Miracles*, as well as *Saxons: Wolves in the Fold of Arthur's Britain*, a book of special interest for us Germans. Pendragon Fiction has brought us *Arthur: The Bear of Britain* and *To the Chapel Perilous*.

• CHAOS SOCIETY •

In April last year the RuneQuest Society changed their statutes for membership. All members of the Society are from this point on only supporting members, and not directly subscribers of Tradetalk. Therefore, we have given all members the chance to change their membership into a subscription. Through this change TT is no longer a membership magazine of the RuneQuest Gesellschaft/Chaos Society it has become a "normal" fanzine for RuneQuest, *Hero Wars*, and *Glorantha*. This statement is true only for Europeans, the subscription status for the USA and Australia may be different, depending on the membership rules there.

• WEB PRESENCE •

In the near future we will also have a presence on the internet. We are working on a web page and an internet shop for our products right now. You will find Tradetalk at www.tradetalk.de. With the internet shop we will make ordering products more easier through the use of credit cards.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

Ingo & André

Kingdom of Night

Part IV: THE THIRD AGE

by Shannon Appel



With the oceans closed and Kerofinela banned to humans we come to the Third Age of the world, which is the age we currently live in. It is also my age, the only one I have known. Though I have written of times long past they were not known to me personally. Few lived from before the Dawn to the Third Age. Ezkankekko did, but as we shall see his story ends here.

Throkblotten Leadhead
Priest of Ezkankekko

The Years of Isolation

AS WITH THE SECOND AGE our history of the Third Age must begin with dissent in Kerofinela. Remember that Kerofinela was a very different place after the Dragonkill War. The dwarves hid in their holes and humans were banned. There were three people who truly ruled the Pass: we Uz, the strange dragonewts, and the new beast people--of which the centaurs and durulz are the best known. Even the old name of Kerofinela was passing; the horror of the Dragonkill War had given it a new name--Dragon Pass.

Somehow, despite the fact that we ruled a great empty land, our Dagori Inkarth brothers found fault with us Uz from Kethaela. The first recorded skirmish between Kethaela and Dagori Inkarth occurred in 1142 S.T. It regarded raiding rights into Ginijii. In the decades that followed battles between us grew more frequent and

greater. 1207 S.T. marks the first true military conflict between our forces when the Uz of Kethaela, behind the banner of Vamargic Eye-necklace, and the Uz of Dagori Inkarth, behind the banner of Kajak-ab Braineater, met in open battle on the plains five miles northeast of the newborn Upland Marsh. It was an indecisive battle, but hundreds of good Uz warriors were killed while useless Elnu cowered.

As we Uz weakened a new enemy sought to take advantage--the corrupt half-Uz Tusk Riders. In 1222 S.T. they began to raid us Uz of Dragon Pass. Ezkankekko the Only Old One saw that Uzdom divided could not stand so he traveled to Dragon Pass in person. Knowing that there was no time for diplomacy he engaged Kajak-ab Brain Eater in a magical contest. He proved that he was the better Uz, and afterward she deferred to him. So did the Only Old One unite the Uz to face a common enemy. The Uz met the Tusk Riders and routed them.

But the Only Old One had not realized how much the beastmen of Dragon Pass had grown to resent the Dagori Inkarth Uz, just as the humans had an age before. As we Uz rested, gorged on our foes, the beastmen descended upon us with dragonewt allies, and engaged in a great slaughter. Our Elno lookouts failed us, as they always did. So it was that in 1222 S.T. we Uz of Kethaela were once more driven out of Dragon Pass.

At the same time that Uz fought in Dragon Pass we must take note of another occurrence: the coming of the Merchant Princes from Ralios. They appeared first in the barbaric lands of Slontos, trading with the Solanthi and the Ditali. We do not know exactly when these people made their first great journey, but by 1190 S.T. they were in Esrolia.

The Merchant Princes offered goods from Ralios, delivered by a western route that did not require travel through Dragon Pass. The first time they met the Only Old One they were so busy congratulating themselves for their bravery and heroism that they did not see the anger in his eyes. Never before had humans so usurped the role of Ezkanekko, son of Argan Argar, first trader of the surface world. It was a great betrayal. Where this new trade route should have strengthened the failing Kingdom of Night instead it weakened it, for the route gave power not to us Uz rulers but rather our human subjects. We should have been honored, I suppose, for humans usually reserved such great betrayals for their own kind.

In their own ways the coming of the Merchant Princes and the cataclysmic battle of 1222 S.T. did as much damage to the Kingdom of Night as the Closing of the oceans and the Dragonkill war had generations before. In 1223 S.T. the Only Old One had to do something he had never done before: he opened the governorship of Kethaela to humans and welcomed every one of them as equal to Uz, even if they did not swear loyalty to our gods. It was a last desperate act to save a crumbling kingdom that had been based on an economy that was now all but gone. In 1247 S.T., when the humans reported that a great red wound had appeared in the sky, we Uz were not surprised by the omen of doom.

There was a brief moment at the end of the Kingdom of Night when hope sprang



anew. After 1250 S.T. word began to filter from the north that a new tribe of humans had settled in Dragon Pass. In 1300 S.T. the Only Old sent the Colymar tribe from Esrolia to discover the truth of this rumor. They were able to settle in the land unmolested. There was great rejoicing in Akez Loradak the day runners returned with word from the Colymar. If Dragon Pass was truly open once more then commerce could begin again with the rich lands beyond. Preparations began to mount great trade expeditions.

Then, in 1313 S.T., a scrawny human washed up from the Mirrorsea, nearly dead. His name was Belintar.

The Fall of Ezkanekko

And here my chronicle will grow brief, for the era of the Kingdom of Night is nearly at an end, and the history of the so-called Holy Country has been well documented by many pharoic lap-beetles.

For reasons of his own Belintar began to war against the Only Old One. Belintar knew great magics that no one had ever seen before and remembered ancient myths that had been lost for millenia. His royal bearing gained him many followers, and he called back all of the Silver Age heroes of Kethaela to fight for him.

The Only Old One had many allies, among them the beastmen of Dragon Pass, the mixed tribe of the Kitori, and many of the human tribes of Heortland and Esrolia.

After two long years of struggle his armies gained the upper hand and the Only Old One killed Belintar with his own spear and then devoured him.

But, Belintar cheated. He stole the body of one of his followers so that he could live again. The people of Kethaela were so impressed by his feat that afterward many abandoned the banner of the Only Old One and instead gave their loyalty to Belintar. One by one each of the six parts of the Kingdom of Night betrayed Ezkanekko, beginning with the islanders.

After two more long years of struggle Belintar had forced the Only Old One to retreat to his last stronghold on the Shadow Plateau: Akez Loradak, the Palace of Black Glass. The battles there were epic. Ezkanekko fought fiercely. He even called up the Great Night Dragon but none of this was enough. Belintar scattered the Only Old One's remaining allies and even slew the Great Night Dragon, destroying its

society forever; its body diverts the course of the Creekstream River to this day.

What happens next has been written a thousand times, but still it pains me. Belintar shattered Akez Loradak, slew the Only Old One, and named himself pharaoh. Ezkanekko did not rise again. The year was 1318 S.T.

For reasons of his own the Pharaoh Belintar was content having destroyed the greatest Uz in the world; he did not follow it up by trying to exterminate our race, but rather retreated to his newly-raised City of Wonders in the middle of the Mirrorsea Bay. We Uz continued to live upon the Shadow Plateau but the swirling remnants of Akez Loradak made it no longer fit for other races.

Meanwhile Dragon Pass continued to open. People were not happy under the Pharaoh's rule, so, starting in 1325 S.T., the many Heortling tribes that had fled to Kethaela following the Dragonkill War returned to their ancestral homeland. Northern Dragon Pass opened in 1330 S.T. when Arim of Holay made his great journey; he would later form the kingdom of Tarsh. It did not matter, though, for it was fifteen years too late.

The pharaoh soon found himself a target for invasion. In 1330 S.T. some of the Slontos tribes began raiding east. In 1380 S.T. the beastmen began to war against the Pharaoh too. He held them off, but with none of the honor or integrity of

Ezkankekko. In 1383 S.T. a new threat appeared in the form of undead emerging from Upland Marsh.

Instead of offering aid the Pharaoh left his neighbors to their fate.

In 1470 S.T. Sartar of the Hendriki went north to Dragon Pass. There he reunited many of the Heortling tribes that had been sundered since the destruction of the EWF. He was a rare human of integrity who fostered peace among the races. It should not surprise us that such a great man could only gain glory by fleeing the stifling embrace of the Pharaoh's Unholy Country.

Unfortunately Sartar's descendants would betray his ideal, and would rain further indignities upon us Uz and our allies. In 1572 S.T. the fifth king of Sartar came to Heortland. He was named Tarkalor. Tarkalor forced a disagreement with the Uz then took offense when the Kitori of the Uz Woods tried to come to our defense. He raised an army, smashed the Kitori tribe, took their best land, and gave it to sun-lovers. This is how both the Sun Dome Temple and the Volsaxi tribe were founded.

In 1580 S.T. another great man left the Unholy Country. His name was Dormal and he opened the oceans again. He was born over two hundred and fifty years too late.

We may find consolation that where Ezkankekko's kingdom ruled for a timeless millenia the Pharaoh's Country ruled for less than three hundred years. In 1582 S.T., the very year of my birth, word came that Tarsh, in northern Dragon Pass, had been conquered. The conqueror was, of course, the evil Lunar Empire, whose birth had been heralded in 1247 S.T. when a hole was ripped in the sky.

Things only got worse for the Pharaoh after that. Sartar was conquered in 1602 S.T. The Unholy Country was invaded in 1605 S.T. In 1609 S.T. the Ditali tribe of Slontos began to raid the Pharaoh because of great bounties offered by the Lunars. In 1616 S.T. the Pharaoh's navy was crushed by Wolf Pirates, then his army was defeated by barbarian invaders from the west. Coward that he was the Pharaoh disappeared that year, during Holy Time. We may only pray that Zorak Zoran is even now gnawing upon his dead soul.

Things have only fared worse since the Pharaoh's disappearance, however. Esrolia was devastated in 1618 S.T. by the Slontos invaders. Karse was taken in 1619 S.T., and shortly after that all of Volsaxiland fell except for the city of Whitewall. This year, in 1620 S.T., Heortland followed. It is a bitter legacy that the Pharaoh left us, and we can only think that the Only Old One would have done much better, had he been the one facing the Lunars.

The Age is not over yet, but let me finish with a census, as I have throughout this history. In 1620 S.T. there is no kingdom in Kethaela, only independent peoples trying to survive. They are: the triolini, newtlings, and Pelaskites of the Mirrosea bay, and the dwarves and humans of

Caladralands, all of whom are trying to stay aloof of the modern wars; the shattered Esrolians, who are trying to recover from the depravations of the people of Slontos; the elves in the Arstola Forest, who mind only their own business; we Uz of the Shadow Plateau, who hide and wait; the Kitori in Heortland, scattered across the worst wastelands, never recovered from the Volsaxi invasion; and the Volsaxi and Hendriki people, both ruled by the Lunars, both placing all their hopes on the last city, Whitewall. The wind children and scattered Ingareens still live as well, though they seem to have little impact on the modern world. Our old allies in Dragon Pass have almost been lost from sight due to the red tide that has washed over them. The Sartarites, beast people, and dragonews all live, but only as servants to the lunar thugs.

And so my chronicle ends with a dark cloud settled over Kethaela. But, we must not despair, for there is an ancient prophecy that has been passed from one Ezkankekko Priest to another for almost three hundred years. It reads thus:

«When crimson waves wash
south,
And blackened flames
burn north,
When east meets west
in peace,
The One shall be
reborn

The tar shall
bubble forth,
In final days
of doom

The spear shall
rise again,
And pierce the
blood-red womb»

We priests of
Ezkankekko hold our
spears in hand, ready
for that day.

• **Shannon Appel** is an editor at Chaosium, and is the long-time publisher of the Chaosium Digest electronic fanzine. He has written professionally for *RuneQuest*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Nephilim*, and *Ars Magica*, and is the co-author of the *Broken Council LARP*.



ALCHEMY IS THE ART of creating special substances, called elixirs, which are often viewed as magical. It includes basic knowledge of geology, chemistry, metallurgy, astrology, ritual magic, and arcane philosophy, and is very similar to the Enchant, Summon, and Ceremony skills. Alchemy is a very demanding art, taking many years to master, and many days to exercise. As such, most alchemists are not suited for adventuring, preferring to hire others to do their legwork for them. However, when special ingredients are needed, or when the alchemist is even more suspicious of outsiders than most, one may travel into the field to obtain what they need.

Most alchemists are very secretive about their knowledge, and will teach their skills to an apprentice only after years of trusted association. Still, alchemical skills are sometimes appropriate for player characters to learn: some thief cults have limited alchemical abilities; the Lhankor Mhy cult maintains an Alchemists' "Guild," and will sometimes teach applicants; a player character dwarf might have alchemical skills; etc.

These rules are intended to be a simple representation of alchemy. Alchemy is a very complicated subject, with centuries of history and philosophy behind it, and no attempt has been made to represent most of the beliefs of historical alchemists. Thus, you will not find a discussion of the Elixir Vitae or the Philosopher's Stone in this article. Such forms of Higher Alchemy are beyond the scope of this article and the knowledge of the author, and it is up to individual gamemasters to develop these rules further if they are so inclined. The rules themselves are intended to be simple, using only existing mechanics from 3rd edition RuneQuest. However, they do draw many specific elements from the 1st/2nd edition alchemy rules.

ALCHEMY RULES FOR RUNEQUEST

by Stephen Martin
with help from Jörg Baumgartner



ALCHEMY SKILLS

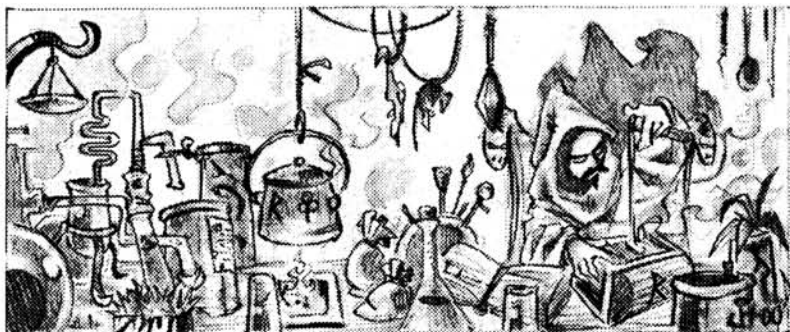
Alchemy is a Magic skill with a base success chance of 0%. It allows the user to successfully create alchemical substances for which he knows the formula. In addition to the skill of Alchemy, an alchemist must also know the formula for the substance he seeks to create. Alchemical formulae are "recipes" for making substances such as poisons, "magic" elixirs, and smoke bombs. In addition to listing the specific ingredients needed, they specify how the ingredients are prepared, treated, combined, and invoked to create the substance desired. As such, each formula is treated as a separate skill. When learned (whether through research or teaching), alchemical skills have a base chance of success of $1d6 + \text{the alchemist's Lore skill bonus}$. Knowledge of one alchemical skill does not aid the character in learning additional formulae, even those for similar substances.

Alchemy is also used to prepare certain special types of ingredients, such as "pure" metals, essential earths, and various distilled essences. These substances are common ingredients in many alchemical formulae, and most alchemists spend a great portion of their time creating supplies of these semi-magical substances. Additionally, many of these substances are useful as components in enchantments and other rituals, and some alchemists specialize in the creation of such substances solely for the purpose of selling them to temples, magicians, and sages.

Note: the following rules use the word "elixir" generically. In most cases, an alchemical substance can take many forms, the exact one depending on the specific Formula. Thus, a "healing elixir" could take the form of a liquid, a powder to be mixed in water, or a compress or ointment to be placed on a wound. Knowledge of creating one specific form of an alchemical substance does not give any knowledge in crafting a different form, though a highly skilled alchemist could attempt to research such a change to the Formula, at great time and expense.

ALCHEMY PROCESS

Once an alchemist has gathered all of the ingredients, he can begin to create a batch of the alchemical substance. Although it varies with the nature and complexity of the Formula, generally most substances can be created with a full day's work, assuming that there are no problems. Especially complicated Formulae (such as those known to many dwarf alchemists) might take longer to complete, perhaps taking as long as a week or more. This is at the discretion of the gamemaster.



When an alchemist seeks to create a batch of an elixir, he must succeed both at Alchemy and the specific Formula. A single $d100$ is rolled; if it is less than both the Alchemy and Formula skill levels, the batch was created successfully. If the roll was greater than one or both skills the attempt failed; the ingredients will be completely ruined, and must be gathered, prepared, and combined again. A fumbled roll indicates that the alchemist created something other than intended, usually (but not always) without realizing it. Thus, a poison antidote might create a poison instead; a healing elixir might cause the imbiber to fall asleep; a smoke bomb might explode in his face, doing damage; etc.

Formulae must be followed exactly, as any substitution of ingredients or procedure is dangerous and unlikely to succeed. If an alchemist attempts to replace one ingredient, changes the way an ingredient is prepared, changes the form of the substance (i.e., from a potion to a powder), or otherwise makes a minor alteration to the Formula, he must succeed in a critical Alchemy roll for the elixir to be created successfully. Once this has been accomplished, the alchemist may attempt the same substitution again in the future with only a normal success roll, in effect having created a second Formula. Substitution of two ingredients or processes generally causes too great a change for any degree of success to be allowed, though the gamemaster may make exceptions to this rule as he or she sees fit.

Alchemy requires precision, and so normally only small batches are created, enough for one dose of a poison, antidote, or elixir; a single smoke bomb or flare; etc. Larger batches can be made, but this makes measurements (in the rare case where a formula specifies exact measurements), preparations, and thorough combining of ingredients much more difficult and time-consuming. For every increase in the number of batches, 10% is subtracted from the user's Alchemy skill ($\text{not the skill for the Formula}$).

Example: Verek has an Alchemy skill of 55%. He is in a hurry, and so seeks

to create three batches of Snake Venom Poison at one time. He would need to roll a 35 or less on $1d100$ to succeed (assuming the roll was also less than his Snake Venom Poison Formula skill level). If additional time is taken, the gamemaster may reduce or even eliminate this penalty.

All elixirs have a base potency rating (POT) of 1. All alchemical elixirs have a POT, for even if the substance has a static effect it will usually have a varying duration during which its effects last. Creating more potent substances is more difficult and time-consuming, and the ingredients are often more expensive and difficult to locate. For each additional POT the alchemist attempts to create, 5% is subtracted from the Formula skill level and 1 to 4 hours are added to the creation time. As such, an alchemist can never create an elixir with a POT greater than his Formula skill level divided by 5. Even when certain magical or otherwise potent ingredients are used (such as the feather of a Thunder Bird instead of a mundane eagle), this negative modifier applies, since such substances are also inherently more dangerous to work with. Such powerful ingredients generally offer their increase to POT without any additional time commitment, however.

Example: Eshnael has a Mineral Poison Formula skill level of 92%. If he attempted to create a poison with a POT of 12, he would need to roll a 37 or less for his attempt to be successful (since his Alchemy skill level is at 98%, this is the only skill level we need to be concerned about). The gamemaster would also determine how many additional hours it took Eshnael to create this more potent elixir, based on the complexity of the Formula and the nature of the ingredients. If he used standard ingredients, his time might increase by 10 hours. If he used ice from the top of Mount Kerofin instead of from a local ice merchant or created by other alchemical means, the increase might take no additional time at all.

AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF INGREDIENTS

Regardless of the skill of the alchemist, more potent alchemical substances can only be created if quality ingredients are obtained. The gamemaster must determine how difficult ingredients are to obtain, how long it takes to locate them, how much they will cost (or how long it will take the alchemist to locate them himself), and the greatest potency of substance that may be created with a batch of ingredients. Successful use of both Alchemy and an appropriate second skill (generally Plant Lore, Mineral Lore, or Animal Lore) may allow an alchemist to improve the quality of a batch of ingredients, at the gamemaster's option. Generally, a single d100 roll is made. If it is lower than both skill rolls, the maximum POT of the substances will be increased by 1d3. If the roll is higher than both skills the batch has been ruined, and new ingredients will have to be obtained.

Temples, guilds, thief rings, and other organized groups of alchemists will usually specialize in only a few Formulae. Because of this, they will generally have quantities of the ingredients easily available to members who know Alchemy and the appropriate Formula. Such ingredients are still not free, of course, and will usually cost around 20 Lunars per maximum POT the ingredients can produce. Such ingredients are never sold to outsiders. Additionally, large cities may have specialty shops that carry some of the more mundane ingredients required by alchemists. This is especially likely to be true in cities that have a large number of alchemists residing there.

When Alchemy is used to refine or distill an essence or other essential substance, only a successful Alchemy roll is needed. The essence or essential created also begins with a base POT of 1. In the case of such substances, which are useful only as ingredients, the POT represents the maximum potency any elixir created with these ingredients can have. Thus, an Essence of Fire of POT 7 limits any elixir created with it to a POT of 7, regardless of the quality of other ingredients or the skill of the alchemist or magician. Such semi-magical substances usually have special storage requirements, and quickly lose their potency (or cause damage to their surroundings) if not sealed in the correct type of container. The method described above may be used to increase the maximum potency of such ingredients, at the gamemaster's option.

SOME "COMMON" ALCHEMICAL SUBSTANCES

No indication is given in these rules as to the costs associated with either creating, selling, or purchasing these substances. I do not profess to a great enough understanding of RW economics, let alone Gloranthan economics, to try to set such prices, and feel that the individual gamemaster is a much better judge for such things. As mentioned above, 20 Lunars per potential potency is a good guide for the cost of ingredients, keeping in mind that the cost of the final potion will be greater than the sum of the ingredients, to reflect the amount of time, the many years it takes to master the skills of alchemy, etc.

Members of organizations with alchemical skills can be expected to get a discount when purchasing substances from their own cult or guild, with 50% being a good guide. Even with this discount, it is very expensive for a thief to use one of these elixirs or substances on a simple second-story job, explaining why the substances are uncommon and why player character alchemists are likely to prefer finding ingredients on their own rather than purchasing them. So are adventures begun.

ADHESIVES

Adhesives are substances that cause two or more objects to stick together. Adhesives are generally in some form of liquid, and act as a Glue spell of STR 1 for each POT in the substance. An adhesive will generally last an hour, unless it is affected by a solvent before this time limit. Depending on the Formula, it may last 1 hour per POT not used for glue strength, so that an alchemist might use 5 POT to give the adhesive a Glue STR of 5, and another 3 potency so that the adhesive will be effective for 4 hours. As with other alchemical substances, a Formula will normally be fixed in the ratio between potency and duration, so that the alchemist has no ability to change one or the other.

HEALING ELIXIRS

This elixir heals damage taken by the character. Usually, a healing elixir is applied to a specific hit location, and will cure damage only in that location. Some Formulae create healing elixirs that are imbibed, in which case they use their full POT to attempt to heal the single hit location that has sustained the most damage. A few rare Formulae create elixirs that are imbibed, but which act to heal general Hit Point damage only.

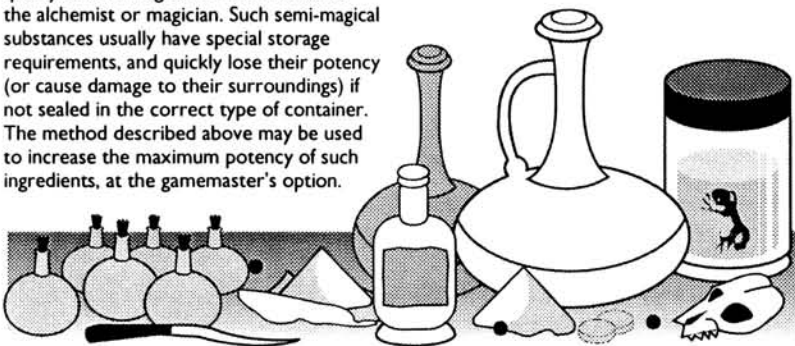
The POT of a healing elixir is matched on the resistance table against the damage done to the hit location (applied as if it were a potency). (Healing elixirs that cure general Hit Points are instead matched against the total amount of damage the character has sustained.) If the healing elixir is successful, the full POT takes effect. If the roll fails and the healing elixir POT was greater than the amount of damage, any excess POT still takes effect. The POT of the elixir that affects the character is applied directly to the damage taken in that hit location (or to general Hit Points, as applicable). Excess points of effect are lost, and cannot be applied to other wounded areas.

Example: Rurik has been wounded in the arm by a troll, so he applies some healing elixir to that location. It has a potency of 8, and his arm has taken 6 points of damage. This needs a roll of 40 or less. On a 37, the full damage is cured by the elixir, though the extra 2 points are wasted. If the roll was greater than 41, 2 points of damage would still be healed in the hit location, possibly returning it to functional use.

Generally, a character can only be affected by one method of treatment every hour, and a given hit location can be affected only once per day. Thus, a second healing elixir could not be used on that character until an hour had passed, and could not be used on the same hit location until the next day, even if it took damage again later. The gamemaster may determine that Spirit Magic healing spells and use of the First Aid skill are included in this limitation.

Finally, note that no healing elixir, regardless of its form or potency, can be used to restore life to a dead being, or to reattach a severed limb. At the gamemaster's option, healing elixirs will stop bleeding in a location if it heals enough damage.

Some types of healing elixirs exist that have other effects than curing damage. Some types of medicine apply their POT to help an afflicted individual resist disease, others might block pain for 10 minutes per POT (without actually curing any damage),



while still others might help to reduce the risk of infection. Some healing elixirs might combine curing damage with one or another of these effects, though as normal the POT would have to be split between curative and other effects.

POISONS

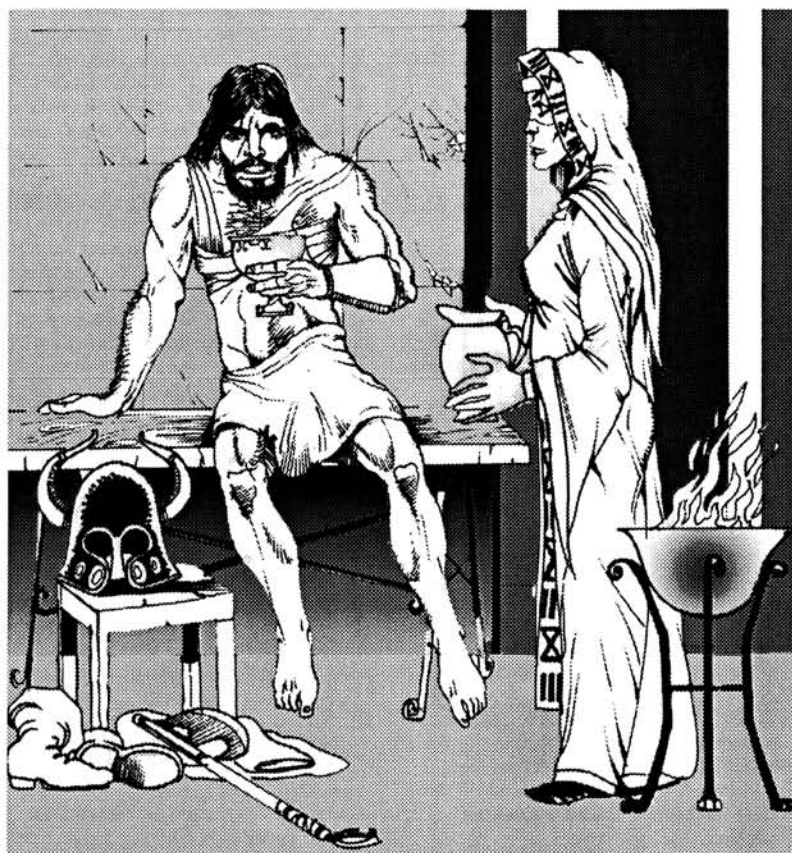
Poisons are substances that are harmful if they are ingested or enter the bloodstream, but are generally not dangerous if they simply make skin contact. Unlike acids, the effects of poisons are not immediate, taking anywhere from 1 round to several hours to affect a character. This is a specific characteristic of the Formula of the poison, and must be determined by the gamemaster. Also unlike acids, damage from poisons is neither automatic nor local, affecting the character's general Hit Points directly.

Few alchemical poisons reach the potency or rapidity of those Nature provides, and so most Formulae for poisons have the venom of various creatures as primary ingredients. However, the use of Alchemy to refine these poisons is necessary to ensure the poisons will remain relatively safe to handle, as well as helping ensure that they retain their potency (when properly stored, of course). Additionally, most poisons have a distinctive taste, and part of many Formulae is an attempt to disguise this taste by various methods. Thus, one alchemical Formula for poison might only be effective if it is specifically combined with wine before it is ingested.

When a poison is ingested or otherwise affects a character (such as Blade Venom entering a wound, or inhaling poison gas), the POT of the poison is matched against the CON of the character. If the poison overcomes the CON on the resistance table, the full POT is done as damage to general Hit Points. If the resistance roll fails, 1/2 the POT of the poison is still done as damage to general Hit Points.

Some types of poison are weaker, affecting a Hit Location rather than the imbiber's general Hit Points. In terms of game mechanics they work the same, matching their POT against the location Hit Points rather than general Hit Points. Such poisons often cause paralysis to the location rather than (or in addition to) the actual damage. This paralysis usually lasts ten minutes per full POT of the poison (even if only part of the POT affects the location). Note that this type of poison cannot be imbibed, and must be applied directly into the blood stream at the affected location, such as through use of poisoned blowgun darts.

These rules specify six classes of poisons, though gamemasters are free to add additional categories or subdivisions as they wish.



Spider Venom
Scorpion Venom
 (including Manticore, Scorpion-Man) (rare)
Snake Venom (including Wyvern)
Herbal Poison
Mineral Poison (rare)
Poison Gas (rare)

POISON ANTIDOTES

Poison antidotes can be taken to reduce or eliminate the effects of poisons. However, to be effective they must be taken after the poison is ingested but before it has actually caused damage to the character. If taken during this time, the POT of the antidote is matched against the POT of the poison. If the antidote is successful, the POT of the antidote is subtracted from the POT of the poison before the poison resistance roll is made. If the roll is failed, the poison POT is still reduced by 1 for each point of POT of the antidote greater than the POT of the poison. Depending on the specific Formula, the poison antidote may be taken up to 30 minutes in advance and still be effective if the character is poisoned.

Thus, use of an antidote can reduce or even eliminate the damage from the poison. However, antidotes are specific to the type

of poison (see above), and taking an antidote for scorpion venom will be of no help if the character was bitten by a snake. Also, remember that poison antidotes are rare in the real world, and usually quite limited, and this should be reflected in Glorantha. Thus, the troll cult of Orani [Aranea] might have alchemical skills to develop Spider Venom antidote, but even large alchemical guilds would rarely have this knowledge.

Certain types of antidotes may be useful against other types of poisons, at the gamemaster's discretion. Such partial antidotes should reduce the poison POT by only 1/2 their POT (rounding down), and should have no reduction if the resistance roll fails, regardless of the POT of the antidote. Suggested substitutions are Scorpion and Spider Venom antidotes, and Poison Gas and Mineral Poison antidotes.

Example: Zero swallows a poison of POT 8. He happens to have a vial of the appropriate antidote, and swallows it immediately. This antidote has a POT of 6. Zero rolls 1d100 and gets a 23 (less than the needed roll of 30), and so the antidote's POT of 6 is reduced from the poison's, leaving a remaining POT of 2 to match against his CON. Zero will

probably be fine. If he had rolled a 31 or higher, the full POT of the poison would have been matched against his CON. However, if the antidote had had a POT of 12, even a failed roll would have deducted 4 (POT 12 - POT 8) from the poison's potency, leaving a POT of 4 to attack his CON.

SOLVENTS

"Solvent" is used generically in these rules to include any substance that causes immediate harmful effects upon surface contact. Thus, it includes acids, alkali, and certain types of rare contact poisons. Most such substances are quite rare.

Solvents cause damage to location Hit Points equal to their Potency, or to Armor Points equal to 1/2 their Potency. POT in the Formula must be divided among these effects. Thus, an alchemist might create a solvent with a POT of 3 against living creatures, but with a POT of 9 against rock, metal, etc. Most Formulae create solvents good only against one or the other of these effects, or in a certain proportion over which the alchemist has no control.

Against living tissue, the full POT of the solvent is applied as damage to the location Hit Points. If the solvent is splashed across multiple Hit Locations, the full POT must be divided among these areas. Armor may protect until it is destroyed, depending on how extensively it covers the affected location.

Against Armor Points, a solvent causes 1 point of damage for each 2 points of POT that exceed the Armor Point rating. Thus, a solvent of POT 6 would do 1 point of damage to an object with 4 Armor Points. If the solvent has a lesser POT than the object's Armor Points, no damage is done regardless of the amount of solvent used.

At the gamemaster's option, a solvent may have full effect against the Armor Points of a single type of substance, at the cost of having no effect on other materials, even those with Armor Points. Thus, a Formula might create a solvent that does its full POT as damage to iron, but which has no effect even on other metals. Solvents may also have additional effects, such as causing general Hit Point damage instead of or as well as the targeted damage (at the rate of 1 point per 5 POT), cause loss of muscular control or use of sight, etc. This is at the gamemaster's option, and generally involves increases in the cost, complexity, or time requirement of the specific Formula.

OTHER ELIXIRS

Alchemists generally do not create actual magical substances. However, certain substances have similar effects to some spells, and many common people believe

that these elixirs are magical. Thus, an alchemist who uses herbs and the heart of a deer to create a potion that increases strength would be viewed as a magician, even though no actual enchantments are performed, no magic points or POW are spent, and spells like Detect Magic or Dispel Magic have no effect on the elixir.

Whenever a "magic" elixir is imbibed, the POT of the elixir is matched against the CON of the imbiber. If it is successful, the full POT of the elixir affects the individual. If the roll fails, only the POT of the elixir that is greater than the CON of the individual will affect him or her (in the same manner as described in the above examples for solvents and poison antidotes). Thus, even most beneficial elixirs must overcome the resistance of the character's body to have full effect.

Elixirs exist that increase (or decrease) characteristics, attributes, and skills, affect perceptions and emotions, and even that affect a character's ability to perform magic. Some "common" elixirs are described below, but the gamemaster should feel free to create others. Also, remember that these elixirs can take many forms: a liquid that is drunk, a lotion that is rubbed into the skin, a powder that is blown into the face of the target, etc.

An elixir that increases or decreases a characteristic (such as STR or DEX) cannot exceed certain physical limits. An increase cannot take a characteristic beyond the Species Maximum, and a decrease cannot take a characteristic below Species Minimum. Species Maximum is defined as the highest roll possible for the characteristic, plus 1 per die rolled and 1 for any add. Species Minimum is defined as the number of dice rolled for the characteristic or the amount of any add to the roll, whichever is greater.

Example: Humans have a STR range of 3d6. This gives a Species Maximum for human STR of 18 (highest roll) +3 (number of dice rolled) = 21. Species Minimum is 3, the number of dice rolled, since there is no add. Elves have a STR range of 2d6+2. This gives a Species Maximum of 14 (maximum roll) +2 (number of dice rolled) +1 (for the add, whether +1 or +20) = 17. Species minimum is the greater of 2 (number of dice rolled) or 2 (amount of the add), and so is 2.

Confusion Elixir

The perceptions and memories of the imbiber of this elixir are changed, as if he had been overcome by a Befuddle spell. This effect lasts for 5 minutes for each POT that affects the character. Unlike Befuddle, the effects of this elixir cannot be shaken off. Concentration rolls are reduced by 5% per POT that affects the character; a successful

roll allows the character to act normally during that melee round only.

Endurance Elixir

This elixir revives and energizes the imbiber. Each POT that affects the character increases the character's Fatigue Points by 1d6. This effect lasts for 5 minutes per full POT of the elixir (even if it does not overcome the character's CON). However, when the elixir's effects end, the full FPs are deducted back out of the character's FP total. This can take a character below his negative FP threshold, with effects as described in RuneQuest.

Fanaticism Elixir

This elixir causes the character to lose control of his emotions, particularly anger. The character will be irritable for 5 minutes per POT that affects him. If he enters combat he will act as if overcome by a Fanaticism spell until the elixir's effects end.

Paralyzing Elixir

This elixir causes a character to lose control of his or her actions, making it harder to move. This causes effects as a Slow spell, and also reduces all Agility, Attack, Manipulation, Parry, and Stealth skills. Each 5 POT that affect a character act as 1 point of Slow; each POT that affects the character act as a -5% on all of the listed skills. The effects of this elixir generally last 5 minutes per full POT, even if the full POT does not affect the character.

Power Blasting Elixir

This elixir makes it more difficult for the imbiber to work magic. It causes the character to immediately lose magic points equal to the POT of the elixir that affects him or her. As normal, if magic points fall to 0 the character will fall unconscious. This elixir has no duration; magic points are regained as normal. Note that because this elixir is not magical, it does match its POT against the CON of the victim, not the POW. Knowledge of the Formula to create this elixir is very rare.

Power Restoring Elixir

This elixir boosts the imbiber's magical energy. In game terms, each POT that affects the character increases magic points by 1. There is no duration associated with this elixir, but magic points cannot be increased above the character's POW. Note that because this elixir is not magical, it does match its POT against the CON of the victim, not the POW. Knowledge of the Formula to create this elixir is very rare.

Sleep Elixir

This elixir causes the imbiber to fall asleep within 5 minutes. The character will sleep for 5 minutes for each point of POT that affects him or her, whether or not the

elixir overcomes his or her CON. If the character does not fall asleep (because the POT is lower than his CON, and fails to overcome it), he still suffers a negative modifier to all skill rolls (including magic use), because of the drowsiness caused by this substance. This negative is generally 5% per full POT of the sleep elixir.

Strength Elixir

This elixir increases the physical strength of the imbiber. STR is increased by 1 point per POT that affects the character. This increase lasts for 10 minutes per full POT of the elixir, even if the full POT does not affect the character. When the elixir's effects end, the character immediately loses twice as many Fatigue Points as he had gained STR. This potion cannot take a character's STR over their Species Maximum, as defined above.

Weakness Elixir

This elixir weakens the imbiber, making them unable to use their muscles and strength as effectively. STR is reduced by 1 for each POT that affects the character. This STR loss lasts for 10 minutes per full POT of the elixir, even if the full POT does not affect the character. This potion cannot reduce STR below the character's Species Minimum, as defined above.

SOME LANBRIL ALCHEMICAL SUBSTANCES

Lanbril alchemists know some of the standard elixirs (the exact ones varying by ring) and have developed some specific Formulae of their own. The following substances are collected from several different rings, and no one ring would possess the secrets to all of them. These substances are often prepared as dusts and packed in parchment spills for hurling or in small tubes from which the dust is blown. Sometimes the compounds are liquids giving off potent

vapors or acting through skin contact. A standard cloud of dust or vapor will fill 3 cubic meters before dissipating. The range will be no more than 3m, requiring a successful Jump, Dodge, or Climb roll (as determined by the gamemaster) for the thrower to escape the effects.

Other alchemical devices and compounds are available to Lanbril thieves. Some possible Formulae might create lubricants for hinges or rusted grates, acids to use against locks, skin lubricants that make escaping from ropes or chains much easier, and Forget gas (as the special thief cult spell). The gamemaster should use these and the following well-known items as guides. The spirit of the thief cults is to counter the strong magical defenses

of much of Glorantha society by means of tricks, gadgets, and well-polished skills, and this is reflected in the alchemical substances Lanbril alchemists create.

Thunder Lung Dust

When a character inhales this substance, the POT is matched against his CON, as described above. For 1 minute per POT that affects him, he will sneeze, choke, cough, and generally undergo upper respiratory distress, so that he can do nothing but clutch his sides and suffer. Any action attempted during this time requires a successful Concentration roll, movement rate is reduced by half, and only one action can be attempted each round.

Scent-Stop Dust

This substance is used to block the scent trail left by an individual. A single dose of the substance covers 10 meters of trail, and reduces all Track by Scent rolls of followers by 10% per POT. The most common Formula creates a dust that lasts for as long as the scent does, effectively blocking the track forever.

A variation of this substance would disguise the scent of the trail by substituting another scent in its place, such as of a deer, wolf, or trollkin. The effects (i.e., modifiers to the Track roll of followers) remains identical in most cases, though if the tracker is intelligent he or she may be suspicious of unusual scents (trollkin in a human city, etc.), and because of this may continue to follow the "new" trail.

Stink Dust

This substance is used to mark an object or entity with a distinctive scent that makes it easy to trail. Groups that know one of these Formulae usually have a specific type of animal that is trained to follow the scent. Any object so marked gives +5% per POT to any Track by Scent

rolls used by an intelligent tracker or a trained unintelligent tracker. Some substances create smells so strong that even humans can follow them (though their base Track by Scent skill level is 0%). Once used, this substance is generally effective for a full day, possibly longer, depending on weather, means taken to disguise or wash off the scent, etc.

Smoke Bomb

A typical smoke bomb consists of compressed powders burning in ceramic jars, or of volatile liquids stored in an easily smashed container. Once the smoke bomb is activated, a cloud of deep black or bright white opaque smoke is released, which rapidly fills a small area. Very rare Formulae might create smokes of different colors. The smoke is generally non-toxic and does not have a strong odor, but an intense enough dose can cause a person who breathes in the smoke to cough or even take damage. Smoke bombs are generally used as signaling devices, to aid in escaping, or to startle and confuse enemies.

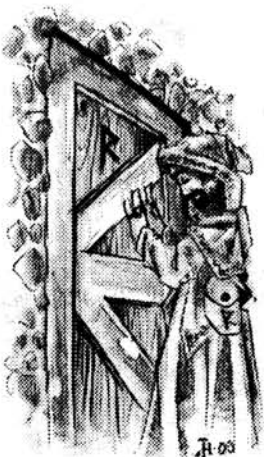
A cloud of smoke affects individuals who rely upon sight or smell as if they were in total darkness, with appropriate negative modifiers to skill use. (Trolls, dwarfs, and other creatures that have special senses are not so affected.)

A smoke cloud will cover 1 cubic meter of area for each POT it possesses, and so they are best used in enclosed areas. The cloud will remain in place for a variable length of time, depending on prevailing wind conditions, availability of windows and doors to let the smoke out of a room, etc. A cloud of smoke will last a base of 1 minute. Certain Formulae might last longer at the expense of covering a small area, remaining in effect for 1 minute per POT used for this purpose. As normal, the ratio of area to duration is a function of the Formula, and cannot be changed.

Flare

Flares cause bright flames that last from one melee round up to five minutes or more. They consist of powders compressed into paper or ceramic containers. They can be made to burn in any flame color (determined by the specific Formula), and can even be designed to propel burning material into the air, like a Roman candle. A flare burns for 1 full turn per POT it possesses.

Most flares are resistant to extinguishing by normal means such as water or smothering, though again this depends on the Formula used. If a burning flare hits something, it may cause damage as a small fire (and may also ignite a normal fire), though usually not more than 1 point of damage per 2 POT of the flare.



Lanbril

King of Thieves

by **Stephen Martin**

with assistance from Jörg Baumgartner and Bryan J. Maloney
based on material by Anders Swenson and Greg Stafford

INTRODUCTION

THIEVES AND OTHER self-seeking scum plague all civilized communities. Not all thieves are members of one of the many thief cults, for many accepted gods have thieving abilities. Orlanth thieves follow the tradition of their god the Adventurer and often try especially daring malfeasancess. Tricksters know their god made the first theft, and are often thieves, usually trying to embarrass their victims as much as seeking wealth. Many thieves worship no gods at all, depending on their own skill to bring success and evade capture.

Still, many locales have their own persistent and illegal thief gods. In Orlanthi cosmology, Lanbril is the name given to the First Thief, and the practices of most of the local thief deities follow the general format described in this article. The Lanbril thief cults ignore fictional conflict, allowing the criminal to practice his trade with some degree of protection from cursory community detection. In addition, most thief cults are not limited to thieves alone, and can include brigands, highwaymen, and all manner of similar members of the Orlanthi "under-society." Some few Lanbril factions embrace a higher code of ethics, but usually only the rare individual member will hold to such a view.

Other lands in the world claim similar gods, with strange and exotic names. There are many thief gods, but perhaps all are disguises of Lanbril, King of Thieves!

MYTHOS AND HISTORY

The myths of the various thief gods are all different. Most seem to have been heroes within Time, great thieves who were so skilled that their followers remember them and pass on their secrets, and offer them some degree of worship. Many of these thief rings do know the name of Lanbril, either as the father, teacher, or god of their hero. The stories told about Lanbril within these rings vary, but some common elements can be gleaned from comparing many of these stories.

Lanbril was a son of Grandfather Life, who was called Grandfather Mortal after his death. In Godtime, humans came late into the world, and did not gain the powers and realms that the older beings had. This had happened before, but humans were so weak that they could not force a place for themselves in the world,

and so they followed the various gods for protection.

But not all humans were happy with this subservience to greater powers. Lanbril was one such human. He claimed that humans were the equals of the gods, and like Umah before him he demanded a realm of his own. But the gods rejected him as inferior, because his father had been killed by Death, which could not (yet) touch them.

Lanbril was enraged at this, and although he did not go to the desperate lengths of some other rejected deities, like Ragnagar, he was determined to take a place for himself. If the other gods thought him inferior, let them so believe, for it would make them easier targets. Lanbril would excel, and the excellence would be his own, something to be cherished because of its very privacy.



Lanbril studied the ways of deceit, and perfected the techniques of seeming not to be doing what he was doing. Whereas other gods worked with energy, the Elements and Powers, he rejected these in favor of physical skill and covert manipulation. He cultivated disorder, setting lesser gods against each other so that they would pay little attention to his actions.

Lanbril professed allegiance to the gods, and followed Orlanth for a time. When he had learned all he wanted he left Orlanth, and spent time with Eumal the Trickster. This he did many times, with many deities, and through his mastery stole minor magics belonging to them. His followers say that he despised some powerful spells as of no use to him, but it is speculated that the higher magics were too powerful for one who was practically a mortal human.

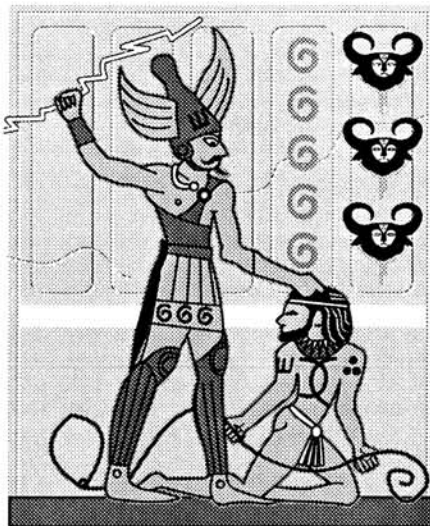
After a while, Lanbril's desire to prove his worth twisted, for the rage and disdain he felt festered in his soul. At some point, he turned from a wish to prove himself, to the seeking of revenge against all the gods, and his mad influence permeated the world. He performed many great thefts at this time, and often traded the things he stole to other gods, thus helping to spread the powers of the gods among each other and lesser beings. One time he stole Orlanth's lasso, and then gave it to Urox in exchange for protection from Orlanth when he discovered the theft. He was exiled from different tribes of gods at different times because of his thefts, but he always returned or found another group who did not know him, or who believed him when he protested his innocence.

Nothing is known or said of Lanbril's actions during the Chaos Wars, but he obviously survived. During the Star Age, Lanbril taught some mortals to survive by skill, cunning, and theft, and by watching out for themselves first. No one knows what happened to Lanbril after the Dawn, but his followers became scattered and now none has full access to his secrets. Some thieves go so far as to say that this was planned by Lanbril, so that no thief could become powerful enough to challenge him.

ICONOGRAPHY

Lanbril has no universal symbols or representations. Even those thief rings who recognize him usually represent their own hero instead. Sometimes images are small statues or paintings, but more often they are semi-secret signs used by thieves to recognize one another. Thus, in the city of Pavis the Black Fang Brotherhood uses daggers painted black to represent their god, and members of the cult use these to identify themselves to their brethren.

The God Learners attempted to quantify and unify the various thief cults, much as they tried to do with the Tricksters. However, the secretive nature of the thief cults made this difficult, and no universal temples or worship practices were established. They associated Lanbril with the runes of Disorder (for he practiced his trade regardless of the consequences



to others), Illusion (for he learned to mask the truth and hide himself), and Mastery (for he is the King of Thieves, and embodies the exaltation of skill over magic). Some local thief gods have other runic associations as well, depending on the specialized skills or magics they have developed.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

One of Lanbril's primary gifts is to help the guilty avoid punishment, including death. Death is said by thieves to be the final escape, for punishment will not follow a thief past the grave. Most thieves believe that their hero (or perhaps Lanbril himself) will ensure that their soul reaches an appropriate afterlife (through deceit, if necessary), or that he will steal their soul from the higher powers and return it to earth for another life. Most thieves do not worry about the afterlife, preferring instead to concentrate on retaining the life they already have. The various Theyalan thief cults have no universal funeral practices, though most follow normal Orlanthi ceremonies. As thieves are almost always considered to be among the lowest classes, they are normally given a minimum of ceremony unless their family is willing to give them full honors. As this usually requires they take on the burden of punishment for the thief's crimes, such actions are uncommon.

THE FOLLOWERS OF LANBRIL

Lanbril is a cult of the criminal underworld in human cities throughout the Barbarian Belt, in particular the Holy Country, Dragon Pass, and southern Peloria. Trolls, elves, dwarfs, and other non-humans do not often embrace Lanbril, and when they do it is usually by an individual who has left their traditional way of life and now lives among humans. In the Dragon Pass area, a small but persistent number of durulz [ducks] follow the way of their own variant of Lanbril.

Joining a Thief Ring

Most cities in Orlanthi lands are relatively small, and it normally will not take more than a couple of weeks for a determined character to be noticed if he is actively seeking to meet members of the local thief cult. From that point he will be observed by various members of the ring and, depending on his actions and skills, might be invited to join within another one to six weeks, at the gamemaster's discretion. A character seeking to join the local thief ring might be required to make a Luck roll each week to see if he is approached. Of course, if the local thieves become suspicious of his motives, it might only take this long for them to attempt to eliminate him.

The decision by the ring whether or not to accept or train the seeker is an excellent opportunity for role-playing, and should be treated as a normal part of the current adventure.

However, if the gamemaster wishes, he may simulate the examination by having the applicant roll under their highest thieving skill (as defined by the local ring). Success indicates he has been offered training or a position working for the ring, as he had expressed his interest. Failure indicates that the character is viewed as too great a risk, and he or she will likely never be approached by the thieves. A fumble indicates

that he has made a serious blunder, and will likely be victimized by the ring until he leaves their area or is dead.

The following skills are generally considered useful to thieves, and training is available to common members of most rings: Bribery (from Lords of Terror), Climb, Conceal, Devise, Disguise (from Lords of Terror), Dodge, Evaluate, Fast Talk, Hide, Human Lore, Jump, Listen, Scan, Search, Shadowing *, Sleight, Sneak, Streetwise *, Throw, Voice Mimicry *, Weapon Attack (usually Dagger, Club, and Shortsword, rarely other weapons). Special skills of the ring may or may not be available as well, at the gamemaster's discretion, especially as a reward for exceptional service. Lesser magics known are rarely if ever taught to common thieves except in one or two cities, where the use of magic within the thief cult is so great that certain common Spirit Magic spells are available to even non-initiate thieves, for a price.

* Refers to new skills described in this article.

The various local thief gods are the deities to whom thieves and criminals often turn for concealment and improvement of skills. Lanbril is the expression of all egotistical and antisocial acts which must be done covertly. Any being who acts in this manner, mortal or immortal, well-intentioned or malicious, may come under the guidance and protection of Lanbril, whether they wish it or not.

The nature of human society is such that Lanbril always finds followers. His covert cults exist in natural counterpoise to centralizing and ordering forces in society. The stronger the social order, the better are the chances for thieves to exist and even excel. Paradoxically, the Lanbril-based gangs often regularise the criminal element. In this respect they can actually help social order, by limiting the area in which thieves are active, and by preventing outside thieves from disrupting the status quo.

Worshippers of thief gods do not advertise themselves, and are not generally known to society at large, except as thieves. In some places, such as the city of Nochet, the thief cults are so powerful or accepted that they operate almost as one of the many guilds of the city, and routinely sell training in certain skills to anyone who can meet their price. In other places the thief cults are so infamous or disruptive that they are officially outlawed, and local authorities spend much of their time tracking them down and preventing them from practicing their trade. Such is the situation in Furthest, where the Invisible Lunes steal only from the wealthy temples and affluent citizens, often flaunting the Lunar authorities with their bold and seemingly impossible crimes.

Lanbril supports any established legal and economic order which provides the proper conditions for his followers to make a living. Because of this, most thief rings will not work as revolutionary agents against an established hierarchy, or even against a conqueror who provides a good environment for the thieves to flourish. However, most thieves are at least vocally patriotic, and will usually defend their tribe or town against enemies, if only because the destruction of their society would entail the loss of their livelihood or even their life.

Some thief gods encourage their worshippers to become more like a brotherhood than a criminal gang, and say that secrecy, theft, and treachery should be applied against established society, rather than to other thieves. This is the case among the Black Fangs of Pavis, who swear a dire oath to never use their skills against a fellow member. Those who break this oath are visited by the spirit of Black Fang himself, sent by the ring's shamanic leaders.

However, most thief gods are as selfish as their worshippers, and feel that fostering a hostile environment will ensure that only the most skilled thieves will survive. Thus, internecine strife between and within thief cults are common. However, most Lanbrilite deities are not pleased by excessive violence in any form. The reason for this is two-fold. First, criminal endeavours often require precise and trusting co-operation for their success. Second, open warfare between gangs

tends to attract the attention of the city authorities, which makes it difficult for members to put their skills to profitable use. Still, in some cities rivalries between gangs are so great that these concerns are often not enough to prevent widespread violence. Thus, in the city of Nochet the three major gangs of thieves each claim exclusive worship of the local thief deity, and actively war against the other two factions.

THE WAY OF LANBRIL

Most worshippers of thief gods are organised into separate rings around individual Master Thieves, who fill the role of acolytes or priests. The Master Thief heads the ring, and is responsible for selection and maintenance of a secure site for the hideout or headquarters, which contains the shrine to the deity. He is also responsible for co-ordination between ring members, arranging training, planning special crimes, etc. Although the Master Thief does not normally take direct part in the ring's criminal endeavours, most take a cut of the profits from all activities, and in general ensure the proper division of the spoils of their followers' crimes.

Initiates of the cult form the core of the ring, and are the only representatives whom common thieves and other non-members meet. The initiates have a multitude of aliases, appearances, and disguises. The appearances and identities of the initiates and even of the headquarters itself constantly shift. No common thief ever knows which of the gang members is actually the leader (if they ever meet him at all), and only the few initiates of the cult will know the full extent of the gang's operations or the true location of the hideout.

In the few places where multiple rings worship the same thief god, co-ordination between rings occurs whenever the individual gang bosses see fit to arrange it. Groupings of rings are called families in some locations, especially when they originated as a single band. These groups may stay allied for a long time, or may break up immediately after the job at hand is completed, but rarely does either side actively seek to cheat the other, if only to avoid full warfare between them. Certain lines of Master Thieves have maintained criminal families over generations and even centuries. However, rings and families are subject to all the perils of individual temperament which one would expect in an organisation of outlaws and the criminally insane.

Co-ordination between the worshippers of different thief gods, even in the rare case where such operate in the same vicinity, is unusual. Even if two thief gods are not in competition with each other, their goals and histories are usually different and often in conflict, and there is no sense of loyalty or honor in dealing with such foreigners. Activities of thief gods have occurred in many places, and only an extremely bold or powerful thief would hope to establish a cult shrine near any area with an established Lanbril cult.

Thief gods are almost universally disliked and persecuted by the temples of established religions. Due to Lanbril's success in concealing his Godtime activities, most cults embodying the Truth Rune are special enemies, who use their skills to capture thieves with great seriousness. Members of any cult, of course, will pursue thieves who steal their goods.

There are no set days considered holy by thief gods. Most have local holy days venerating the first theft of their patron, or his greatest theft, and such can occur on any day. Wildday does seem to be one of the more common days associated with many thief gods, but this is by no means universal or even significant.

No thief god is widespread, nor does any have a very large cult. Shrines are usually the largest temple size available. Shrines teach either a divine spell particular to the god, or provide a Spellteaching Spirit for a special Spirit Magic spell. Some thief god cults have no unique magic to teach their worshipers, and provide only one of the common Divine or Spirit Magic spells.

COMMON THIEVES

Not all thieves are initiated into the secrets of the local thief deity; only those who have proven their skill and trustworthiness will be allowed into full worship of the thief god. Prior to such an event, any thief who operates within the area controlled by a local thief cult will be expected to work for the thieves, rather than against or even independently of them. Such membership is open to the whole criminal class of the community in which a ring makes its home, even if they are not actually "thieves."

Joining Lanbril under these circumstances is largely a matter of perceptive slumming, or of becoming noticed by the local ring. The seeker must find the fringes of the underworld and gain the attention of local cult members, who may eventually invite the individual to join the gang. Just when that occurs depends upon the character's efforts and the gamemaster's judgement, but it probably should be more than a week and less than four weeks, largely dependent on the size of the city.

Individuals in search of a contact will probably be victimized by the established thieves, robbers, pickpockets, muggers, or con men of the cult before they attain their sordid goal. If they foil members of the cult, however, they may attract its attention more quickly, though sometimes an intentionally failed attempt will be arranged by the cult to see what actions the prospective member takes.

Once the seeker has been observed for a time by the initiates and/or leader of the ring, an examination of sorts will be arranged, though the individual will normally not know this until he has passed it. The "interview" takes place during what appears to be a normal barroom conversation or other social occurrence, and is usually conducted by the Master Thief himself, or an important initiate. The examiner conceals the fact that he is actually interviewing the prospective member, often by disguising the

offer in terms of employment opportunities.

A member of a thief cult is a member of a criminal ring or family, with all the implications of that status. Loyalty is a basic expectation, and the rings rarely recognize the difference between seeking training and seeking membership. Thus, an adventurer joining the cult solely to purchase training may find that ties to Lanbril can be more than embarrassing, and may also find it difficult to break such ties, for even in places like Nochet it is a crime to associate with known criminals (if only because of "guilt by association"). Ring members who show disloyalty (such as by tipping off the local authorities or fingering members) will find that Lanbril's enforcement is quick and often final.

The ring may arrange subsistence for those members who need it, though they will have to work for it. Those without useful skills or knowledge will find themselves on the bottom of the cult, with lives as bad as that of any peasant. They will hide wanted members inside one of the gang's hideouts for periods of time, if this serves the interests of the ring. Most thieves are by nature selfish, and will not take risks to help common members. However, rescue of captured common members is possible, if only because it is in the best interests of the ring to keep such individuals from telling the authorities what they know about the ring.

Special magics known to initiates of a thief cult are never taught to common members, and are rarely cast in their behalf unless doing so would benefit the individual thief or the ring as a whole. In such cases, the ring will normally attempt to cut its losses anyway, and dispose of the one who is bringing trouble down upon them, though in such a way as not to endanger current or future operations.

NEW COMMON THIEF SKILLS

Note that these skills are not universally available, but are common enough among thief rings that they are not considered "cult secrets." More specialized skills (that are considered cult secrets) are described later in this article. Also, these skills may be available through other sources than thief cults. Voice Mimicry, for example, is a common skill among entertainers and actors, and so training might be available to worshipers of Donandar, for example.

SHADOWING

Stealth skill, base 10%

This is the art of following someone around a town or city without being noticed by the target. It is normally impossible in a rural setting (where Hide and Sneak should be used instead). Success must be checked every five minutes while the thief shadows the subject. If the shadower fails the skill roll, the subject figures out that he is being followed, and is allowed a Scan roll to pick out the thief as the shadower.

On The Job Training

All thief cults include people who regularly provide instruction in normal and cult speciality skills. Common members can pay for instruction at the normal rates, but they will usually be "asked" to assist in a criminal job as compensation for instruction. In many cases, thief cult followers will be employed by the cult as enforcers, informants, and the like, and will receive training as compensation for this service. This option is possible for any common member, but those who have a 50% or better skill level in some useful skill will ultimately receive better jobs and training. The failure of a common member at an appointed job may result in the failure of the overall enterprise. In addition, such skilled members are usually being considered for full membership in the cult, and failure to accept such a role is usually viewed as disloyalty.

When a player character assists in a criminal job in exchange for training, he or she should be encouraged to play it out as a normal adventure.

Alternately, the gamemaster can treat such an event as occurring between normal gaming sessions. In such cases, the gamemaster should decide which one skill is most useful to the trainee for that particular job, then have the player attempt a single skill roll. If the player is successful he has done his or her part in the job

correctly, and receives the training request. If the player fails the roll the player failed in his part, and if he fumbles it is certain that this had disastrous results. In the case of a simple failure the character's errors did not make much difference, and the worst he suffers is a bad reputation and no training (plus hesitation on the part of the ring to give him a second chance). If the job was affected and the character is blamed, the severity of the consequences is up to the referee, and could be based upon the success or failure of a Luck Roll, if desired. In any case, the character will receive no free training, and may have been hurt or arrested. Even if the authorities don't arrest the character, the other gangsters are likely to be so upset that it will be hard for the trainee to avoid bodily injury or worse.



STREETWISE

Knowledge skill, base varies by place of origin, usually 0% to 15%

This skill enhances a character's detailed perception of urban social reality. The base chance for Streetwise depends upon the character's background. A person raised in a large city begins with 15%, a person raised in a small city or very large town begins with 10%, and a person raised in a rural area (or any noble) begins with only 5%, all including the character's Knowledge bonus. Streetwise is to some degree intercultural, and an Orlanthi in a Dara Happan city will be able to use this skill effectively, though he may need a few hours or days to adjust to cultural differences. However, Streetwise is specifically intra-racial and so a streetwise human will not find his skill of much use in a troll town, or vice versa.

A streetwise character knows the ways of urban life and subculture. Even outside of his native city he can deal with stranger urbanites of all sorts without alienating them, in order to find out the inner workings of a new locale. When in a strange city, the Streetwise skill of a character is divided in half, unless the new city (culturally and geographically) is very similar to the city in which he learned the skill.

In any large institution (such as a city) there are patches of corruption, and so Streetwise can be used to discover the right guard to bribe, the name of the Lunar officer who regularly visits the Uleria temple, or a secret route into a government building. However, even a critical Streetwise roll will not generate information on things that do not exist (though a fumbled roll might, of course). With such a roll, however, the character would be able to find out that he is barking up the wrong tree before he gets himself into serious trouble.

Example: The thief, Poacher, needs a pass (to which she is not entitled) from the occupying Lunar army. She makes a successful Streetwise roll to discover that such a pass may be obtained from a particular officer for a purse of silver. With a critical roll she could find out the name of the specific clerk who forges the passes, and might even learn enough dirt on the official to get the pass for free! If she failed, she could try again in a week or two, to find a different official to bribe. If her Streetwise roll was a fumble, however, she would likely be arrested, or at least receive wrong information, which could be disastrous.

VOICE MIMICRY

Communication skill, base 5%

This skill allows the user to duplicate the tone and sound of another person's voice. Penalties should be given if the voice mimicked is wildly different from the player's (such as a man mimicking a woman's voice, or a human mimicking a duck's or troll's). A successful skill roll allows the player to mimic a specific voice with which he or she is very familiar (though a close associate of the mimicked person should be allowed an Idea roll (INTx5) to "hear" through the mimicry), or

disguise their own voice successfully. On a critical roll, even a close associate of the mimicked person would not be able to tell the difference, not could a close associate of the thief recognize them. A failed roll indicates that it is obvious the thief is trying to fake his or her voice.

INITIATE MEMBERSHIP

While many thieves are only peripherally members of a thief ring, the most dedicated and skilled will usually become initiates. Being an initiate allows the worshiper access to the special skills and magics that the cult will not teach to more casual members, and also gives them priority when jobs are being assigned or cult resources are needed.

A common member of Lanbriil who seeks advancement in the cult (or perhaps just further training) may be considered to become an initiate of the cult if he has been loyal, discreet, and brought profit to the ring. He must be recommended to the Master Thief by another initiate. Although it is not required, mastery of any useful skill (see above) is a bonus. A candidate for initiation must not be an initiate in any other cult, or must be willing to forswear his former allegiance (and possibly face Spirits of Retribution). Normally, only common members who have served the ring loyally for at least five years will be considered for initiation, although skilled thieves who come from another area or thief cult may be offered membership sooner. Common members with less seniority are put off with promises or threats; if they persist, the ring's leader may decide that they need to be disciplined or even eliminated.

Requirements for initiation into a thief cult are similar to other cults, as described in RuneQuest. The skills tested vary with each ring, though most will come from the list of common skills given above; Ceremony is rarely if ever one of the skills tested. If the prospective initiate meets the requirements, he must pass a test given by the ring. Again, this is best resolved through role-playing (taking into account the past deeds and loyalty of the candidate), but can be abstracted as a roll of INTx5 or less on D100. As with common member induction, the prospective initiate usually has no idea that he is being tested until he is suddenly hailed as a full ring member and an initiate. Accordingly, a candidate who fails the test will never know that he had been considered, though he might be considered again in the future after further deeds or loyal service.

Initiates must sacrifice one magic point each holy day. They must also maintain their position in the temple by leading and participating in thefts. This means that they will often be placed in charge of a few common members; if so, they are responsible for the actions of those common members. They must contribute to the prosperity of the ring, and must remain in the good graces of the ring leader. Initiates have no specific tithing requirement, since they must give the ring a large percentage of their take from each crime.

Once initiated into the inner secrets of the thief cult, a member cannot easily leave. Until this

moment, he most likely did not know with any certainty who the ring's true leader was. Now he does, and this makes his leaving an opportunity for betrayal. Ring members may escape this stricture only by leaving the city of the ring in which they were enrolled. Even then, the members of the ring may go to great lengths to obtain revenge on the traitor. Initiates of thief cults generally cannot become initiates of other cults, if only because the other cults will not take known thieves as members.

Initiates form the core of the rings, planning and leading crimes involving other initiates and common members. They are the liaison between the Master Thief and the common members, and between the Master Thief and non-members, such as local beggars and informants. The exact set-up for dividing loot varies, but one common method is to give 20% of the proceeds of a crime to the planner, 40% to the individual who actually leads or commits the crime, 25% to the other participants, and 15% to the Master Thief.

Initiates have opportunities to gain training in the skills known to cult members, though they must still pay for such training (in cash or commission of crimes). Initiates are also expected to offer training in any skills they have mastered to other initiates and to common members. Generally, they receive 50% of the payment for the training, with the ring and/or Master Thief getting the rest. Different thief rings have different skills in which they specialize, so not all thief skills may be available to the initiate. Additional training may occasionally be available from allied organization. For example, in Jansholm members of the Shadow Cats can gain training in Throw and Voice Mimicry from local Donandar worshippers. In return, entertainers in that city can gain training in Climb and Jump from the thieves, who are masters of these skills.

Spirit Magic spells are often not taught by a ring, although this depends on the specific thief cult. Even when such magics are available, only favored initiates will be allowed to purchase the knowledge to cast them. Unless the thief cult includes shamans as members, only one or two Spirit Magic spells will normally be available. However, depending on the political and religious climate of the city, a thief cult may have an arrangement with a local shaman or temple to provide training in other magics. The spells available to a thief cult will generally come from the following list: Befuddle, Conceal Item **, Coordination, Darkwall, Disrupt, Face of <Thief God> **, Mobility, Shimmer, Silence, Speedart. If the thief cult has any Divine Magic spells available, the initiate may sacrifice for such spells on a one-use basis with the permission of the Master Thief.

** Refers to new spells described in this article.

SPECIAL THIEF CULT SPIRIT MAGIC SPELLS

CONCEAL ITEM

2 points

range touch, focused, passive, temporal

This spell acts to conceal a single item of 3

ENC or less. A satchel or backpack could be concealed with this spell, as could an object held by the caster. If the concealed object is a weapon, it will become visible as soon as it is used to attack or parry. The item is concealed by misdirection, and does not make the item truly invisible.

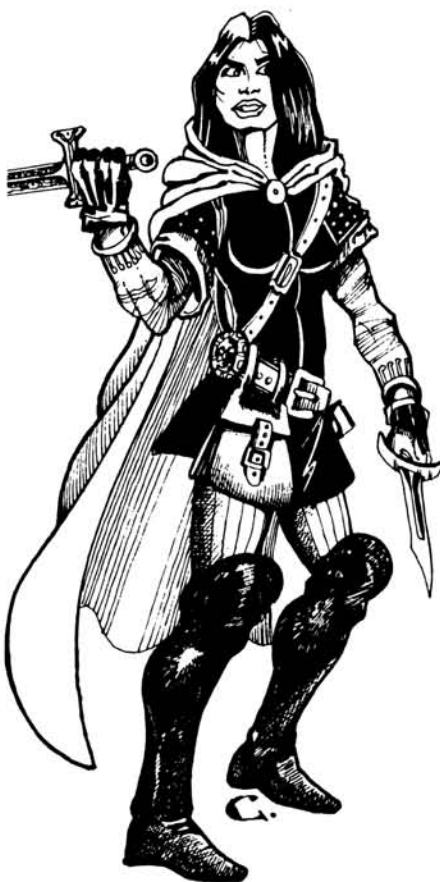
FACE OF <THIEF GOD>

2 points

range self, unfocused, passive, temporal

This is a general disguise spell. It causes the user's face to become exceedingly ordinary and forgettable, so that one wearing this spell is likely to pass unnoticed and unremembered, especially in a crowd. No two uses of this spell give exactly the same face, and the user's clothing also shifts in the direction of ordinariness, though a Spot Hidden will allow an observer to see that the spell user has either much better or much worse clothing "concealed" under his ordinary clothes. The spell cannot change sex or race: if a female troll casts this spell she will look like a very ordinary female troll, and so will still stand out in many places.

This spell is common to many thief cults. Although most give their own thief hero's name to the spell, a few know the spell by the name Face of Lanbri!



Changing Thief Cult Allegiance

Thief cults are very secretive criminal organizations, and as such they view all applicants with a certain amount of suspicion. Anyone who seeks membership will have their motives carefully scrutinized, to ensure that they are not seeking information to use against the thieves or, perhaps worse, rival thieves trying to steal the ring's secrets. As such, a person who has been a member of one thief cult, but who then seeks to join a different one, will often be viewed with a degree of suspicion akin to paranoia. Even if the motives of the candidate are deemed good (they had to leave their home city to avoid imprisonment or death, they lost out in an internal conflict within their gang, their gang was wiped out by another gang, etc.), acceptance as an initiate is not automatic. Outside thieves are a danger to the local thieves. They don't know the local authorities, and so don't know how to deal with them properly. Because of this they will likely upset the status quo, which could cause the authorities to come down on the thief cult more heavily than normal. They will often be reluctant to be subservient to established members of the ring, especially if they are more skilled than those in charge of them. Because of this, a candidate who has been a member of another thief cult will certainly be forced to

become a common member first, and will only be initiated into the secrets of the thief cult after proving their worth and loyalty for a few years. If they learn the ways of the city, obey the commands of their seniors, and bring wealth to the ring, they will generally be offered membership as an initiate.

In most cities, the local thief cult's senior-most initiates are granted greater authority, and are often called Lieutenants. While many of these individuals are merely initiates with the trust and backing of the Master Thief, many thief rings have a more formal acolyte status. Generally, the Master Thief of a ring will designate his favored initiate, the one whom he is grooming as his replacement. When they have proven their loyalty and skill the religious secrets of the cult will be imparted to them, so that the ring will be able to continue if the Master Thief is suddenly killed or captured. A selfish or paranoid Master Thief may refuse to promote initiates to this status, an act which usually spells the end of the ring when the Master Thief dies or is captured. The gang might continue, but will have no access to the hero founder, and so will eventually be taken over or forced out by a more potent organization.

Lieutenants sometimes include older members who have retired from actively committing crimes, but whose wisdom and skill are still needed by the cult. All Lieutenants provide training to cult members, plan and co-ordinate the most important crimes attempted by the ring, and generally serve as the arms and eyes of the Master Thief. A Lieutenant who has lost the favor of a Master Thief retains his special status, and so a large ring may have more than one acolyte. This often leads to internal conflict when a successor is needed, as any acolyte is capable of becoming the new Master Thief. This is the main method by which a large ring will split into two separate gangs, both worshipping the same thief god. Occasional thief gangs will have multiple acolytes by design and so rarely have this kind of conflict, such as among the Skillful Thelosiens.

Generally, an initiate will only be promoted to Lieutenant if he or she is a master (skill level 90% or greater) in one of the skills deemed important by the ring. However, family ties and other sources of favoritism may lead to a less-skilled initiate being made an acolyte, which usually causes discord among the other, more skilled initiates. There are no other requirements for this status. Lieutenants have all of the normal benefits and restrictions of the status (again, there is no specific tithing requirement), including the ability to sacrifice for reusable Divine Magic. They may not learn Spellteaching, however, and only the Master Thief can accept a cult follower as a full member (initiate) of the ring.

Master Thief is the title generally given to the bosses and leaders of the thief cults. For most thief cults, Master Thief is a title, and does not necessarily reflect the attained skills of the leader. Many factors besides thieving ability play a part in the selection of the ring's leader after the previous one dies, retires, or is imprisoned, including favoritism, length of service, skill levels, knowledge

of magic, ability to deal with city bureaucrats, and of course politics. The Master Thief of an extensive and profitable gang is as likely to be a miserable fence as a dashing cutpurse, rather than someone who can legitimately claim to be a master of the ring's favored skills. In thief cults where acolytes are present, the new Master Thief will of necessity be one of the lieutenants of the previous leader, since only they will have knowledge of the religious aspects of the ring. Because of this, there are none of the standard requirements for acceptance listed in RuneQuest.

Each Master Thief is in charge of his own ring, for no Master Thief can afford to tolerate a challenge to their authority. Master Thieves are responsible for the selection and maintenance of the ring's hideout, which serves as both a worship site and a refuge. Within the security of this "temple," and assisted by one or more lieutenant acolytes, the Master Thief maintains authority over his ring, co-ordinates the various contracts member thieves undertake, and deals with all aspects of membership, from recruitment to initiation to organizing vengeance against those who betray the ring. Although they are closer to Rune Lords than to full priests, they serve as the religious leaders of the cult, in addition to organizing the more material aims of the ring.

When the Master Thief of a ring dies or retires, his replacement will usually have been chosen long before. Capture does not always indicate that a new Master Thief is needed, as many capable leaders can operate effectively even from prison. The former Master Thief will have imparted critical secrets to his successor, so there are none of the standard requirements or tests described in RuneQuest. However, there is no guarantee that rivalries with senior cult members will not break out into a sort of succession war, with the victor taking over as leader of the ring, especially in the rare case where the ring has more than one acolyte. In many cases, such warfare may cause the ring to split, with the major rivals heading up their own gangs.

The Master Thief is by definition a notorious criminal, and must be discreet; many go only by aliases or in disguise, so that their true name and face is unknown to all but the most trusted members of their gang. Master Thieves must spend approximately 90% of the income directed to them by their group to maintain the temple and the gang, and of course spend most of their time directing the activities of the ring. They do not gain an allied spirit, but may usually learn Divine Magic. They are not limited to DEXx5 in any of the normal (or cult special) thief skills.

Most thief cults have only Worship <Thief God> and one other Divine spell. In most cases this is a special spell, although the occasional common spell (such as Mindlink or Warding) may be found, and any thief cult that teaches Spirit Magic spells will also possess Spellteaching. It is rare that a thief cult has more than one special spell, and none is so powerful as to know more than two. Many thief cults have no special Divine spells at all, though they may have special or unique Spirit Magic spells, skills, or some other form of specialized knowledge (such as Alchemy).

Common Divine Magic: Worship <Thief God>

COMMON THIEF CULT DIVINE SPELLS

DETECTION BLANK

1 point

ranged, temporal, stackable, reusable

A specialized anti-magic spell designed to block detection spells. It may be cast to screen any one object, spell, or person from detection. It stops only Sense, Find, and Detect spells, but unlike Countermagic, Shield, and similar spells, it does not let the person doing the detection that the spell has been blocked. Otherwise, it functions as two points of Countermagic for each point of Detection Blank.

Unlike Countermagic, simple penetration of Detection Blank by a boosted detection spell does not dispel the overall effect, though the target is clearly detected. Future detection spells must still be boosted to penetrate the Blank.

This spell does not block spells such as Second Sight or Mystic Vision, nor any skill, even magical skills like Sense Assassin or Sense Chaos.

DIVINATION BLOCK

2 points

range special, instant, stackable, one-use

Note: this spell is different than the spell of the same name given in Gods of Glorantha, which is a ritual magic version of this spell known in Fanrit.

This spell blocks the history of the activities of up to 12 individuals associated with one definable material object for an activity period of up to 12 hours. Alternatively, it may be used to keep the history of one object from being revealed by Divination spells or the Lhankor Mhy Knowledge spell cast by the priests of any god for a period of time in the object's history up to twelve hours in length. The existence of a Divination Block will be revealed to an inquiring priest only on a critical success roll for the Divination. If the spell is stacked, an extra point of spell doubles the period of time covered by the spell. A third point will triple the time, etc.

VISION

2 points

ranged, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This spell gives a viewpoint which may be up to 150 meters away from the spirit of the recipient of the spell. Looking from this viewpoint is approximately like looking through the recipient's eyes (or using Darksense, for a troll), but it gives a 180 degree view. After this spell is cast, the viewpoint can be rotated up to 180 degrees in a melee round.

While using Vision, the recipient cannot use his own eyes (or Darksense, for a troll). However, he can switch back and forth between the spell's viewpoint and his own from one melee round to the next.

The viewpoint created by the spell is visible as a semi-transparent sphere about 4 centimeters in diameter. Attack spells cast at the viewpoint affect the caster of the Vision spell.

SUBSERVIENT CULTS

Thief cults do not have subservient cults, because of their small size and power, and the secrecy under which they constantly operate. Although Master Thieves sometimes threaten their initiates with divine retribution if they are disloyal, no true Spirit of Reprisal has ever been reliably noted for any thief cult. Individuals who leave a thief cult generally leave the area to avoid retribution by members of their ring, and often seek to join the thief cult of a rival gang or distant city.

ASSOCIATED CULTS

Lanbril has few friends, and he would trust none of these any more than they would trust him. Thief rings may occasionally make common cause with individuals or organizations, but such alliances are temporary at best, and fraught with the danger of betrayal on both sides.

However, a number of thief cults have become associated with the chaos deity called Krarsht. Although no formal connection between Krarsht and Lanbril is known in any myth, any thief cult that strays too far from their society's mores, or who comes to view ruthlessness as their goal (rather than as an end to a means) will often be approached by the minions of the Mouth. The Lips and Tongues of the Krarsht cult usually can offer much to a thief cult, especially one that is in a struggle with another ring. These gifts include training in useful skills, offers to hire the Krarsht cult assassins, and sometimes even special magic.

Such an alliance runs two primary risks. First, it is rare that a thief cult can accept such gifts and still retain control, and Krarsht usually ends up taking over the ring completely, in time. Second, any member that accepts aid from Krarsht, especially magical aid, will eventually end up seduced or overcome by chaos. Even if this does not occur, the thief cult's questionable activities and associations will eventually attract the attention of local chaos-fighters, and this usually spells doom for the ring and all its members.

Where the thief ring becomes so entangled with Krarsht that the two could be considered associate deities, Lips, Jaws, and Mouths of Krarsht will usually gain access to the thief cult's special skills or magics. In return, Master Thieves and selected initiates of the Lanbril ring will gain access to training by the Assassins of Krarsht, and may also be allowed to sacrifice for the special Krarsht Divine spell of Create Image. This happens to few thief cults, since thief cults are usually too disorganized

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to make good tools of the Krarshti. Still, at least two gangs in Heortland are so influenced, and the Black Fangs of Pavis seem well on their way to becoming merely another arm of the Hungry Goddess.

See Lords of Terror for details of the Krarsht cult. The spell of Create Image is not described in that write-up, and seems to be limited to the Krarsht cult in the Holy Country, Dragon Pass, and Pavis. It is the only magic Krarsht ever provides to groups it is seeking to influence, such as thief cults.

CREATE IMAGE

1 point

self only, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This spell creates an image of a humanoid figure over the form of the caster, effectively disguising him or her. The image may look different, as when the caster is stranded in the middle of a group of trolls and needs to look like a troll until he can get away. The image may also be smaller or larger (up to SIZ 21); a smaller image is less than effective, obviously, but a larger image can provide some protection to the caster if he or she is attacked. The actions of the image will exactly mimic those of the caster, so images must be of the same general body type to be convincing.

If the image is intentionally jostled or attacked, the spell will end. During the round in which the caster is attacked, the image will provide the effect of a 1 point Shimmer spell, plus an additional point of Shimmer for each point of SIZ the image is larger than the caster. If the attack succeeds despite this defense, the image is dispelled and the spell ends.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

INDEPENDENT MASTER THIEVES

Master Thieves are at once the epitome of a Lanbril thief's aspiration and an embarrassing superfluity. Most thieves try to become as skilled as possible, but a thief gang can have only one leader, and this will not always be the best thief. Some thieves have no desire to lead others or run the gang's operations (even though they may be a Lieutenant-acolyte of their ring), but are so skilled that they cannot accept orders from others, especially those who they see as being inferior in skill.

In such situations, the thief in question may declare themselves to be a Master Thief, even though they do not plan to lead their ring. Such a declaration will usually be viewed as a challenge by the ring's Master Thief, who needs to be the only Master Thief in order to retain control of the gang. However, if the independent Master Thief can survive on his own, and can prove (by his actions, if not with words) that he is not challenging the leadership of the Master Thief, he may be able to operate within his former ring's area without animosity. The city of Refuge, in southern Kethaela, is known for the number of independent Master Thieves who operate in the city, only possible because there is no native thief cult in this city.

Such an independent Master Thief is likely a master of several thief skills, especially since his continued independence hinges on his being so skilled that he is useful to and tolerated by the thief cult. Independent Master Thieves may seek training and aid from the ring, but will not automatically receive direct support, and generally will not be given access to any cult secrets (such as spells or special skills).

THIEVES' ARGOT

This secret language is used for communication between cult members, both as a universal language and to preserve secrecy. Some thief cults use it during worship ceremonies as well. No specific written version of Thieves' Argot is known; local Theyalan scripts can be used to write in Thieves' Argot, though this is rarely done. It is widespread among thief cults throughout the Barbarian Belt.

Although it has a limited vocabulary and range of expression, Thieves' Argot seems to have an independent origin as a language, outside of the Theyalan tongues. It has of course absorbed many features and words from the local languages over the years, and any speaker of a Theyalan tongue has 1/5 his skill level in local dialects of Thieves' Argot, and 1/10 in any non-local dialect. (The reverse is not true: knowledge of Thieves' Argot does not give any ability to speak or understand any specific Theyalan tongue.) Speakers of Thieves' Argot have 1/2 their ability to understand non-local dialects of the language. Despite its name, Thieves' Argot is generally known by beggars, entertainers, and other underprivileged persons with whom thieves commonly associate.

Thieves' Argot contains common sounds from many different tongues; mutually intelligible dialects, similar in parts to the dominant regional tongue, exist in different cities. A character speaking Argot usually will sound like a particularly unintelligible member of the lower classes. This language is unknown to most Gloranthans (including Lhankor Mhy sages, who view it as mere slang, unworthy of their attention), and is often not understood even by local law enforcement and other city officials.

Thieves' Argot is rarely taught formally, but all thieves and people who associate with thieves will pick it up quickly. Each full season a character spends a significant amount of time as a common member of a thief cult (or otherwise associates with thieves for a number of hours each day) may roll for a skill increase (as if he had undergone training or used a skill successfully).

SPECIAL DEVICES

Lanbril cultists use a variety of special tools. Some, such as lockpicks, extendible ladders, hooks, and saws, are used to enter upper stories and locked places. Other devices are intended to distract: while guards investigate the device, the thief goes about his business. Other thief gear includes reversible cloaks, reversible hats that can be folded up to be placed in a pocket, spidersilk cloaks that can be folded into a pocket, glass cutters, and so forth.

Thief Cults

of Kethaela and Kerofinela

by Jörg Baumgartner and Stephen Martin, some parts based on material by Chaosium, Inc.

There are many thief cults operating in the lands of Kethaela and Kerofinela. Most of these gangs follow the general format of the Lanbril cult write-up presented here. Such thief cults usually have only one or two non-standard skills or spells, if any. Thief cults are often transient organizations, splitting apart, dying out, or joining together depending on the actions of their members, and the changes wrought by history



The following list is not intended to be complete, and gamemasters should feel free to add additional thief cults, move the cults listed here to another location or era, or modify these gangs to fit the needs of their campaign and players

Artworks
by
Juha Harju

THE BLACK FANG BROTHERHOOD

Pavis and the Big Rubble

During the time of Pavis' glory in the Second Age, the local Lanbril cult was quite powerful. However, when the Troll Occupation ruined the city the thief cult was hard hit, and barely managed to survive in the part of the Rubble known as Real Town. Although a much-weakened remnant survives to the present day (known as the Hole Lords), more infamous is a spin-off group, the Black Fang Brotherhood.

The Black Fang Brotherhood was formed some 200 years after the Troll Invasion, when a human shaman met Black Fang on the Spirit Plane. Black Fang was a legendary bandit of approximately 100 years before who had raided everyone inside the Rubble,

regardless of race. Little is known of his life, but rumors abound: some people claim that he was a half-troll, and at least one source mentions a powerful magic ring owned by the bandit. Black Fang had been a worshiper of the local thief cult in life, and his spirit formed the core of a new Lanbril cult, this time a cult of assassins. Black Fang is said to serve an unnamed god; while this is probably a veiled reference to Lanbril, associations with Zorak Zoran, Krarsht, or some currently unknown deity have been postulated.

The gang is small and extremely secretive, for there are many who will put to death anyone suspected of being a member. However, they are useful to the powers that be, and such is their fame that they are often hired to perform jobs in Dragon Pass, Heortland, and Esrolia. Thus, they are tolerated unofficially and even encouraged, so long as they serve the ends of the authorities. It is believed that a hiring shrine has been established near Pimper's Block, to allow for easier contact by prospective clients from Sartar

and beyond.

Although famed as a cult of assassins, the members of the Black Fang Brotherhood do commit other types of crimes. Kidnapping is only slightly less common than assassination, for example, with the individual either held for ransom or sold as a slave, depending on the wishes of the person doing the hiring. Other criminal activities include protection rackets (usually in the Rubble rather than in Pavis Outside the Walls) and non-Ulerian prostitution.

Black Fang's cult is organized as an extended family, with initiates "adopted" in. Unusually, shamans play an important role in the cult, so important that a small number of shaman priests rule the cult rather than a single Master Thief. Because of this, worshipers of Black Fang generally know more magic than most other thieves, adding to their reputation. The Black Fang Brotherhood has no acolytes, because the leaders follow the normal process to become shamans and awaken their fetiches. In addition to the Divine spells Divination Block and Shattering, the shamans of the cult know the skill of Alchemy. A number of Formulae to create different types of poison are known, including the extremely rare Blade Venom Formula.

Shattering

1 point

ranged, instant, nonstackable, reusable

The caster must overcome the target's magic points for this spell to take effect. It does 2d6 points of damage to a random hit location of the target. Only magic can protect against this damage; Gods of Glorantha is incorrect when it states that armor will absorb the damage from this spell.

Blade Venom

Blade Venom is a kind of poison that can be applied to the edge of a weapon before an attack. It is much in demand when cult assassins are hired. This doubles the price of the contract, since possession of Blade Venom is a capital crime in Pavis and most of the rest of the world. Blade Venom was once sold to outsiders by the cult, but its use became so widespread after the Lunar conquest of Pavis that they were forced to stop. It is now sold only to cult members.

Blade Venom is created using the Alchemy skill and knowledge of the Blade Venom Formula. It is a relatively fast-acting poison, taking effect during the Bookkeeping phase of the following melee round. There is a known antidote for Blade Venom, and no other types of antidote are effective against it. The antidote is very expensive, and manufacturing and selling it (through agents) to wealthy citizens is a major source of income for the Black Fang Brotherhood.

One dose of Blade Venom provides enough poison to coat one Dagger Blade. Once applied, the Blade Venom dries up and loses all of its POT within five minutes; sheathing the dagger immediately renders the Blade Venom useless. Blade Venom is good for only one attack, successful or not, and loses one POT for each point of physical armor penetrated, whether natural or man-made. The POT remaining after armor is penetrated is matched against the target's general Hit Points as normal.

Example: Halnas, a worshiper of Black Fang, attacks Ruric the Restless with a Dagger coated with POT 15 Blade Venom. He successfully attacks, and the blow penetrates the 6 points of armor covering Ruric's abdomen. This reduces the POT of the Venom from 15 to 9, which is then matched against Ruric's CON of 15. Halnas rolls a 17, which is a success, and Ruric loses 9 general Hit Points, in addition to the 2 points of damage to his abdomen from the dagger itself. If Halnas had rolled a 37, for example, Ruric would have lost only 5 general Hit Points, half of the Blade Venom's POT.



THE BLACKGUARDS

Durengard and Leskos

The thief gang of Durengard is known as the Blackguards. They have been present in the city for at least four centuries. Unusually, the cult has two Master Thieves: a junior who controls activities in the port city of Leskos, and the senior Master Thief in Durengard itself. When the senior Master Thief dies, retires, or is captured, the Master Thief of Leskos appoints and trains a successor, and takes up residence in Durengard to direct the activities of the entire cult.

In the last decade, a new thief gang has started to move into Leskos, and the Blackguards fear that they are trying to take over Durengard as well. The leaders of this new gang seem to have support from outsiders (specifically, the Krashst cult, though this is unknown even to most of the rival gang's leaders). They specialize in protection rackets, but have also assassinated a number of city officials and the previous junior Master Thief of the Blackguards. Skirmishes between the two groups have become fairly regular, which has led to increased vigilance on the part of local law enforcement. Gamemasters are free to decide the origin of this cult — it could be an offshoot of the Krashst-influenced Safe-Crackers of Whitewall, a ring from another city being aided by the Krashst cult, or a new gang brought in by the minions of the Hungry Goddess to supplant the Blackguards (who perhaps have successfully resisted entanglement with chaos).

The Blackguards specialize in preying on rural visitors going to the capital, who are relatively ignorant of city life and its dangers. They specialize in the skills of Conceal, Dodge, Evaluate, Sleight, and Sneak. They can learn the Spirit Magic spells of Coordination, Silence, and Conceal Item, which helps them hide objects they have stolen until they are safely away.

THE BOLDHOMERS

Boldhome, Duck Point

The thief gang that operates out of the city of Boldhome originally began in Duck Point, where it was called the Feather Filchers, who followed a duck hero named Galejon the Sneaky. They have always been a very casual gang, and it is believed by some that they started out as a group of Trickster worshipers who eventually specialized in stealing. When Stone Nest was built by Sartar they saw a wonderful opportunity, and most of the members moved into the new city. When it became clear that

other ducks were not going to follow them they tried to return to Duck Point, but their old nests had been taken over, and it was hard for them to gain a new foothold. Seeking better opportunities, the majority traveled to the new city of Boldhome, and there they found a niche that suited them well. They became organized for the first time, and are the only formal thief gang in the capital city of Sartar.

Boldhome has a strong troll presence, and it was not long before trollkin (who make excellent night operatives for the duck leaders) joined the cult. The ring is well-known in the capital of Sartar, but its members are treated as a joke by most of the humans and trolls of the city. They are mockingly known to human citizens as the Masterful Midgets or Thimble Thieves, while the trolls call them Squirming Squirts or Tasty Terrors. The ring has been very inactive since the Lunar bounty on ducks (though the trollkin gangs continued to be a nuisance, secretly directed by the duck mastermind, who hid in the sewers and caverns beneath the city). However, they have started to operate openly again since the Lunar setbacks in Pavis and Esrolia of the last couple years, though trollkin members now outnumber the ducks by a ratio of 2 to 1.

The Boldhomers specialize in small thefts, especially where their size and skill at sneaking aids them. Few are pickpockets or second-story men, nor have they had much luck with protection rackets or extortion. Outside of Boldhome, some members concentrate on tolls and taxes on riverine trade, though this has become more difficult since the Lunar Empire conquered the kingdom. A few have attempted grander robberies or banditry, but they are rarely successful, and even if they are they usually leave the cult in disgust to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Pinfeather the Bandit is the best-known former member of this cult in the last two decades. Favored skills include Dodge, Fast Talk, Hide, Scan, Sleight, and Sneak. They know the Divine spell Hidebehind.

Hidebehind

2 points

ranged, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This spell must be cast against a specific target: if their magic points are overcome, the spell takes affect on the caster. For the duration of the spell, the caster will always be behind the target. No matter how the target searches, twists, or turns, the caster will not be in front of him or her. The target can still attack the caster. This is difficult, of course, as few people are skilled at hitting a target behind them, but certain spells might be effective, at the gamemaster's discretion.

Unlike most Divine Magic, this is an active spell. If the caster is wounded (by another person, for example) or otherwise distracted and fails a Concentration roll, the spell will end. The spell also ends immediately (without a Concentration roll attempt) if the caster attacks or casts a spell, whether at the target of the Hidebehind or any other person.



THE FISHMONGERS

Seapolis

The FishMongers of Seapolis grew out of humans who resisted the rule of the Rightarm Islands by the ludoch mermen of Choralinthor Bay. With triolini rule comes triolini limits on or prohibitions against taking certain types of fish and other products from the sea. Many humans feel that their pearl harvest is unfairly limited, or that they should be allowed to fish for the rare Sunfish (which are very valuable), and some have begun following a hero (or aspect) of Pelaskos who was known for his thefts from the triolini during Godtime.

The FishMongers are a small group. Their membership changes fairly often, as fishermen join out of anger, frustration, or poverty, then cease worshiping the hero when times are better (or when triolini retaliations become too severe). Most members remain primarily fishermen, plying their nets or diving as normal, but using the special skills of the FishMongers to increase their catch.

The FishMongers know the common thief spell Divination Block, and teach the special skills of Breath Control and Swim Quietly; additional skills of importance include Hide, Listen, and, of course, Swim (which all applicants to the cult must know at 90% or better). Although some members perform the rare theft from the triolini themselves, most content themselves with supplementing their normal fishing with some of the "forbidden" treasures of the sea.

Breath Control

special skill, base 0%

Breath Control is a special skill that allows a character to hold his breath longer than normal, even while exerting himself by swimming or running. In addition to replacing the CON roll as described in the asphyxiation rules in RuneQuest (if the Breath Control skill level is greater), the roll need only be attempted once every two rounds, rather than every round. Thus, even a low skill level in Breath Control is useful, as the CON roll is reduced by one factor each time the roll is made; eventually, Breath Control will give the better chance of success. Breath Control does not help a character who is surprised by the need to hold his breath.

Breath Control is a special Endurance skill. An individual gains a bonus based upon his characteristics as follows:

CON	Primary modifier
POW	Secondary modifier
SIZ	Negative modifier

Swim Quietly

Stealth skill, base 5%

If this skill is used in conjunction with a successful Swim roll, the swimmer makes little or no disturbance while stalking prey or escaping foes; even telltale currents are reduced, and do not warn observers or wary fish. The swimmer moves at half normal swim rate. A character's Swim Quietly can never be greater than his Swim skill.

HOLAYA'S BASTARD DAUGHTERS

Filichet, in the Lunar Province of Holay

The thief gang in Filichet is composed solely of women. Their name is somewhat of a joke, since the Holayans as a society trace descent through the mother, with the exact father of the child usually held to be unimportant. For a daughter to be a bastard is nearly impossible, and the name signifies the separation that the thief cult imposes on its members, from their families and culture as a whole. The cult's heroine is claimed to be a daughter of Holaya (the founder of Holay) named Alaya, who stole from her mother (or one of her mother's lovers) and was exiled, but who refused to leave the city of her birth.

Holaya's Bastard Daughters are a conservative group. They have learned over the centuries that they survive best if they are circumspect, and do not perform crimes that are too large, or against citizens who are too important. They specialize in theft from traveling merchants, especially men, who are unlikely to be willing to stay in Filichet for the length of time it would take to capture and prosecute one of the thieves. The gang has a special spell useful against Issaries merchants, Fake Passage, though the origin of this special ability is unknown.

Fake Passage

1 point

touch, temporal, stackable, reusable

This spell allows the caster to foil the special Issaries spell Lock. It allows the caster to easily open an object closed by Lock, without having to overcome the spell's strength. The object can be opened and closed any number of times for the duration of the spell.

Use of this spell does not dispel the Lock. Each additional point stacked allows one more person to ignore the effects of the Lock for the duration of the spell. This spell will not identify an object protected by a Lock spell.

THE INVISIBLE LUNES

Furthest, in the Lunar Province of Tarsh

The city of Furthest was built by the Lunar Empire after they absorbed Tarsh, to form the capital of the new Province. The city was designed to be a perfect example of Dara Happan and Lunar society, but the world is imperfect, and so the pure and bright city soon gained its underside. The truth is unknown outside of the local thief gang, but it is believed that the members of the Invisible Lunes came to Tarsh from within the Lunar Heartland, perhaps refugees from one of the many Dart Wars among the Lunar nobility.

Regardless of their origin, in the last century the Invisible Lunes have established a reputation for being able to fool even the high Lunar priests and officials. Because of this, they have a strong hold on the criminal element of the city. Publicly they claim to worship the Blue Moon Goddess, but this is believed to be a facade designed to confuse the Lunar authorities and strike terror into the hearts of the common citizens. It is generally successful in both respects.

The Invisible Lunes specialize in second-story jobs, heists conducted in full sight of secular or religious authorities, and other inexplicable thefts. They accomplish this through use of Conceal, a spell rarely known to the minor thief cults of central Genertela. Whether the ring does have some connection with the infamous Blue Moon Assassins, or whether their magic comes from some other source, is not currently known (and so is up to the gamemaster). The cult does not practice assassinations, and in fact members seem to go out of their way to avoid killing people in the course of their crimes, if only to escape the harsh punishment laws of the Lunars.



Conceal

3 points

ranged, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

Like Invisibility (see Troll Gods), this spell makes the user invisible by attracting the enemy's attention to a spot other than where the recipient is. He remains unnoticed unless he wishes to draw attention to himself, or he is detected by magic. If he makes a noise, an enemy could try to strike him by ear, subtracting 50% from the chance of success.

If the recipient attacks with spell, missile, or melee weapon, he becomes visible in the first strike rank of the round in which he attacks or acts, and disappears again after the last strike rank of that round unless engaged in melee. In any round that the recipient disengages from melee, he disappears again at the end of that round.

Despite the spell's name, it is equally effective against such senses as troll Darksense and dwarf Earthsense.

THE LYLKETERS

Exact area of operations unknown

Sometime in the late 800s, a local thief gang moved into the city of Lylket, which was one of the early God Learner cities in the land. They were eager to prey upon the riches and lore of the Jrusteli, but they did not realize that they had been lured there specifically to serve as subjects of an experiment. The God Learners had observed the many thief cults of the land, and were determined to try to forge a true cult from these warring gangs, a true worship of the god Lanbril that would provide access to all of his special powers if enough worshipers could be gathered.

The gang had a history of success, and over the course of 100 years acquired many magics from the Jrusteli mages, never realizing

that their special powers were stolen or copied from other thief cults, not the God Learners themselves. During this century, the thief cult grew more organized and influenced by the Justeli, with a formal structure of worship, unified mythology, and hierarchical structure of initiates, acolytes, Master Thieves, and Thief Priests. However, the cult never developed the full range of powers observed in local thief cults, and so the experiment was deemed a failure and terminated. The thief gang remained in the city, but no longer had as many spectacular successes.

The Lylket gang was intimately familiar with the tunnels below the city, for these were the main thoroughfares they used when conducting their illicit business. Thus, when the trolls invaded the city from below the Lylket gang was the first and hardest hit, but the few survivors were also the only ones with the knowledge and skills to survive and escape. They traveled to nearby Karse and operated for a number of years, but when Old Karse fell they were unable to maintain their hold, and moved inland. Little is known of their activities after that, though reports from Smithstone hint at a vicious war in the 1400s that ended with the expulsion of the Lylketters. They have not been reliably reported since, but rumours persist of a hidden thief cult that operates throughout Heortland, who have mastered all of the skills and magics of Lanbril. Some go so far as to say that they secretly control many or all of the thief cults of this land, though most people laugh at these suspicions, or know that another organization is the source of such rumours.

The Lylket gang is believed to have had access to all of the special skills and Spirit Magic spells listed in the main Lanbril write-up, as well as the Divine spells of Divination Block, Extension, Sanctify, Vision, and Warding.

THE MACHINISTS

Mount Passant

The Machinists are very typical of the inhabitants of God Forgot. They are atheists, relying upon their own skills rather than the gods, who failed them repeatedly during the Gods War. As such, they rarely use magic in their crimes, even Spirit Magic. Instead, they have developed their skill at using or making special tools and inventions. Groups of machinists can be found in the cities of God Forgot, though nowhere are they strong, because of the strict punishment laws of the Talar of Talar Hold.

The Machinists specialize in the skills of Devise, Listen, Lockpicking (a specialized version of Devise), and Sleight. Their crimes involve opening safes, breaking into locked rooms, con games involving fake technological or magic items, and any other activity in which their ingenuity can gain them an easy profit. A few common devices used by the Machinists (and possibly elsewhere) are described below.

The Chirper

A Chirper consists of a fancy box with a carefully worked grill allowing sound to emanate from the interior while concealing the insides. The box is often well made, at a cost of about 100L, but does not have to be. Inside the box is a mouse or bird. The design of the box amplifies the normal noises of the poor beast to be loud enough to attract attention. Often the animal is hurt, so that it will whimper, cry, or scream. The thief may cast a Spirit Magic spell on the box so that it will emanate an aura of magic, thus prompting guards to great caution, giving the thief more time to steal or escape. Variations of the trick are obvious, and all of them are regularly used.

The Thief's Helper

The Thief's Helper looks like an ordinary staff, about a meter and a half long. However, it is actually a telescoping tube with a claw grapple at one end and a chisel spike on the other. When the thief enters a building, the Helper is extended by sliding out the sections

and fixing them in place with pegs (which then serve as ladder rungs). The ladder may be made as long as 4m. The Helper is set into the ground on the spike or hooked onto the end of a protrusion on the building. The thief then climbs up the ladder to the desired height and draws the Helper up. The spike on the end is strong enough to be used to jimmy open windows, etc.; the collapsed Helper is sturdy enough to be used in combat as a staff, but has only 8 Armor Points.

The Whumper

A Whumper is a clockwork mechanism in a box that produces percussive noise at a preset interval, either rhythmically or in a seemingly random pattern (very much like a music box). Whumpers are only made in highly civilized lands, such as the interior Lunar Empire or the Holy Country, for they require complex mechanical skills to produce. Typical Whumpers produce a scraping sound every few seconds. They can also be made to produce a rattling noise every 15-90 seconds, a foot fall every minute or so, or similar sounds, always to distract and lure away guards. Whumpers can cost anywhere from 100L to 1000L or more, depending on the reliability, flexibility, and quality of the device, how far it has traveled from its maker, and on how well the seller likes the purchaser.

THE MOCKERS

Karse

The Mockers are a gang of Pelaskite origin. During the Darkness, the fisherfolk of Choralinthor Bay huddled within the fortress of Old Karse, relying upon their heroes to protect them from the terrors of the world. As the heroes fell to chaos, one of the fisherfolk grew more afraid of death than of his people's enemies. This "Unknowable Man" snuck out of the fortress to steal the weapons the enemies brought, wearing a disguise to pass unnoticed, and hiding among the many dead when he came across other living things. The Mockers thus claim credit for saving the city, though the officials and temples of Karse of course deny this myth.

When the River was moved during Belintar's battles with the Only Old One, Old Karse began to wither, as people left for more fertile markets. The Mockers remained in the shell of the city, resorting to highway robbery to survive until the founding of New Karse a century later. Even today, their main hideout (and their shrine to the Unknowable Man) remains in the ruins.

The Mockers know the skill of Feign Death and the Spirit Magic spell Face of the Unknowable Man. They once again specialize in burglaries and cutting purses, profiting from the disorganized nature of the markets and officials of New Karse. They will occasionally resort to ambushes on the highway down from Whitewall when they feel that the take will be worth the retaliations.

Feign Death

Stealth skill, base 5%

This esoteric skill allows the practitioner to conceal himself amid a scene of carnage. Feigning death involves lying absolutely still and maintaining a posture so death-like as to be ignored by enemies. A successful use of the skill will fool an untrained enemy looking carefully over the bodies. A critical success will even fool a trained healer who does not use magic or check pulses. A failure at this skill indicates that the character will not fool anyone who makes even a cursory examination, while a fumble draws the attention of even a casual observer to some movement that the thief makes. Untrained characters that are trying to just lie still must still check for a fumble. After a skill level of 50% is reached, further increases can not be made through training or research, only through experience.

As learned by a human, this spell will not work against



species with special senses, such as troll Darksense, dwarf Earthsense, and aldryami Elfsense, each of which can easily detect signs a human would miss. Only a critical success by a human will fool these senses, and then only against a cursory examination.

THE SAFE-CRACKERS

Whitewall

The Safe-Crackers is the name of the thief cult that operates in Whitewall and the surrounding towns. Whitewall is an ancient city, with myths of survival dating back to the Silver Age. It has always been a place where Orlanthi and trolls have met peacefully, usually to trade, and most of the humans of the city credit their friendship with the trolls as the primary reason their city has stood for so long.

After the Great Darkness the humans of the region slowly came out of their hiding holes. The greater clans and families established themselves, and allowed orphans and widows from distant kin to come to their places. The boy who is remembered only as the Safecracker was one such orphan. He was a feral child taken in by the chieftain of Whitewall, who fed him on scraps of left-over food, for food was still scarce in that time. The Safecracker longed for more, and cast an envious eye on the goods of the strong and well-fed trolls, who traded only with those who had things they wanted or needed. The Safecracker had nothing, and so he received nothing from them. Like Lanbril before him, his envy and frustration turned to hate, and the hate to innovation.

Safecracker watched the trolls seal their goods with magic, to keep them safe while they slept through the grayness of the day. He knew that if he could get at these riches he would be as great and satiated as the chieftain, so he watched hard whenever the troll merchants came. He tried many times to pierce the magic, but lacked the strength to open the chests. He followed the trolls and learned from them, and at every chance tried new methods (often stolen from others) to try to break the enchantment. Each time he failed and was hurt by the magic, his will to break the spell grew.

Finally, the Safecracker found the solution. He met a man who worshiped a god he would not name, and this man taught him a spell to disguise himself. Safecracker was now able to move among the trolls by appearing as one of them, and eventually he figured out how to alter this magic so that the troll spells also recognized him as a troll. The Safecracker took the goods from his first success and used it to organize the other penniless orphans of

Whitewall into a gang of thieves. The gang remains to this day, always straining relations with the trolls by their activities.

The Safecrackers specialize in stealing from Argan Argar traders, though they have no problem stealing from humans as well. They specialize in daytime thefts, when trolls are less active, and often spend days or weeks casing a job, to ensure they know the locations and habits of the merchant, her guards, and her magically-protected goods. They have been allies (and tools) of the local Krarsht cult since before the Dawn, and the Master Thief and his acolytes have access to the special Krarsht spell of Create Image.

Crack Safe

2 points

touch, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This spell allows the caster to foil the special Argan Argar spell Safe. It allows the caster to safely touch an object or pass through a barrier covered by Safe, without having to resist the spell's magic points or risk taking general Hit Point damage. The object can be touched or passed through any number of times for the duration of the spell, without alerting the caster. Only one such object is affected with each casting of the spell.

Use of Crack Safe does not dispel the Safe spell, nor will it protect anyone besides the caster. The caster of the Safe spell will know that the spell has been broken through if he physically touches the item, but not before. This spell will not identify an object protected by a Safe spell.

THE SCROLL SNATCHERS

City of origin unknown; widespread influence

Although there is no proof of the existence of the Scroll Snatchers, many scholars believe in their existence. Over the centuries, many important documents have disappeared from Lhankor Mhy libraries throughout Kethaela and Kerofinela. While most sages scoff at the notion of a gang of knowledge thieves, citing the well-known predilection of cult members for hoarding documents in private libraries, many of these thefts are not so easily explained. For example, when the Two Spell Scroll of the Jonstown temple disappeared in 1547 S.T. a ransom note was left, and the scroll mysteriously reappeared after 50,000 guilders were delivered according to the instructions.

The Scroll Snatchers are believed to have originated in the time of the EWF, possibly as an organization of rebels who stole important secrets to use against the draconic leaders of the Empire. After the fall of the Empire, however, the thefts of books and scrolls continued. Some items have been recovered by the cult (several in the last few years by the Esrolian detective named Zero, in the city of Nochet), others have not, but all of the documents suspected to have been taken by this cult have contained hard-to-duplicate information or instruction.

The gamemaster must determine if the Scroll Snatchers do or do not exist, and if so the exact nature of the group. Some possibilities for this organization are listed below, and gamemasters are free to use one of these, to combine two or more of them, or to come up with their own explanation.

- 1) A loose organization of thieves in many cities, who fence stolen documents for each other to avoid detection by cult authorities.
- 2) A thief cult originally based in one of the EWF cities, now scattered throughout many locations (like the Secret Guild of Alchemists, see below).
- 3) A band of Thanatar worshipers who perform the thefts themselves, or who use a band of thieves to perform the thefts for them.
- 4) An "urban legend" of the Lhankor Mhy cult, used by some sages to cover their hoarding or the accidental destruction of documents.

THE SHADOW CATS

Jansholm

The thief gang of Jansholm is commonly known as the Shadow Cats, but members insist on calling themselves The Honorable Brigands. It was founded in the Dawn Age by a group of resisters against Palangio the Iron Vrok, the Dara Happan Governor General of Kerofinela. Their hero (known only as the Shadow Cat) led a band that waylaid messengers and under-guarded baggage trains ("like a cat plucking feathers from a songbird"), then evaded pursuit by hiding among the citizens of Jansholm. Palangio's soldiers were never able to capture them, and even his mages could not track them down. Because the Shadow Cat was cautious, and never attacked too often, or took too great a take, his band (and the citizens of Jansholm) were able to avoid major retaliation from the Dara Happan army.

Over time, the Shadow Cats turned from honorable theft from a conquering army, to thievery from the citizens of Jansholm (and later the small port city of Sklar, which sits at the mouth of the Solthi River, downstream from Jansholm). Still, they remember their past glory, and tell tales of their predecessors' heroic actions against the invading Dara Happs, though none of the current members has attempted to emulate these actions by defying the Lunars. The ring began breeding and training shadow cats to assist them in the early Imperial Age, and now their cats are capable of nearly amazing feats. Most people believe that the ring's cats are actually familiars or spirits, but they are simply an especially intelligent and well-trained breed.

Since the middle of the Imperial Age, the ring has cultivated an arrangement with the beggars of the city. Additionally, the god Donandar has a large following in the city (for a great theatre/temple to him was built here at the beginning of the Third Age), and his itinerant players and entertainers make common cause with the thieves of the city as well. In this way, the entertainers run their scams and occasional thefts, turning over a cut to the thieves in the form of "Brigandage Licenses." Meanwhile, the beggars mark prey and act as lookouts for the Shadow Cats in exchange for certain types of support. So close has the association become that the leader of the Shadow Cats is given associate membership in the Cult of Donandar, and the King of the Beggars is one of the advisor lieutenants of the Master Thief.

Most of the thieves of Jansholm prefer mugging to cutting purses, and larger-scale robberies to muggings. They actually keep a fairly low profile in their activities, but the fear they engender makes it easy for them to collect protection money from the wealthier merchants of the city. A few members of the cult are generally members of local law enforcement as well, and this helps to prevent large-scale retaliation. The occasional Master Thief becomes enchanted by his own tales of the ring's glory days, and begins a campaign of highway robbery that lasts until he draws too much attention to the gang. In the few times this has happened, the ring has always managed to survive with a new leader. (This new leader is often one of the acolytes who is also a member of the local police. Unable to protect his cult any longer, he betrays the Master Thief and takes over the ring instead.)

The Shadow Cats specialize in the skills of Animal Training: Shadow Cat, Bribery, Climb, Jump, and Streetwise. Members can also gain training in various skills from the Donandar cultists, including Throw and Voice Mimicry. The Shadow Cat also teaches his followers Divination Block, which helped them hide from Palangio's mages in the Dawn Age, and has continued to conceal their activities in the centuries since.

Animal Training: Shadow Cat

Knowledge skill, base 0% for most people

This skill is similar to Riding in teaching skills, in making a shadow cat do something it has not been trained to do, in making a



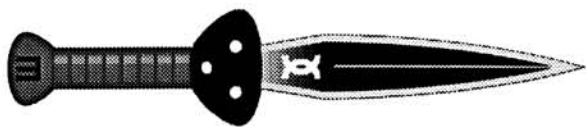
THE SECRET GUILD OF ALCHEMISTS

Formerly New Crystal City; widespread influence

This group originated in New Crystal City, where their founder had stolen the secret of alchemy from dwarfs during the Dawn Age. Throughout their history they continued to practice their art, but eventually they went too far and stole something important, probably gunpowder. Up until then their thefts had been considered a minor annoyance, but Martaler the Blazing Forge (the Brass Mostali leader of Gemborg) could not ignore this latest theft of dwarf secrets. He began a series of retaliations, primarily through use of gobblers and gremlins (see The Gloranthan Bestiary), and in the late 1500s was able to break the core of the gang. The Master Thief and all of his acolytes were killed, but a few of the alchemists were able to escape, and they have scattered throughout the land. Most of them were able to gain membership in other rings, offering their knowledge of alchemy as an incentive for their acceptance.

In the last 40 years, the membership of the Secret Guild has increased, as local thieves have been taken on as apprentices and taught their skills. Thus, many thief cults throughout Heortland (and even as far away as Pavis, rumours claim) have access to a few of the many substances once known to the Guild. However, dwarfs are immortal, and retaliation has followed these alchemists and their students, and will continue to do so until the last secret has been reclaimed by the Mostali. At least one thief ring (of the city of Mygalos, in northern Esrolia) was completely wiped out by dwarfs and their creations, along with almost a square kilometer of the city that was destroyed in the massive explosion that leveled the thief ring's hideout.

Members of the Secret Guild of Alchemists know no special magics, but specialize in the skill of Alchemy. Collectively, they know the Formulae for most poisons (though not Blade Venom) and antidotes, adhesives, solvents, Confusion and Sleep elixirs, Power Blasting potion, Smoke Bombs, Stink Bombs, Flares, Thunder Lung Dust, and Scent-stop Dust. However, most of the alchemists only knew the Formulae for a few substances. Thus, none of the thief rings of Kethaela has access to more than 3 or 4 alchemical substances, usually including at least one poison and one other substance.



shadow cat fight on command, and in choosing a shadow cat for breeding.

Shadow cats can only be taught skills and actions appropriate to their awareness and body type, including attacking with Bite or Claws. Shadow cats can be trained to follow individuals, climb onto roofs and through windows, pick up small items in their mouth, and to return to one of a number of set locations. In general, a Shadow cat can be trained to do anything that a dog could, though they are much more agile.

THE SHADOW GANGS OF NOCHET

Nochet

The City of Nochet is the largest in Kethaela, but originally it had only a single thief cult, which worshipped a hero known as the Shadow. However, through the centuries this cult has split a number of times. Some of the splinter cults have been reabsorbed or exterminated, so that now there are three rival gangs, each of which claims to be the sole heirs of the god all three cults worship. Each of these gangs strives for domination of the city's thieving opportunities, and bloody battles and strings of murders are not uncommon. The gangs usually become quiescent in the wake of such occurrences, as local officials crack down on them, but when the officials grow complacent again the gang warfare erupts anew.

Each of the three gangs of Nochet retains only a portion of the original secrets of the cult. The Shadow Mongers operate in the older neighborhoods of the city, now a stronghold for the Old Earth and Pure Earth political factions. Like most of Esrolia the cult is matriarchal in organization, and the Master Thief and her Acolytes are always women. They specialize in the skills of Conceal, Hide, and Sneak, and know the special Divine Magic spell of Detection Blank and the Spirit Magic spells of Shimmer and Silence. They rely upon fear to keep their victims pliable, and are not above murder in the course of a second-story job if they feel the victim might go to the authorities.

The Knowing Shadows operate primarily in the newer parts of the city, nowadays especially seeking out Lunars and members of the Red Earth faction as targets. They prefer muggings and cutting purses to burglaries, and also have ties to local prostitution and drug trafficking. They know the Spirit Magic spells of Befuddle and Forget. They are the smallest of the three gangs, a struggling, male-dominated cult in a woman's world. This leads them to be somewhat more brutal in their activities, and many members seek every opportunity to dominate women, especially the wealthy women merchants and politicians of the city.

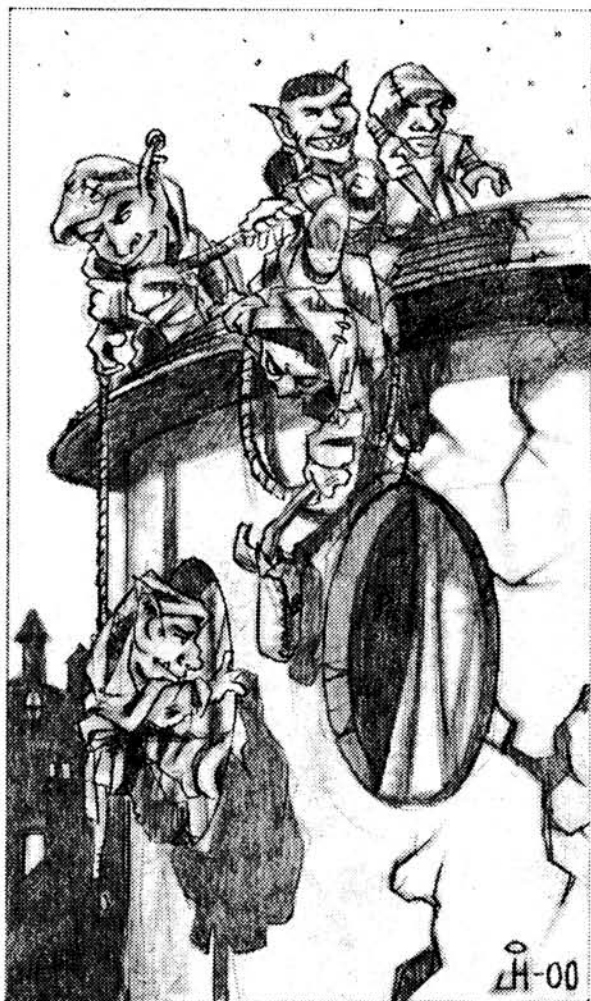
The Shadow Fishers operate solely in the port areas of Nochet, and so control almost half the city, more than either of the other two Shadow cults. They run an extensive protection racket on the docks and in the markets, and rarely resort to overt robberies. They are feared by all of the small fishermen, for they are as brutal as their compatriots, but most of the larger operations need pay only a small "fee" to avoid their attentions. The Lunar ventures in the area have steadfastly refused to buy into this racket, and have asked for assistance from local Lunar authorities, resulting in the presence of Lunar troops in Nochet in large numbers. The Shadow Fishers specialize in the skills of Bribery, Fast Talk, Human Lore, Throw, and Club Attack, and have access to the Spirit Magic spell of Bludgeon. They also know the Divine Magic spell Divination Block.

Forget

2 points

ranged, focused, passive, temporal

If the victim's magic points are overcome, this spell causes them to forget events taking place both 10 melee rounds before and 10 melee rounds after the spell takes effect. The memory loss takes



effect immediately, and will continue for the duration of the spell (normally five minutes). If a guard chases some thieves who successfully hit him with this spell, he will forget why he is chasing them (or perhaps even that he was chasing them), but he will remember the encounter after the spell wears off.

THE SKILLFUL THELOSIANS

Thelos

The city of Thelos lies on the border between Esrolia and Caladraland, and as such its inhabitants do not quite fit either culture, combining elements of both. The thieves of Thelos are no exception, and their Theyalan culture is heavily modified by the less urban, less egalitarian Caladralander society. Unusually, the cult has several acolytes at any given time, and from these acolytes all of the members of the cult elect the Master Thief once every six years, or when the current Master Thief dies or retires. This practice makes the cult top-heavy with leadership, and most crimes committed by the ring involve multiple thieves working together to pull off a large heist, led by one of the acolytes.

The Thelosians boast of their skill at evading capture, or escaping if caught, for their founder Thelados was a famous contortionist and escape artist of the Imperial Age. His followers specialize in thefts of expensive items, such as jewels from Caladraland and

dwarf-wrought magical items being brought into Esrolia, and have contacts with many fences throughout Esrolia and Heortland. They specialize in the skills of Climb, Devise, Evaluate, Foil Restraints, Jump, and Search. They have access to the Spirit Magic spells of Coordination, Face of Thelados, and Mobility, but have no special Divine spells.

Foil Restraints

Manipulation skill, base 0%

This is the ability to position oneself so that restraining ropes, chains, etc., are applied ineffectively. The initial roll must succeed when the bonds are applied, as the skill is useless against bonds already on the thief. If this initial roll succeeds, the character can try to free himself from the bonds at any future time by again making his Foil Restraints roll successfully, without obvious struggle. This may be attempted once every five minutes. If his roll was a critical success, he may release himself at any time without further skill attempts. If the character failed his Foil Restraints roll when tied up he cannot try to escape. Note that this skill is not proof against extraordinary restraint methods, such as tying weights to a person's feet and dropping them in a river, nor will it assist in escaping from any locked device.

Foil Restraints can also be used as a defense against the skill of Bind Captive (see *The Book of Drastic Resolutions*, Volume Darkness). Whenever both skills are used, a skill versus skill contest ensues, as described in *RuneQuest* (Player's Book pg 34, Deluxe edition pg 36). Bind Captive is always considered to be the active skill.

WILL'S SEEKERS

Willford

The thieves of northern Esrolia are centered on the city of Willford, where the hero worshiped is called Blind William (though even the thieves who worship him acknowledge that he is not the Will after whom the city is named). They rely heavily upon magic in their trade, and most initiates know some spells. Some of these spells are learned through the Spellteaching ritual, but the cult also has secret arrangements with temples of some of Esrolia's Husband Protectors, who seek to undermine the power of the leaders of the Esrolian Matriarchy. Will's Seekers primarily steal from merchants who are passing through and from rich Esrolian priestesses.

Members of the Seekers will usually know at least one or two Spirit Magic spells, taken from the following list or as available from local temples: Coordination, Darkwall, Dispel Magic, Find Copper, Find Diamond, Find Gold, and Find Silver. They also know the special Divine spell Find Hidden Wealth.

Find Hidden Wealth

1 point

ranged, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This spell operates exactly as Find <Substance> described in *RuneQuest*. However, rather than sensing a specific substance it detects any objects within range that are being hidden by a Hide Wealth spell (see *Gods of Glorantha*, *Troll Gods*, or *Tales of the Reaching Moon* #14). As long as the Find Hidden Wealth spell is in effect the hidden object can be uncovered, at which time the Hide Wealth spell ends.

THE CITY OF REFUGE

The City of Refuge is officially known as Malkion's New Refuge. It lies on the coast just north of the God Forged Isles, and is very much a Western city in design and inhabitants. Refuge was built in the Second Age by refugees from the Malkioni Diocese of

Nochet, who were fleeing the conflicts between the God Learners and the Kethaelans. Despite the grand and noble intentions of its founding Bishop, the city quickly became a haven for thieves. Its native thief cult was quite powerful until the 1300s, when the city was conquered by the Hendreiki of southern Heortland at the same time as Mount Passant and the Bandori Valley. A thane of the Hendreiki king was appointed Governor of the city, and this practice continued until the city was conquered again by Richard the Tiger-Hearted's short-lived kingdom of Malkonwal. When Richard was captured, the Talar of Talar Hold took advantage of the anarchy in southern Heortland. He sent in troops to capture the city, led by Talar Kithis Ikadi, a young relative. The citizens have been allowed to continue with their own culture in most ways, as long as they obey their Talar's laws, and pay tribute and allegiance to the Talar of Talar Hold. Still, it remains infamous throughout Kethaela as being infested with thieves.

Refuge has no native thief gang, for the Hendreiki utterly destroyed the original ring, and the internecine fighting between the remains of this ring and immigrants from other cities has always prevented any one group from gaining a strong foothold. More recently, the justice of the Talar has eliminated two or three gangs who had become too powerful. However, many thief cults from throughout Kethaela can be found here, brought by thieves who have come to escape justice in their home city, hoping for anonymity in a place where they are just one thief among many. One of the most famous groups currently is JuBal's Black Hawks, a group of assassins. The Black Hawks' leader is a mysterious man, with different rumours claiming him as a renegade Black Fang from the Pavis Rubble, a former Lunar gladiator, and a brutal agimori exiled from Seshnela.

Many shrines to thief gods exist in Refuge, often established by acolytes fleeing internecine conflict in their home city. Few last for long, whether because worshippers leave or are captured, are killed by one of the rival gangs, or because they are absorbed by another gang which is temporarily more powerful. There are a number of independent Master Thieves in Refuge, more than most cities, probably because of the Western influences.



NOTES ON THE CULT OF LANBRIL IN PAVIS

THE RUNEQUEST CAMPAIGN pack Pavis: Threshold to Adventure contained the first write-up of the Lanbril cult. It also included information on the different thief rings and Master Thieves of that city. Even earlier, the Black Fang Brotherhood itself was estimated to have 300 initiate and runemaster members. With greater understanding of Glorantha comes change, and it seems likely that this information was incorrect in many specifics. Pavis is simply not a large enough city to include three large or native thief cults, nor is it large enough to support a total of 7 rune masters among the Lanbril gangs.

The Pavis campaign lists three Lanbril rings: the Hole Lords, Harli's Gang, and Knobby's Nippers. However, two of these are recent additions to the criminal population of the city. There are currently only two native Lanbril thief cults in Pavis, including the Black Fang Brotherhood. The other two rings represent thief groups that have relocated or expanded into Pavis in the last few decades. As such, these three gangs generally will not cooperate with each other, as each is striving to gain control over most or all criminal activities in the area.

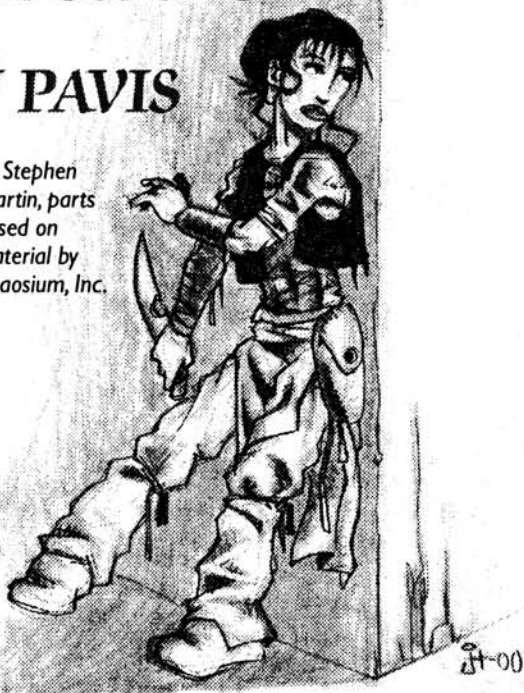
The Hole Lords are the largest thief ring in Pavis, with a history stretching back to the time of the Troll Occupation of the Rubble. It is likely that Black Fang was a member of this ring at some point during or before his bandit career. Harli's Gang specializes in second-story jobs and stealing warehouse goods, led by an immigrant from Tarsh who came to the city thirty years ago. Knobby's Nippers are a spin-off of the Hole Lords from the time of the Lunar Occupation, who specialize in recruiting and using children (including the youth gangs of the city) to perform crimes.

The Black Fang Brotherhood is the other native Lanbril cult. Most of the Black Fang assassins operate out of the Rubble, and have no affiliation with the Lanbril rings. The Black Fang Brotherhood is led by several shamans, with at least three independent "families" rumored to exist. At least one of the thief rings described above is probably a front for the Brotherhood, though this is unknown to the other thief gangs and the populace at large. Our suggestion for this front group is Harli's Gang, because of its connections with Gimgrim the Grim.

There are also many independent adventurers in Pavis and the Rubble. They are considered thieves by many, for their main occupation is assaulting and ransacking the assorted troll, broo, elf, and nomad homes in the Rubble. They can operate on their own because of the lack of a single thief cult controlling the area. The best known example of such adventurers includes Wolfhead and Griselda and their gang, who operate out of the Rubble. Many freelance thieves are also known, but because of their general inexperience and lack of connections they are often caught. Most of these individual "thieves" do not call themselves such, of course, nor do they worship a Lanbril cult, instead following Orlanth Adventurous (as Wolfhead does).

One independent Master Thief is known in Pavis, Chukel the Clever. His origin is unknown, for he is not directly connected to any of the Lanbril rings, and it is likely that he is an exile from Sartar. He has contacts in the three rings (but not the Black Fang Brotherhood), however, and is often hired to provide advanced instruction in thiefly skills to promising candidates, for he is a master of all of them. In return, he is allowed access to the Lanbril shrines maintained by the gangs. A second infamous thief of great skill is

by Stephen
Martin, parts
based on
material by
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known only as the Rat. He is closely connected with the Hole Lords, who often perform errands for him. He is rumored to have connections with Lunar intelligence, though the corpses keep obscuring any definite proof.

The thieves of Pavis concentrate on second-story work, picking pockets, and cutting purses. Mugging is discouraged by the large number of armed adventurers wandering around, and highway robbery is even more strongly deterred by the occupying Lunar army. Cons and rigged games of chance are rife in the town, but this is as often the work of tricksters or itinerant Donandar entertainers as it is members of the thief rings.

There are a number of street gangs present in Pavis, one in almost every neighborhood. One or two of these groups of street toughs are directly controlled by Knobby's Nippers, and all of the others are used as tools (runners, lookouts, and spies) fairly regularly by the three gangs. These street toughs are generally in their teens; those who do not have legitimate occupations by the time they reach the age of 20 or so are usually recruited by the thief cults as full members.

Both because of the lack of an organized Lanbril cult in Pavis, and the active warfare that often breaks out between the three factions, outsiders generally do not have the option to try to join as a common member just to gain skill training. However, the many guilds and temples in Pavis are more open than most to selling training to casual worshippers, because of the frontier nature of the city and the presence of the Rubble nearby. Availability of training to outsiders varies considerably depending on their race, cultural background, social status, and cult affiliations. Adventurers can pay to learn from the Lanbril rings, but this is not recommended for outsiders, as it can be extremely hazardous. Technically, anyone offering enough should be able to associate themselves with these opportunistic bandits, but many have had their throats cut for asking too many questions.

A Holiday
Glorantha/Heroquest locale

The Tower of Xud

By José Ramos,
with the unwitting help of Jörg Baumgartner,
Fernando Blesa, Paolo Guccione,
Xavier Spinat and Andrew Weill

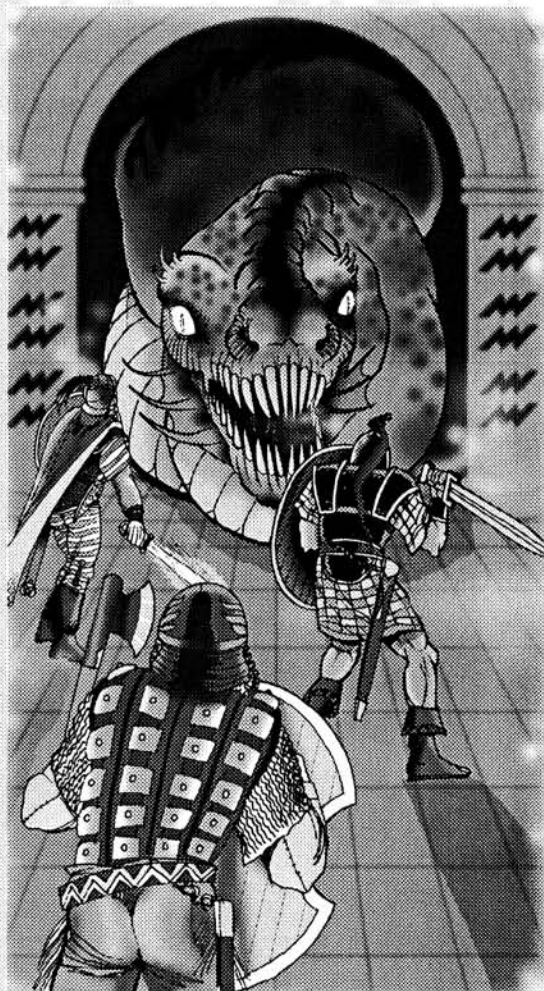
The Tower of Xud is possibly the most impressive man-made structure in the whole Safelster area. What cannot be doubted is that it is the tallest. Standing just beside the bustling port city of Kustria, in the kingdom of the same name, the Tower is a black spire of seamless rock rising unchecked to the heavens. Its height seems to change every day, and it has been growing steadily this last two centuries, after King Ulianus of Seshnela conquered most of Safelster and built the Arena. Despite its variations, it is always more than a mile high.

History

The origin of the Tower is lost among the mists of the God Learners expansion and fall. Although it was for a long time the symbol of the God Learners rulership over Safelster, some scholars claim that it was built by the Dark Empire. Sources of the time are untrustworthy, and no matter who built it, it soon became the hub of God Learner Hero Plane activity in the region, including the destruction of all traces of the previous history of the Tower.

The Xud is a Jrusteli acronym, possibly the name of the controlling academic body. Almost nothing is known about it, except that it had a whole university dedicated to it.

When the Gift Carriers came, the Tower, that had remained unassailable to all the rebels that had tried to enter or destroy it, became insubstantial and shrouded for a decade in continuous fogs. It was then that the last God Learners were destroyed while using its highway properties. The tower remained untouched by ordinary men for centuries, other than for the occasional heroes who either emerged from it, tried to gain entry, or just materialized in its proximity. The little town of Kustria, fallen in disrepair after the end of the Second Age, was revitalized by Ulianus' conquest and became the center of



Tanisorian power, as it had been for the Jrusteli. However Ulianus built his city at a little distance, fearing the dark shadow of the Tower.

For a time many pious Malkioni tried to destroy the tower, from inside or out, but all attempts failed, usually with fatal results for the would-be demolishers.

Now the Church of Kustria watches the Tower constantly, to apprehend and interrogate anyone leaving it, or trying to gain entry. This is more a nuisance than a real menace for a hero, but if provoked the wrath of God can be lethal.

Physical description

The Tower of Xud sits in the Old City of Kustria, in a cleared and cobble stoned square 100 meters (350 feet) wide. The Tower, for all its height, is only 30 meters (100 feet) in diameter and it rises straight into the sky, with the top hidden from those below.

No windows, doors or other entrances are usually present, although some appear or disappear when needed. The tower is made of smooth black stone, and matte bands of stone like writing or a decorative design, changing continually. It is not known in what language, if any, those great black glyphs moving

up and down the sides of the Tower may be written.

The only known entry that is always open is at the top. Daring fliers that have reached it either disappear, or are unable to get inside the Tower, finding only a small chamber from which any further progress is impossible.

The Tower is associated with many unusual weather patterns, and even more supernatural events, such as rings of cloud forming around it, rains of blood, the Red Moon shining out of her normal phase, hailstones piling three meters high at the base of the Tower, or continual lightning hitting the Tower whenever a storm is near. These are one more reason to explain why Ulianus founded the new Kustria away from the Tower.

After the events of last year (1616 ST), the Church and the City Guard watch the Tower to impede any attempt to enter.

The Interior

This report of the insides of the Tower is based on the experiences of a small band of heroes last year. It is very likely there are many inconsistencies, and the experience will be different for any other would-be explorer. However, the common phenomena found by three different groups show that there is an underlying structure. It is this structure we will try to reveal.

Gaining Entry

Apart from flying up to the top (and even then you will find a small chamber and no entry points), the Tower can be accessed from the Mundane or the Hero Plane. In the Hero Plane there are doors, usually out of form with the surrounding landscape, relics of the God-Learners. Although some of them still take you back to the Tower, others have been corrupted and can take you anywhere, usually somewhere unpleasant.

The only known entry ritual from the mundane plane (although doubtless there are others) requires a sentient sacrifice, when Yelm is hidden by the Tower's mystical shadow. The blood or vital fluids of the sacrificed being is used to design a door on the Tower's wall, while the victim's spirit is still around to be devoured by the Tower. As you may expect, it is a horrid crime in Kustria to carry out this ritual.

Once the door opens it remains open for the rest of the night, although only those that enter together will experience the Tower together. It seems it is hard but not impossible to overtake someone in the Tower, as one of the heroes entered behind another group but went out before them, and without having seen them, but he could see and pursue the quarry he went into the Tower to chase. Certainly time does not follow the same course within

the Tower as it does outside. Some heroes have gone out years after they went in, while others grew old while only a few hours passed outside.

The first obstacle

Once you are in, you meet the first obstacle, the Guardian of the Threshold. A male devotee of the barbarian and Arkati death god blocks the way. The entry hall is a small chamber, tiled in shining white mosaic, and whose only exit is a low archway where the guardian waits.

It appears that the builders of the Tower did not want to spend too much energy gaining access as the guardian is easy to overcome. Trickery, strength and even peaceful intent or bargaining can get you across, and you can get some association with the Power of Death in the process.

Once you defeat the guardian, or makes him or her let you pass, you can cross the archway. Indeed, there is no other choice. When you cross, all your mundane gear is lost and you are instead garbed in the clothes or armor of your mind, as you picture yourself in your mind's eye. Only enchanted or highly cherished items make the translatio, though that does not make them impervious to damage in the Tower.

In passing the arch, questers also hear or feel those who support them, who trust in them, or those who care for them. That may be a source of strength inside the Tower, but it is not known how to tap it.

The Ground level

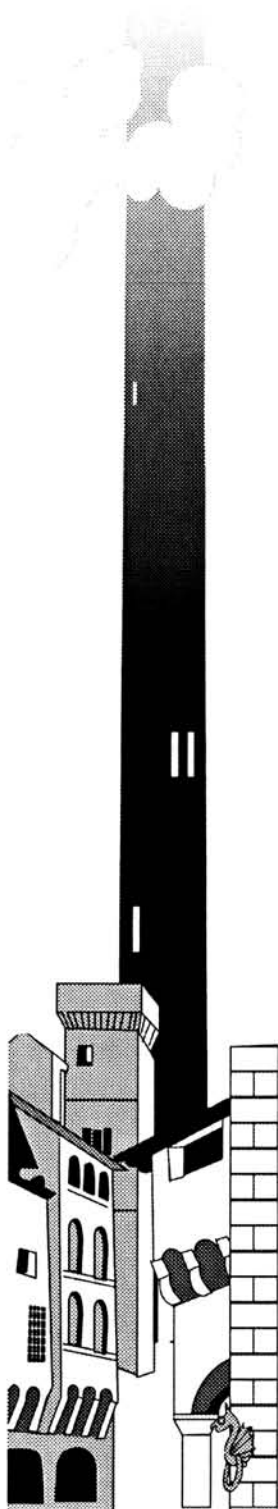
Beyond the arch there is a circular stair rising to the right, and a long corridor (so long its end is not in sight) with doors marked with strange glyphs along both walls. The last questers did not open any side doors, in this or any other level, so it remains only speculation, but the accepted theory says these doors open to any location in the Mundane world, if you can just read the glyphs and find the right doorway. Of course, opening the wrong door could be fatal.

The First Level. Darkness

All the internal walls, floors and ceilings (but an exception) are made of big blocks of stone, black where they can be seen. These are impervious to damage, including the effects of the different levels.

As with all the levels, this one has a guardian. But also as in all the levels, it has been deliberately weakened by the God Learners and you can get protection or help for the other levels.

As you go up the stairs the shining tiles begin to get duller, until at last you are in impenetrable, pitch black darkness. At some time in the Darkness you stop breathing, feeling hunger, or feeling normal fatigue. After a long time in the dark, the quester finally



reaches a landing and also feels a strong oppressive presence. If you resist the fear, the level can be passed through without interference, as the circular stair continues after the landing. However, if you explore the long corridor, filled with doors, with (we suppose) invisible glyphs indicating destinations, or if you try to contact, menace or talk with the presence, it will manifest and either devour, possess or become an ally of the quester. The presence is a split portion of Mother Umbra, a tractable darkness spirit associated with the troll deity Xiola Umbar. It is fortunate it is not one of her brother's demons who guards this level.

It has been theorized that doors in this level open in Hell.

The Second Level: Water

If you continue up the stairs, at a certain moment the darkness becomes more substantial, offering resistance to being traversed. You begin to float, depending on your equipment. If breath then there is little to fear from that quarter. As expected, you finally reach a landing where a corridor leaves off, while the stair continues spiraling upwards.

The guardian here is more material than the previous one, but it only becomes active if noise is made or blood appears in the Water. The guardian here is an enormous eel or snake (being in the dark, the questers could not see it) that almost fills the corridor. The guardian is far too big to get to the stairs. Anyone swallowed whole, will be taken to Magasta's realm. One way to avoid this fate is to induce the guardian to vomit you out before you arrive, which depending on your actions can be easy to accomplish. If you do, you will be thrown out of the Tower and the Quest, at a high altitude of course. A sylph saved the hero who discovered this, so take it into account. It is not known how you can befriend the guardian, if it is at all possible. Perhaps using food?

It is generally accepted the doors in the corridor take you anywhere where water is dominant.

The Third Level: Earth

As you ascend the stairs, the water becomes more and more viscous, until it impedes any further movement. Now you have to dig to advance through, first mud, then wet loam, and at last packed earth.

The questers did not find any guardians, unless the earth's resistance itself is the guardian. There were roots going through the side corridor, but they did not explore it. One group speeded up its travel time by planting an olive cane, and the trunk that grew up instantly opened a way upwards.

The halls of the Deep Earth, and Gata's four corners are just some of the locations to which the doors here will take you.

The Fourth Level: Fire

The Earth becomes drier and drier, until it crumbles away and a burning beam of light passes through. In every case a single beam shines through, burning away any unenchanted inanimate matter, no matter what the material is. This is possibly a warning, so you know that you are going to get through.

The light does not damage living flesh but causes pain and a searing heat, with the exception of the eyes, which are burnt out instantly if exposed to it. Simply covering your eyes with your hands will protect them, although any bandage used to cover them will usually be burnt, and the eyes just afterwards.

No guardian, besides the blistering heat and blinding light has been found here, but the heat becomes stronger as you advance through the corridor.

The blindness is both a disadvantage and a reward. As it is to save your eyes. However see below in rewards. Also, the skins of those that have passed through the fire shine for a time with a soft glow. This glow will be reproduced with any strong exposure to the fiery element in the future, to which, although not immune, they are now more resistant.

The net effect of passing through the fire is that the questers are now naked, sometimes without tools and some or all may be blind. A member of a fire cult might pass with her eyes open, but it remains to be proved. Unfortunately the questers I could question had no strong elemental associations.

The Fifth Level: Air

After leaving the landing of Fire, the first sign of the arrival of Air is the intake of the first breath. Soon a slight breeze can be felt and heard, that gets stronger as you go up. When you get to the landing, the wind is quite strong, and two strong gales can be felt just one step beyond. It is hard to avoid getting blown in the landing, and then to be at the mercy of the two whirlwinds. However they don't bang you around, but depending on how you enter, they take you either through the corridor or up the stairs. Even a strong flier would be hard pressed to go where it wants.

If you politely ask for help or hospitality, and either acknowledge the power of the wind, or declare kinship to it, a way will open before you. You may then choose your own way, and you may get the help of the Second Wind.

Curiously, none of the questers came to harm here, the wind always dropping them unhurt on the floor.

The Sixth Level: Moon

Although some old works hint at the elemental structure, no reference existed to the Moon as an element you could find at the Tower. Indeed, she had not risen when the God Learners fell. Even more, instead of the usual stone blocks, the walls are made of the same stone, but fused, or melted and then



• Once you are in, you meet the first obstacle, the Guardian of the Threshold. A male devotee of the barbarian and Arkati death god blocks the way.

stretched.

It is a widespread opinion that the Red Men expedition present at the events of 1616 was there to manifest the moon at the Tower. A powerful Lunar spirit was used as the seed.

No matter what is its origin, the Moon level is starkly different from the rest. The corridor does exist, but there are no doors in it. A redheaded child, a girl with an enormous scimitar, waits for any arrivals. She is by turns naive and worldly, gullible and wise, commanding and craven. She offers her help to pass the last level in exchange of some "small" service, unless you are an enemy of the moon. Her followers may gain her blessings for free, but you should notice that although those protected by her have survived the next level, the Chaos level, they have always been warped by it.

The Seventh Level: Chaos

After the usual stairs you reach a landing. It is in darkness, but shapes, colors and movements can be seen within it. As soon as the quester gets to the landing (and no matter how many people are in the group they somehow always arrive alone) his body and his mind begin to wander, exploring all the possibilities of being. It is not known if this is the Gbaji inside all of us, or Chaos assaulting our sanity, but only those with very strong wills may succeed in remaining unchanged. However, certain entities can help, and the quester's experience and religion are also important. The Solace in the Dark cannot defeat chaos alone, but may help a friend. A quester saw the Second Wind use itself up to let him pass through. The Touch of the Moon keeps changes more or less limited, although it tries to change them to forms pleasing to her eye.

This is the worst level, and it is likely the God Learners used the Tower as a way to go somewhere, bypassing this level, through the side corridors and their doors.

All who pass through are changed, even if only slightly, but they are not necessarily tainted by Chaos. One of the general effects is the recovery of eyes and other pieces lost in the quest, although possibly in a different form.

Exit

After you find the stairs leaving the chaotic level (which is not easy with your body expanding in twenty seven different ways, without directions, and your only eye in what was your navel) it is just a small matter of passing a magical portal to the small chamber at the top. And then going back down to the surface, of course, so be prepared!

The 1616 quest

The last known expedition to enter the Tower and leave to tell the tale consisted of four groups chasing each other inside the Tower. First went a powerful renegade Brithini

sorcerer, who had traversed the Tower before. Unfortunately we have been unable to talk with him about his experiences. Next went a Sentanos mercenary possessed by a Lunar hero, a follower of Duke Yanafal. The Yanafali disappeared, the Moon level was formed, and the mercenary left as a redheaded woman after dealing with the Moon Woman. Later that same night a group formed by a knight, a healer and a rogue went in. The knight fell from the middle of the Tower, but St. Orlanth gave him the power to save himself. The rogue did not exit and the healer reappeared as a male Uzuz marked with the red sign of the Moon. The last, a sailor and possibly an Arkati, went in and out practically unchanged.

Gifts and mythical explanation

There is the possibility of getting some kind of gift, friend, or power as you traverse the levels. The only way to make them last is to pass through the Chaos level, representing entry in Glorantha. Other gifts are only of use inside the Tower. Even more, you can get only one gift from the Tower into Chaos, but if you have several then which one you keep is beyond your control.

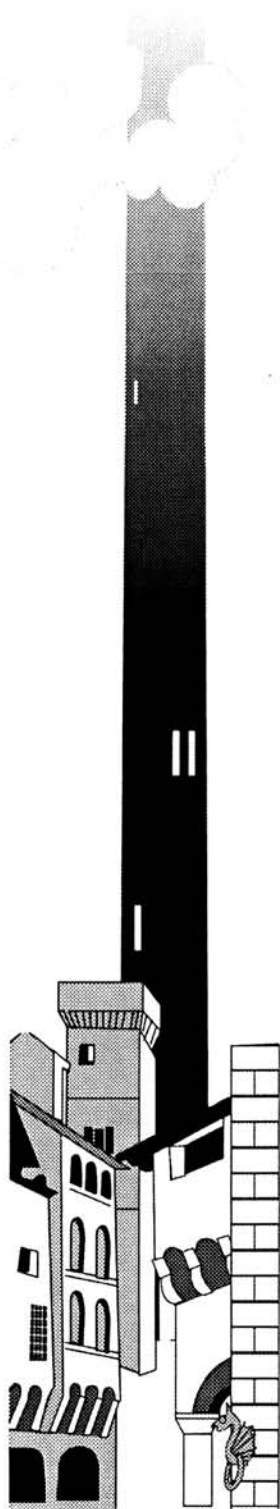
Known gifts are:

- Friendship with Mother Umbra, and even melding with it to become a troll.
- Blindness to the spirit plane, gaining immunity to spirit attack (and incapable of interaction with them).
- Friendship with the Second Wind. The quester with this gift used the Second Wind to traverse the Chaos level, but any other abilities it confers are unknown.
- Enhanced tolerance for pain and fire, as a toned down version of the Fires of Ehilm.

Some questers have progressed along the path of illumination, which may hint to an Arkati connection with the origin of the Tower.

The Tower has been considered by scholars as a model for the Spike, allowing access to all of Glorantha through its mystical connection with the rest of the world. The God Learners used it both as a fast way to travel and as a secret accessway to many myths and landscapes. To open a door requires you to have traveled there in the traditional way, but after that, anyone who knows the way can get there bypassing any intervening obstacles. In this way the God Learners opened back doors to all the popular myths.

It is interesting to note that the deities worshipped in Hrelar Amali (Flamal, Yelm, Orlanth, Magasta) are linked with the same elements as the Tower. Darkness is forbidden in Hrelar after Flamal was devoured, but it is still a potent holy place.



Istakax

by Jonas Schiött

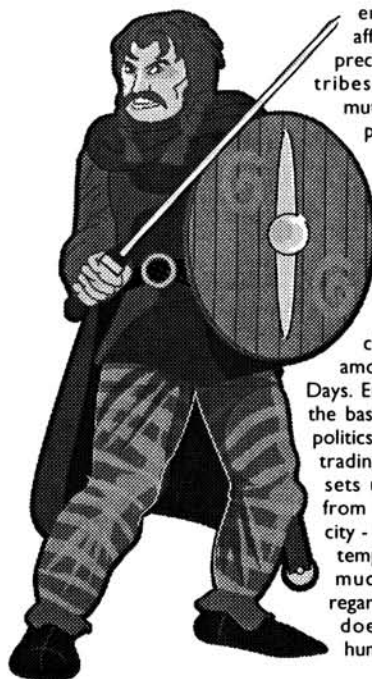
In the easternmost reaches of Delela, on the border of Corolaland, lies the town of Istakax. Ever since the dawn of Time (and possibly before that) there has been some kind of settlement here at the Istakahixa (a troll name) waterfall, above which the Dorskior River runs too rapid and shallow to be navigable by trading vessels.



ISTAKAX IS INHABITED by a thousand humans and a few trolls. The city covers a large area, but one has to consider that crops are grown and livestock is allowed to roam free within the earthworks. Approximately two out of every three houses are restored ruins, built largely of stone. The rest are of traditional wooden make. Most of the inhabitants live by farming and animal husbandry, but a significant minority seek an income from the lake or in trade, usually with trolls or Galanini. Also, the Goodmead clan ships its beer through Istakax. Strangely enough, none of the local inns stock it. Another export is containers made of soapstone, which abounds in the surroundings.

Politically, the city is a neutral zone. There is no formal government; most people mind their own business. There is a city militia though, and its captain (Eagin Dragonslayer) sometimes acts as if he owns the place. As a matter of fact, he almost does. His only real rival in terms of influence is Barnan Redhair (high priest of Orlanth). Some visitors are surprised that humans and trolls (and even tusk riders!) get along so well in Istakax – the two races have, historically speaking, always been enemies in this region. What is easily overlooked is the fact that the current inhabitants are unrelated to the previous ones, thus having no feud to carry on. Also, if you want to survive in a tough frontier

Jonas, Sten and Dag
The Chaos Apes, in various configurations, ran the RQ tournament at GothCon (in Goteborg, Sweden) between 1984 and 1993. At the moment they do not actively game in Glorantha.



environment like this one, you can't afford to be loaded down with a lot of preconceptions. Both the Nardain and Rolin tribes have realized this, and now have mutually beneficial arrangements with the people of darkness. Ozobo, the Ajim clan closest to Istakax, is friendly with at least some trolls for religious reasons: this clan is dominated by Storm Bull worshippers.

The religious life is of course dominated by Orlanth; the Major Temple draws not only locals, but also worshippers from the neighbouring clans of the Nardain tribe and a fair amount of transient adventurers on Holy Days. Ernalda can maintain a Major Temple on the basis of Istakax alone, but doesn't mix in politics. There is a small Issaries shrine at the trading post, and a travelling Uleria troupe sets up shop here once in a while. Apart from these, sites are scattered around the city - like Chalana Arroy (next to the Ernalda temple) or Eurmial (in Norim's shack, not much to look at). The trolls probably regard the "ZZ Temple" as a site, but Xog doesn't answer questions from nosy humans.

History

Legends state that some otherwise unknown race of beings lived here during the God Time in a magical city, the name of which is likewise unknown. The first historical residents were trolls, who didn't leave any significant traces of their presence. Above ground, that is. They quietly withdrew into Halikiv when the Second Council broke up. The Council was wary of its former allies, so a walled city was built to protect the route from Kartolin Pass via the Doskior into central Ralios. Construction of this first Istakax began in 370 and was completed 375, just in time for Nysalor's birth. In the years that followed it was the staging area for several attacks against Halikiv by Council troops. Tragically, it was stormed and razed to the ground by trolls and elements of Arkat's army in 436.

While under the Dark Empire's thumb, the Delelans were naturally not allowed to occupy such a strategic spot; it was instead riddled with troll hovels. With time, the Empire started to decline in power: the conflict with Seshnela was deemed of greater importance than the Wilds, so the Orlanthi seized their chance. The trolls were evicted and a new Istakax erected (728-9) to serve nearly the same functions as the old one. It was much less ambitious in scope, however: where the old walls had the same extent as the present-day earthworks, the new walls are the ones of which remnants are still standing. The only more-or-less intact buildings from this period are the keep and one of the towers. Istakax came for a time to serve as a watchpost against the Vindor tribe, which succumbed to dragon worship and later died out, leaving the lands along the Rendalian unoccupied. The city

was destroyed again in 1302, when the troll buildup in Corolaland finally allowed them to retake it.

This time their victory was short-lived: Retter drove them back after only a few decades. Resettlement still posed a problem, but for reasons of Delelan politics. The previous citizenship had fiercely maintained its independence from all of the surrounding tribes. But by now, the Nardaini had expanded to enclose Istakax, something the Ajim and Rolin tribes were unhappy about. In 1351 a treaty was finally worked out, allowing a trading post to be established on the site and guaranteeing non-interference. About ten years later, the tribes also agreed to build an independent temple to Orlanth in Istakax where all visitors could worship (allowing it to become a Major temple). No full-scale, systematic reconstruction was accomplished for lack of inclination (the troll threat seemed to be ended), funds and proper expertise.

In 1581 the first Lunar caravan came to town. This caused some confusion at first, but as they paid their way with solid silver, they were soon accepted. They quickly worked out that overland travel is a very inefficient way to reach central Ralios from here. But going by river meant leaving their pack animals in Istakax, which meant an extra cost for stabling and guarding them. Installing Lunar troops as a garrison was not a workable solution, so they tried to convince locals of the need for some sort of protective force. This proposal was for a long time met with indifference.

Nine years ago, some Humakti decided on Istakax as the logical place for their new temple (they already had branches in Kilwin and Dorflik). Suffering from their usual delusions of grandeur, they erected a building that dwarfed all others in the city (excepting the keep, of course). Needless to say, this rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. Thus when a band of trolls, spearheaded by several Death Lords, launched a surprise attack 2 years later (on Zorak Zoran's High Holy Night), Orlanthi help was slow in coming. In fact, after a promise that the berserkers would vacate the premises had been extracted, the town leaders allowed Argan Argar to maintain a 'temple'. The Humakti have staged three raids to retake the temple, but since they always attack on their High Holy Day, the trolls know when to strengthen their defenses. It was after the first of these assaults that the Lunars finally got their way and a city militia was formed to keep the peace, jointly paid for by all of the city's businessmen and temples. As a compromise between the involved parties a (supposedly) neutral militia captain was appointed.

Places of Interest

The Arena: Good, clean family entertainment. Owned by Eagin Dragonslayer, managed by Gerkor Bloodwolf. Fights every Windsday evening. Fun! Beer! Excitement! Betting! Admission only three pennies.



The Baths: The 'tough' inn. Originally a guard tower with bathing facilities for the soldiers, it was turned into an inn by Torgen Twisnout when trolls and tusk riders started visiting the city. This presence is now in a decline, so business is poor. There is a storage cellar, a bar on the main floor, an abandoned second floor where customers lacking in common sense can sleep, and a top floor inhabited by Torgen (no one else has ever seen it). Beer prices are related to the purchaser's race and skill with a lance. They also depend on time of year, hour of day, number of guests and water level in the river. Regulars include the Biff Boffs (a local gang of comparatively meek tusk riders), trolls from the temple and really butch humans

like Hubrik or the Stormback brothers. Rumours circulate that Minotaurs have been seen in here.

The Bronze Bell: A "fashionable" inn (compared to the Baths). Owned by Eagin. Bolp, the innkeeper, has a medium-sized (100 lbs.) bell of cast bronze hanging over the bar. He's heard from travellers that bartenders in Safelster signal with a bell whenever they get a tip. This sounded so trendy that he just had to take it up, not realizing that the bells were supposed to be little tinkly things. He doesn't get many tips these days. There is usually some form of entertainment (bards, jesters etc) in the evenings, a good-natured atmosphere and plenty of customers (many of them

Orlanthi from the temple). Dorian Sleepyhead and his pals accuse Bolp of diluting the beer with water from Istakahixa. Norim defends Bolp on this point, calling Dorian a tasteless twerp. Other rumours state that Norim gets a discount on beer.

The Keep: Where Eagin and Gerkor stay when they're not at the Bronze Bell. A small, but solidly built stone fort. The cellars house prison cells and cages for those unfortunate beings destined to fight in the arena, to which an underground tunnel leads. Most of the twenty-odd militiamen/arena-keepers live in the barracks.

Temple of the Copper Lizard: A Major Temple to Ernalda, housing 5 priestesses. An equal number of acolytes serve there, but live with their families. Two Chalana Arroy Healers live in a small house on the temple grounds. The name derives from an ancient, verdigrised copper altar, covered with engravings of an elongated, eight-legged lizard. Such a creature is said to have lived here before Time, punishing desecrators of the Earth. One fragment of an old poem suggests that the lizard was ridden by some kind of warrior.

Jorvin's Trading Post: Jorvin himself is often away on business, at these times old Kallum is in charge of the post (but can usually be found at the Bronze Bell). In the house (which is of course protected by a Market) "civilized" imported goods such as fine fabrics, well-crafted swords and a crossbow from Safelster can be found. There are also products of local and troll make, waiting for transportation elsewhere.

James' Workshop: This is where James, Istakax' most famous smith, resides and works. He makes extravagant weapons and suits of armour, covering them with spikes, studs and

other non-functional details. It's all high quality and even higher encumbrance. James' best customers are the Zorak Zorani - they've given him two zombies, one of which is always modelling the latest tasteless equipment outside the Workshop, striking various melodramatic poses. On a wall inside the smithy hangs the magnificent suit of plate armour that earned James his title of Master Smith in Loskalm, before his illness (no spikes there!). The rest of the building is littered with bronze and lead hardware, all of it looking very weird.

The Shaman's hut and garden: Guolo Twelvepointer cultivates all kinds of interesting plants, including a few varieties of mushroom that he traded from the black elves in Bigbelly Valley. At first, he had some trouble with pilfering, but this stopped once word got around about the side effects of eating something from Guolo's patch.

The Tent Camp: Quite a few hsunchen families visit the city intermittently, and this is where they pitch their homes. The most common guests are Galanini and Lotari. This is also where the ambulatory Uleria shrine can be found if it's in town.

The Hill of the Wind: Orlanth's temple in Istakax hardly seems large enough for its congregation; in fact most ceremonies are held outdoors. On these occasions, Barnan flies to his position on top of a tall pillar (specifically built to stand taller than any building in town), from which he invokes the winds. Many participants drift over to the arena after services are over. Apart from Barnan and Tormod (who have their quarters on the Hill), three priests and four acolytes are attached to the temple. Both cats and chickens are raised on the premises, and some effort is spent on keeping them apart.

The "Zorak Zoran Temple": Is really nothing more than a meeting-place for visiting trolls. A dozen dark trolls and twice as many trollkin live here more or less permanently. Most of these are Argan Argar worshippers, including the self-acclaimed High Priest Tuzzabuzz Bolgmonger.

Interesting People

Torgen Twisnout: A good deal more intelligent than the average Tusk Rider, Torgen has seen a lot of mercenary service in Seshnela and even learnt some Sorcery. But a "civilized" demeanour is unlikely to go over well with his kin, so he affects a "strong & silent" image instead. The real reason for his presence in Istakax is that his twin sister Varga disappeared here four years ago. Torgen realized that investigation might take some time, and decided on tavern keeper as a good cover while he got to know the place.

Hubrik the Galaninieater: An ex-Galanini who now worships Storm Bull. Berserks



enthusiastically, but with a poor sense of timing.

Bolp: Nervous, greedy and servile, not to mention overweight. Bolp is very anxious to maintain his inn's reputation. He also has a comically high opinion of anything "western".

Norim, the egg-headed one: The run-down old Trickster, suffering from infirmities acquired at the Baths. Seldom goes there nowadays, which doesn't prevent him from getting drunk. The Healers no longer trust him (the money he gave them last time just disappeared), so his leg is still lame. Distantly related to Barnan Redhair. Rumour would have it that they're half-brothers and that Norim has some kind of hold on Barnan.

Kallum, the old troll: The only one of his race normally seen at the Bronze Bell. Has seen all of the Humakt-Zorak Zoran fights with his own darksense, and tends to get rather long-winded on the subject.

Eagin Dragonslayer: An atheistic foreigner of unknown descent. Since his appointment as captain of the militia, Eagin has gradually bought into the various businesses in town, and now holds more power than any other individual. Many rumours circulate about him, the main theme being a HeroQuest where he stole three fingers off Ping! the Little Gorilla. Other stories concern all manner of dishonest and underhanded deeds. Some prefer to call him Dragonsnailer (when his back is turned). Eagin's hidden agenda is long term stabilization of the entire area around Istakax on behalf of the Lunars, who pay him extra for this. For the past two years, he has been working with a dwarf called Ironshield, who runs a smithy in the Keep, to get access to better armaments. This fact is kept well hidden, on account of all the trolls nearby.

Gerkor Bloodwolf: Started his career in arenas with a pit in the ground where starved wolves would fight, Gerkor handling the betting. After teaming up with Eagin, he soon gained access to a real arena. Many different animals and monsters have been on the repertoire since then. Gerkor's wife is said to be a werewolf, and some would have it that he is himself a fugitive Telmori shaman. This year he finally managed to defeat Barnan Redhair for the title of Best Dressed Man in Istakax.

James: Once an Orlanth cult smith, James was struck with Brain Fever on his way home from journeyman wanderings in Loskalm. He is now mentally retarded (INT 6). Because of his acute difficulties with numbers, he takes payment in "sacks". A "sack" is simply a sack so full of Bolgs that he can barely lift it.

Guolo Twelvepointer: A recent addition to the population, Guolo is a shaman. Formerly of the Damali tribe, he still dresses in women's clothing. He knows very little of local affairs and is tight-lipped about his past. But for a suitable

donation he will enter a state of higher consciousness, where he can acquire scraps of information that might (or might not) be useful. This is accomplished through ingesting or inhaling various concoctions of herbs and fungi from his garden.

ORLANTHI

Barnan Redhair: The High Storm Voice is rather satisfied with his position and privileges, and the attendant duties are no burden – they give him a chance to show off. Normally, Barnan's only problem is his distant cousin Norim, but lately a couple of new thorns have pricked his side. First of all, he is no longer Istakax' Best Dressed Man: after holding the title four years running, that upstart Gerkor Bloodwolf snatched it away. Anything that could tarnish Gerkor's reputation would be very welcome. As if that wasn't enough, his own brother Tormod went and bought a disgustingly tasteless helmet from James' Workshop! Things can't get much worse, can they?

• Xog

The one Zorak Zorani that insists on staying put. Isn't interested in talking to humans, but might consider eating some. The only thing that's ever scared him is his mother



Bigtuft: The high priest's familiar, and very self-conscious about it. She likes to order the other intelligent cats around, and doesn't seem to notice their lack of attention (as long as they don't contradict her).

Tormod Newtlingbane: Would never have stayed in Istakax but for the fact that his brother is high gonzo in the local temple. There isn't nearly enough action around here to satisfy an up-and-coming young Wind Lord. Tormod would have pulled up his stakes long ago if Barnan hadn't kept going on about his feeling that something's about to happen. Typically enough, he was in Kilwin when the Humakti had their last rumble with the trolls – the only reliable entertainment in this dump. If any fighting or other kind of excitement breaks out in town, Tormod will want to be in on it (though he'll probably show up too late).

Shard: Tormod's familiar; shares her master's martial predilections, though in a somewhat less disciplined fashion. She's easily distracted by any kind of unusual goings-on.

Beirgil Slowhand: A big brute of a Storm Voice, who would seem better suited as a Wind Lord (or perhaps Storm Bull) but lacks the inclination to adventure. He is also very calm-tempered; few have ever seen him actually use his greatsword.

Ceanbard Lightheart: Physically unimposing, but possessed of great energy and vigour. If his best friend Beirgil can be likened to a brooding storm cloud, then Ceanbard is a swift but erratic breeze. An enthusiastic poet, he never tires of praising Orlanth and the winds for their life-giving influence.

Glasmac Nightstrider: Is, apart from his normal duties, an associate priest of Yinkin. He is thus in charge of the temple cats, and some of their characteristics seem to have rubbed off on him – like a nocturnal lifestyle and a somewhat odd sense of humour.

Morris: Glasmac's familiar. Notably lazy, even for a cat. He prefers Glasmac's company to that of the other cats. Bigtuft and Shard are real pains in the neck, and the rest are just brainless ninnies.

The Stormback brothers: Barnan's housecarls, according to an hereditary agreement between their family and the temple, and Istakax' most arrogant Orlanthi. Like to slouch around near the Hill, commenting unfavourably on passing Player Characters. When drunk, they enjoy brawling with each other (and anything that gets in their way).

Toral Giant sword: A somewhat sloppily dressed Orlanth initiate, with a faraway look in his eyes. Dislikes Bolp intensely, and feels there should be room for an alternative inn in town, cooperatively run by the Orlanthi. He gained his honour-name by bringing home a 2 metres long, crudely forged sword from an expedition into Coroland.

ERNALDANS

Erien Flatearth: The Ernalda High Priestess is a very stable and solid person (mentally as well as physically). She is in her late middle age by now, and is a distinctly conservative thinker: her first concern is always for the Earth. During the decade that she has held her post, Erien has resolutely avoided getting her temple entangled in politics. That kind of ephemera is all very well for those Orlanthi windbags, but she has more serious concerns.

Isaine Sixfoot: The oldest priestess, with more than eighty years of life behind her, is also an initiate of Ty Kora Tek and officiates at most burial ceremonies. Her outlook is deeply fatalistic: the Earth covers everything in the end, struggling against it is futile.

Krisdel Glitterface: To this young lady, the cult is more an aid to social advancement than anything else. Naturally, she finds Erien's pacifist policy frustrating. She is the only unwed priestess – she has a child of course, but the father is unknown.

Brenma the Wide: Embodies the maternal aspects of Ernalda. More interested in the welfare of the people (in particular, the families) of her community than in the soil itself.

Kardavyn: A widow, looking far older than her years. Her husband was a Humakti, slain by trolls seven years ago; her son died in a sudden illness soon after. Since then, she has been completely absorbed by her religious duties.





Adventures in Bakshaan

by Shannon Appel

Description: Lean, hunched, and balding, Nepovilo is the archetype of an aged man who has dealt too long with Chaos. Still, a strange energy frequently fills him. Many are discomforted by Nepovilo's mismatched green and blue eyes, which often fail to focus.

Chaos 107, Balance 6, Law 5

NPCS OF NOTE

This section includes notes on a few minor NPCs located within Bakshaan who can offer adventure hooks. Also take note of the following NPCs detailed in *Atlas*: Deinstaff (pg. 60), Senator Farrat (pg. 61), Lady Vanzoza Farrat (pg. 61), Kelos the Merchant (pg. 62), Nikorn of Ilmar (pg. 62-63), Pilarmo of Bakshaan (pg. 63) and Tormiel of Bakshaan (pg. 65).

NEPOVILLO SELLSPELL

When Nepovilo first came to Bakshaan, it was to sell his magical talents in the great markets. Because of the Ilmioran tolerance for magic, Nepovilo was able to do so with only minor trouble, and his business became mildly prosperous.

Unfortunately, some ten years ago, Nepovilo made an unwise choice when he accepted a rare herb from Troos in payment for his services. The herb was alleged to increase the magical powers of he who consumed it. In actuality, it did, but not in the way that Nepovilo expected.

Now, Nepovilo is constantly possessed by the magical spells that he knows. They fill his entire essence, and although they do not submerge his personality, they do influence it heavily. Whenever Nepovilo is encountered, roll on the following table to determine what spell is influencing him. Nepovilo will be under the influence of that spell for the next 0-2 days, which has the following effects: he is constantly treated as if the spell were cast upon him (if appropriate); his personality traits are modified as is noted; and whenever he casts the spell for the normal cost, it doubles in strength.

Nepovilo's changing personality has caused many to label him a madman. This has hurt his business somewhat, but many still come to the sellspell to take advantage of his chaotic talents.

STR 8
INT 19
APP 6

CON 7
POW 25
HP 9

SIZ 10
DEX 11

Damage Bonus: none

Weapons:

Brawl 51%, Damage 1d3
Dagger 49%, Damage 1d4+2

Armor: None

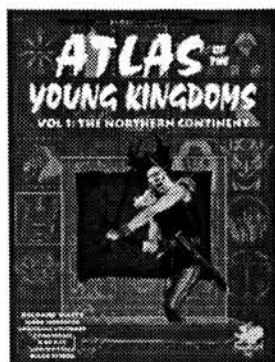
Runes: Rune of Benign Purity* (2) [TBG pg. 10], Rune of Invisibility* (varies) [TBG pg. 12-13], Rune of Redaction* (1-4) [TBG pg. 13], Runic Cloak of Cran Liret* (4) [TBG pg. 16], Runic Hell's Armor* (4) [TBG pg. 16], Runic Hell's Bulwark* (4) [TBG pg. 16]

Spells: Babble! (1) [TBG pg. 31], Breath of Life* (1) [Elric! pg. 77], Chaos Warp! (4) [Elric! pg. 78], Deftness of Cran Liret* (1-4) [TBG pg. 32], Guile of Cran Liret* (1-4) [TBG pg. 34], Heal* (2) [Elric! pg. 79], Liken Person! [TBG pg. 35], Make Fast* (1) [Elric! pg. 80], Make Whole* (3) [Elric! pg. 80], Obscure* (2) [TBG pg. 35-36], Portent* (3) [TBG pg. 36], Quick Healing* (4) [TBG pg. 36], Wisdom of Slortar* (1-3) [Elric! pg. 83]

* Nepovilo regularly offers these spells for sale
! Nepovilo occasionally offers these spells for sale

Notes: Nepovilo's spells last 25 Combat Rounds, or about 5 minutes, thus the more time important spells must be requested when there is a fairly immediate need. This is less relevant for the permanent spells and runes. Nepovilo typically charges 50 bronze per magic point he expends when casting a spell, although this varies depending on his daily personality.

Skills: Bargain 89%, Change Topic Randomly 79%, Conceal Object 44%, Evaluate 66%, Fast Talk 75%, Insight 31%, The Million Spheres 12%, Oratory



• Atlas of the Young Kingdoms, Volume 1: The Northern Continent

provides a wide variety of information on the lands of the Northern Continent, including: Vilmir; Ilmiora; the Weeping Waste; Nadsokor; Org and the Forest of Troos; the Sighing Desert; and Tanelorn. This article builds on a small portion of that book, by providing some specific adventures hooks to be used against the Atlas' vivid background.

Background information

Bakshaan is a rich mercantile city-state located in the South of Ilmiora, near the Forest of Troos. It is a center of commerce and trade for the region, and also the site of the yearly Bakshaan Fair. Unknown to most, Bakshaan also is home to the Mereghn, a secretive order of assassins. See **Atlas** pg. 41-43 for more complete notes on Bakshaan, and **Atlas** pg. 55-60 for notes on Ilmioran society in general.

Nepovilo's Random Spell Possession Table

1. Babble

Half of what Nepovilo says is nonsense

2. Breath of Life

Nepovilo is **ENERGETIC**

3. Chaos Warp

Nepovilo is **ARBITRARY** and highly chaotic

4. Guile of Cran Lire

Nepovilo is **DECEITFUL**

5. Heal

Nepovilo is **MERCIFUL**

6. Liken Person

Nepovilo acts like those around him

7. Make Fast

Nepovilo is **LAZY**

8. Make Whole

Nepovilo is utterly sane, and aware of his problem

9. Obscure

Nepovilo talks in riddles

10. Wisdom of Slortar

Nepovilo is **PROUD**

73%, Own Language 95%, Scribe 40%

Story Ideas

- While sane, Nepovilo organizes an expedition into the nearby Forest of Troos, searching for another herb which may cure his affliction. Even if the party is successful, they may have to deal with a Nepovilo who acts dramatically different when they return.

- The Mereghn (a group of assassins) often gain spell aid from Nepovilo before conducting jobs. Recently they have become suspicious of his madness, and decided he is a liability. Thus, they are planning to assassinate him. Nepovilo has gained knowledge of this plan, and hires the players to guard him. Overly zealous players may try to seek out the Mereghn on their own.

- Nepovilo's spells begin escaping and possessing others. Nepovilo may hire the adventurers to get them back. Senator Farrat may hire the adventurers to investigate the problem, or the players may find themselves in the middle of a strange magical brawl in the Market.

CAPTAIN GUISSO

Once a sailor of the seas of the Young Kingdoms, Guisso settled in Bakshaan after he was introduced to the Temple of the Straasha there by the previous high priest. He quickly became one of Straasha's most devout followers, and when the last priest passed away, he took up his position.

Unfortunately, Guisso is still haunted by his past. His career began as a sailor on a Purple Towns brig. The Captain, Heorsin Harddeal, was a poor merchant and a worse sailor. When he placed his ship in grave danger during a storm, an altercation erupted between Guisso and the Captain. In the rough-and-tumble fight, Guisso managed to gouge out one of Heorsin's eyes before subduing his Captain and taking command of the ship. It was only through Guisso's decisions that the ship survived the storm; if Heorsin had been at the helm, his ship would have joined Pyaray's Chaos Fleet at the bottom of the sea.

After arriving safely upon land, Guisso fled for his life. He continuing doing so for two



decades, jumping from one ship to another, until he finally felt safe. It seemed that either Heorsin was dead, or the old wound forgotten. However, since settling in Bakshaan and taking up the mantle of Priest, Guisso has heard some disturbing inquiries concerning himself.

Description: Though 43, Guisso is still a broad, stout man. His black hair and beard are both spotted with white, but he shows no signs of slowing down.

Chaos 27, Balance 33, Law 8

STR 14	CON 16	SIZ 15
INT 7	POW 16	DEX 13
APP 9	HP 16	

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons:

Brawl 74%, Damage 1d3+db
Sea Axe 81%, Damage 2d6+2+db
Net 53%, Entangles

Armor: Soft Leather 1d6-1

Spells: Bounty of Straasha (4) [Elric! pg. 77], Breath of Life (1) [Elric! pg. 77], Guide Water (4) [TBG pg. 33-34], Heal (2) [Elric! pg. 79], Straasha's Hold (4) [TBG pg. 37], Summon Elemental (1)

[Elic! pg. 83], Wings of Lassa (4) [Elic! pg. 83]
Skills: Appear Inconspicuous 3%, Climb 73%, Natural World 51%, Navigate 92%, Oratory 43%, Repair/Devise 78%, Sailing 90%, Swim 65%, Young Kingdoms 41%

Story Ideas

- A Priest of the Church of Goldar in Bakshaan spots Captain Guisso, and recognises him from a description given by Heorsin, now a fellow priest in the Purple Towns. The players become a pawn in one side of this conflict, as the considerable financial powers of the Church of Goldar are turned towards Guisso's downfall.
- Guisso introduces players to Straasha's Temple (see below).

PLACES OF NOTE

Atlas already notes several important places within or near Bakshaan, including: Mereghn Headquarters (pg. 53) and Nikorn's Palace (pg. 54). This section details one more, Straasha's Temple.

Straasha's Temple

Numerous churches to the gods of Law dot the city of Bakshaan. However, only a few know that a Temple to the Elemental God Straasha, exists deep beneath the streets of Bakshaan. If Bakshaan's semi-secret church were made public knowledge, it is likely there would be some strife with the temples of law.

Straasha's Temple is reached through a labyrinth of connecting passages and sewers beneath Bakshaan. Unfortunately, these passages are the same ones which ultimately lead to the Mereghn headquarters, and so the occasional worshipper of Straasha disappears beneath the streets.

The actual temple is located in a huge natural cavern, several hundred feet across and thirty feet high. The majority of the cavern is filled by a lake of fresh water. It connects to both the Barlimm and Vador Rivers, and so the water is kept constantly circulating.

Residents of the Temple

The high priest of Straasha here is Guisso, a 43 year-old ex-Sailor (see above). On any day, he leads 3d6 natives of Bakshaan and 1d6-3 foreigners in worship of Straasha (use assorted stats for the foreigners; most of the natives are Sailors [Elic! pg. 112], Peasants [Elic! pg. 113], or Merchants [Use Decadent Noble Stats, Elic! pg. 112]).

Very notably, the Temple also regularly has 1d6-3 Undines (Elic! pg. 98-99) in attendance. These Undines are very loyal to Guisso, and bring him word on happenings all along the Ilmar, Barlimm, Vador, and Miniato Rivers. If Guisso wished to take advantage of this knowledge, he would have considerable clout in Bakshaan politics.

Properties of the Temple

Water spells are easier to cast in the Temple. All fixed cost water-related spells cost

one less MP, to a minimum of 1. All variable cost water-related spells act at one point higher than the number of magic points expended, to a maximum of 1 higher than the normal limit.

Drinking water from the lake in the Temple imbues the drinker with Breath of Life [Elic! pg. 77] for 4d6 minutes. If water is removed from the lake, it will retain these properties for 4d6 minutes.

Water elementals can be summoned at the Temple even if the caster does not know the water elemental pathway spell (Bounty of Straasha). Each of the water elemental's stats will be at +1 when rolled.

Fire elements may not be summoned in the Temple.

Story Ideas

- A greedy merchant has heard of the magical properties of the water in Straasha's Temple. He wishes the players to gain a sample by whatever means they deem appropriate.
- The Mereghn have grown tired of Straasha worshippers tromping through their tunnels, and hire the players to wipe out the Temple. The ensuing battle will involve melee with Guisso, undines, and innocent worshippers. The Mereghn will move in to clean things up when the melee has died down.
- The waters of the Lake have begun to foul due to industries upstream, at Barlimm's dam. Players are hired to destroy Barlimm's dam, and return the river to its natural state. Clever players might gain aid from Raalston, who also has reason to hate the Barlimm dam.

ITEMS OF NOTE

The Pyramid of Law

Located in the very middle of the City Square is a solid pyramid, two meters on a side, composed entirely of an unknown silverish metal. An ornate barricade of wood sets the pyramid off, protecting it from the throngs. Two ceremonial guards stand at the entrance to the pyramid's enclosure, collecting a 10 bronze fee from any who wishes to enter and commune with the pyramid.

Little is understood about the pyramid except for the fact that it seems to be strongly tied to the Patrons of Law. Because of its most prominent property--the fact that those who touch the pyramid seem to be unable speak untruths--the Pyramid has become a focus of interest to the mercantile community. Many deals, oaths, and promises are struck while touching the Pyramid.

The Pyramid was first found by the Bakshaans a hundred years ago, when an expedition travelling in the Forest of Troos accidentally unearthed it. It was dragged back to Bakshaan, appropriated by the City Council, and placed in the City Square, where it sits to this day.

Use CITY GUARD stats, Elic! pg. 111, for the two Ceremonial Guards

APPENDIX: ADVENTURES IN GLORANTHA

Although it would be a feat to move the entire city of Bakshaan to Glorantha, several of the elements of this article could be used in a Glorantha campaign.

- *Nepovilo Sellspell could be found in any large city.*

Pavis would be an excellent choice, given the number of adventurers that frequent it. His spells would of course have to be modified, but the basic concept would remain the same.

- *Captain Guisso and his Temple to Straasha (Magasta) will need slightly more modification. In Glorantha the temple would not be truly secret, just hidden. With that proviso it could fit into any port city large enough to hide an assassin's guild. One of the cities of the Holy Country would be the best choice in central Genertela.*

- *The Pyramid of Law could easily be an Issaries holy item. The Issaries priests just can't figure out why Storm Bulls keep sniffing around their temple...*



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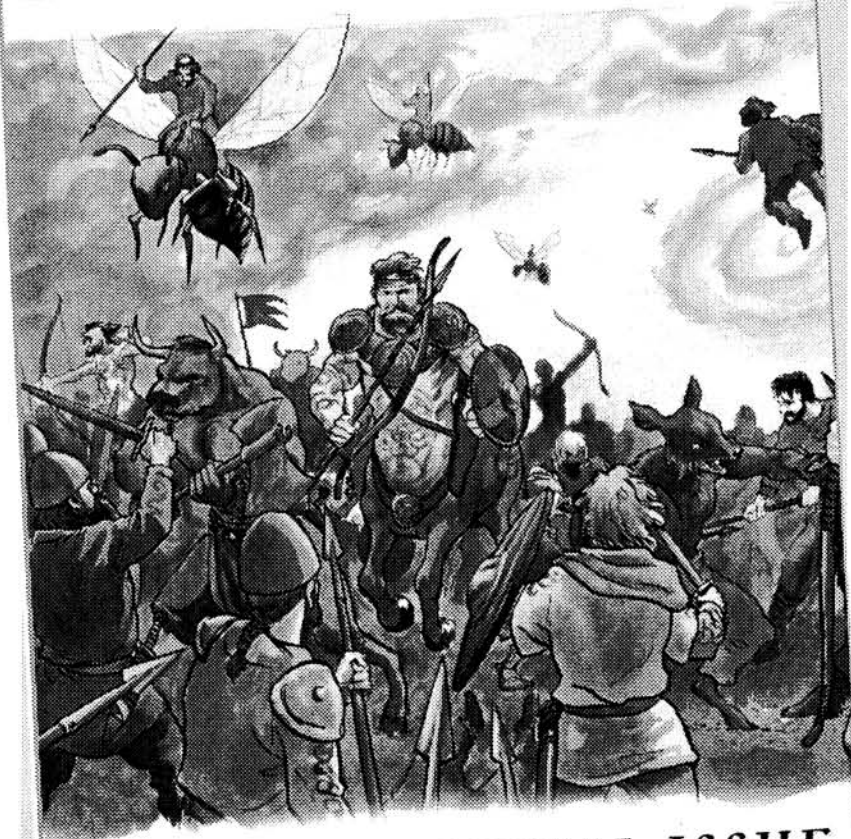
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