GURPS® Fourth Edition

# PYRAMID®

## Dungeon Collection



Art © Dean Spencer

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

# Treasures From the Past, Better Than Ever!




For 25 years, *Pyramid* magazine delivered incredible gaming material with each installment. ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** has delighted crypt-crawling fans for over a decade. Where these two intersect is magic!

The ***Pyramid Dungeon Collection*** is a trove of fantasy material from the first two volumes of *Pyramid* – almost all of which has been unavailable in any form for years – updated for ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition* and specifically ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy.*** Within these pages you'll get:

- *Locations.* Nine locales ready to add to your fantasy settings, from an underground dwarven settlement to an "impossible" city in the sky.
- *Advice and Ideas.* An assortment of incredible people, things, and insight, including a serpent-priestess, cursed items, and an unusual new form of magic.
- *Adventures.* Three ready-to-use adventures (complete with maps) that feature new monsters, odd challenges, and incredible rewards for the intrepid.

*The* ***Pyramid Dungeon Collection*** *is intended for* ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** *but would work with other* ***GURPS****-powered fantasy campaigns, especially the* ***Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game.***

By **Steven W. Disbrow, William J. Keith, Steven Marsh, Phil Masters, Elizabeth Mccoy, B. Nicholas Pasinella, Christopher R. Rice** and **Matt Riggsby**
Cover Art by **Dean Spencer**
Interior Illustrations by **Kent Burles, Guy Burwell, Alex Fernandez, Denis Loubet, Brandon Moore, Aaron Panagos, Chris Quilliams, Dan Smith, Nikola Vrtis,** and **Eric Wilkerson**
Cartography by **Matt Riggsby**

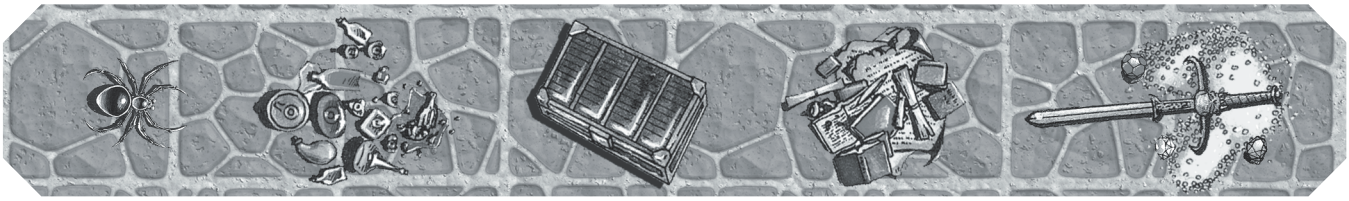
STEVE JACKSON GAMES
www.sjgames.com

**1st Edition, 1st Printing**
**Published September 2019**
SJG 01-1008
ISBN 978-1-55634-867-9
9 781556 348679
Printed on Demand

GURPS® Fourth Edition

# PYRAMID®

# DUNGEON COLLECTION




**Written by STEVEN W. DISBROW, WILLIAM J. KEITH, STEVEN MARSH, PHIL MASTERS, ELIZABETH McCOY, B. NICHOLAS PASINELLA, CHRISTOPHER R. RICE, and MATT RIGGSBY**

**Illustrated by KENT BURLES, GUY BURWELL, ALEX FERNANDEZ, DENIS LOUBET, BRANDON MOORE, AARON PANAGOS, CHRIS QUILLIAMS, DAN SMITH, NIKOLA VRTIS, and ERIC WILKERSON**

**Cover Art by DEAN SPENCER**

**Cartography by MATT RIGGSBY**



***GURPS*** System Design ▌STEVE JACKSON
***GURPS*** Line Editor ▌SEAN PUNCH
***GURPS*** Project Manager ▌STEVEN MARSH
Project Manager ▌DARRYLL SILVA
Production Manager ▌SABRINA GONZALEZ

Production Artist, Art Direction, and Indexer ▌NIKOLA VRTIS
Page Design ▌PHIL REED and JUSTIN DE WITT
***GURPS*** FAQ Maintainer ▌VICKY "MOLOKH" KOLENKO

President/Editor-in-Chief ▌STEVE JACKSON
Chief Executive Officer ▌PHILIP REED
Chief Creative Officer ▌SAM MITSCHKE
Chief Operating Officer ▌SUSAN BUENO
Director of Sales ▌ROSS JEPSON

*Reviewer:* Sean Punch



***GURPS,*** *Pyramid*, Warehouse 23, the pyramid logo, and the names of all products published by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated are trademarks or registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated, or used under license. ***Pyramid Dungeon Collection*** is copyright © 2019 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. Some artwork © 2015, 2019 Dean Spencer, used with permission. All rights reserved. Printed by KDP.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this material via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal, and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.



Stock # 01-1008 • ISBN 978-1-55634-867-9 • Version 1.0 – September 2019

STEVE JACKSON GAMES®

# Contents


**Introduction . . . . . 3**

**Section 1: Locations . . . . 4**
*by Matt Riggsby*

Aulos, City in the Sky . . . . . 5
**Map of Aulos . . . . . 11**

Caerceol. . . . . 12
**Overview of Caerceol and Surroundings. . . . . 13**
**Floor Plans . . . . . 15**

The Goblin Market . . . . . 19

Kunruk Above/ Kunruk Below. . . . . 22

Saroo . . . . . 28

Tanir Aesayya. . . . . 34

The Triple City of Amadan. . . . 39

Uxuloth, City of the Dead. . . . 45

The Wellsprings of Creation . . . . . 51
**Map of the World of the Wellsprings of Creation, Overview . . . . . 58**
**Map of Enota Region . . . . . 59**
**Map of Rabilus and Semaria Regions. . . . . 60**

**Section 2: Advice and Ideas . . . 61**

Alaba the Serpent-Priestess . . 62
*by Phil Masters*

Tkarsh's Band. . . . . 65
*by Matt Riggsby*

The Cursed Sword of Hsima . . 69
*by Steven W. Disbrow*

The Cursed Rings of José Von Lee. . . . . 70
*by Elizabeth McCoy, with Christopher R. Rice*

Chaos and Ritual . . . . . 72
*by Elizabeth McCoy, with Christopher R. Rice*

Magic Ingredients Revisited . . . . . 77
*by Matt Riggsby*

Riding the Tiger. . . . . 81
*by Matt Riggsby*

Wandering Caravan Table . . . . 84
*by Matt Riggsby*

Sylvania Unbound . . . . . 86
*by William J. Keith*

Those Who Pray. . . . . 88
*by B. Nicholas Pasinella*

**Section 3: Adventures . . . . . 96**
*by Matt Riggsby*

The Labyrinth of Five Essences . . . . . 97
**Map of the Labyrinth of Five Essences . . . . . 102**
**Map of the Labyrinth of Five Essences, Unlabeled . . . . 103**

The Search for Ed. . . . . 104
**Map of the Evil Temple . . . . . 114**
**Map of Catacombs of the Spider Queen . . . . . 115**
**Map of the Vault . . . . . 116**

The Torturer's Apprentice . . 117
**Layout of the Palace . . . . . 125**

**Index. . . . . 126**


## About *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of ***GURPS*** players. We can be reached by email: **info@sjgames.com**. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

*New supplements and adventures.* ***GURPS*** continues to grow – see what's new at **gurps.sjgames.com**.

*Warehouse 23.* Our online store offers ***GURPS*** print items, plus PDFs of our books, supplements, adventures, play aids, and support . . . including exclusive material available only on Warehouse 23! Just head over to **warehouse23.com**.

*Pyramid* (**pyramid.sjgames.com**). For 10 years, our PDF magazine *Pyramid* included new rules and articles for ***GURPS,*** plus systemless locations, adventures, and more. The entire 122-issue library is available at Warehouse 23!

*Internet.* To discuss ***GURPS*** with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at **forums.sjgames.com**. You can also join us at **facebook.com/sjgames** or **twitter.com/sjgames**. Share your brief campaign teasers with #GURPShook on Twitter. Or explore that hashtag for ideas to add to your own game! The web page for ***Pyramid Dungeon Collection*** can be found at **gurps.sjgames.com/pyramiddungeoncollection**.

*Store Finder* (**storefinder.sjgames.com**): Discover nearby places to buy ***GURPS*** items and other Steve Jackson Games products. Local shops are great places to play our games and meet fellow gamers!

*Bibliographies.* Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We've added them to many ***GURPS*** book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for ***GURPS*** releases are available at **sjgames.com/errata/gurps**.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Fourth Edition.* Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

# Introduction

The first issue of *Pyramid* came out in 1993, and for over 25 years – and across three distinct eras – it delivered gaming goodness in various forms. The bimonthly print edition ran from 1993 to 1998, a weekly HTML-based subscription-website version ran from 1998 through 2008, and a monthly PDF version ran from 2008 through 2018. (We refer to them as Volumes 1, 2, and 3, respectively.)

Evolving as it did in part from the ***GURPS*** support magazine *Roleplayer* (which itself ran from 1986 through 1993), *Pyramid* and ***GURPS*** have had close ties since the beginning. Every issue of the print era included ***GURPS*** support, and the third volume had ***GURPS*** as its focus!

Since the beginning, "fantasy gaming" and ***GURPS*** have also been closely aligned. The original ***Man to Man*** set is an excellent resource for fantasy combat, and its first published adventure – ***Orcslayer*** – laid the foundation for "dungeon crawl"-style combat action.

Finally, fantasy has been part of *Pyramid* since *its* first issue, including reviews of contemporary sword-and-sorcery products and even ***GURPS Supporting Cast***-style stats for an elven mage from one of the authors of that supplement!

Thus, when it came time to bring back some of that classic material – most of which hasn't been available in any form for over a decade – fantasy was a logical choice as a themed genre. It's the most popular genre in tabletop gaming in general, and is beloved by ***GURPS*** fans. The rise of ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** (and the standalone ***Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game***) in the intervening years made that decision even easier.

So, we welcome you to this collection of classic material that originated in the first two volumes of *Pyramid*. All of the features herein have been updated to modern-day ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition* standards and stats, intended for ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** (with an occasional digression to the ***Dungeon Fantasy RPG***). And most of this tome was written by authors who went on to become ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** contributors.

This supplement is broken down into three broad sections: *Locations, Advice and Ideas,* and *Adventures*. Of course, *Pyramid* being a magical place where just about anything was possible, some bits defy easy categorization. But, really, the unexpected made real is as well suited for fantasy realms as it is for the legacy of *Pyramid*.

*– Steven Marsh,* ***Pyramid*** *Editor, 2000-2018*

## About the Authors

A long-time gamer, roleplayer, and writer, *Steven W. Disbrow* took the role-playing part to the next level by co-founding the Improv Chattanooga theater in 2017. He also creates e-commerce systems and reads comic books when he's not on stage acting like a fool.

*William J. Keith* is a professor of mathematics and the author of several pieces for *Pyramid*. He is from Houston, has worked in Philadelphia and Lisbon, and as of this publication, is living and working in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. A player of roleplaying games since the 1990s, he especially enjoys world-building, memorable characters, and high-fantasy settings.

*Phil Masters* is a long-time ***GURPS*** writer and contributed to all three versions of *Pyramid*. Among other works, he is the author of two ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** supplements, the ***Discworld Roleplaying Game,*** and all three installments in the ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition* ***Steampunk*** series. He's also worked on several other roleplaying lines and has created an RPG of his own, ***The Small Folk*** (available from Warehouse 23, **warehouse23.com/products/the-small-folk**).

*Elizabeth "Archangel Beth" McCoy* still resides in the Frozen Wastelands of New Hampshire, with four cats, a spouse, and a single offspring. Her other RPG offerings include ***In Nomine*** material and ***GURPS Alien Races: Sparriels.*** She also has SF&F ebooks available at the usual locations for such things. In a reversal of her usual appearances in *About the Author* notes, she has tapped Christopher R. "Ravenpenny" Rice for assistance converting this material to ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** standards. Pay no attention to her evil laughter.

> *This magazine extends three feet into the fourth dimension.*
>
> *–* ***Pyramid*** *#1/1*

*B. Nicholas Pasinella* is a sustainability consultant with degrees in physics and geography who has been obsessed with roleplaying games since getting "The Red Box" for his 10th birthday. He has contributed to ***HârnWorld*** products and playtested multiple ***GURPS*** books. His hobbies include talking about someday finishing his dissertation, answering questions about how to recycle batteries, and futilely yelling at period pieces for anachronistic armor. He lives in Somerville, Massachusetts, with his wife, daughter, two cats, three fish, and a parrot.

*Christopher R. Rice* is from Portsmouth, Virginia. He dreams of writing full-time, or at least eking out a living doing it. Of course, if he's not writing about ***GURPS,*** he's blogging about it. Visit his site "Ravens N' Pennies" (**www.ravensnpennies.com**) for more ***GURPS*** goodies. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group and especially Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix" for their help and advice.

*Matt Riggsby* has been playing roleplaying games since the only game in town came in three poorly typeset tan booklets in a white box,using cheap dice that slowly converted themselves from icosahedrons to spheres. Having been educated in the lore of lost civilizations, he still kills things and takes their stuff while working a day job for loremasters of healing. The marching order for the rest of his party includes a sorceress, a 10th-level rogue, and a pack of dogs.

# Section 1
# Locations

When you think about it, one of the first things you notice in most fantasy settings is . . . well, the setting. The first word in "dungeon fantasy" is the dungeon, which implies places to go, people to beat.

The virtual pages of *Pyramid* featured many interesting settings by Matt Riggsby, which we're proud to re-present here for the first time in ages. Matt has made a name for himself in the realm of ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** with an ability to create the amazing, including the ready-to-use locale featured in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Encounters 1: The Pagoda of Worlds.*** Anyone who has enjoyed his material knows that he has a keen eye toward setting, and he understands its importance in establishing an engaging campaign framework.

One great feature of locations is that they can be used in so many campaigns. It can be difficult to (say) incorporate a full adventure about a war between two mighty kingdoms, but a city of the dead (pp. 45-50) or an uncommon elven dwelling (pp. 34-38)? That might appear just about *anywhere!*

The settings here range from the more-or-less mundane (such as a goblin marketplace – pp. 19-21) to the truly fantastic (a flying city, pp. 5-11!), from something as small as a castle (pp. 12-18) to as large as the framework for a complete fantasy world (pp. 51-60). And, since these locations aren't tied to any particular adventure or storyline, they can all be adjusted (in the finest ***GURPS*** tradition) to suit your campaign needs. Maybe an important ritual component is housed in Uxuloth, or maybe the heroes must figure out how to find and *get to* the flying castle in order to uncover a vital secret.

Regardless of what you do when you get there, this assortment of locations is bound to be useful for just about any world you could possibly imagine. And the ideas herein might even prove inspirational to worlds you didn't realize you *could* imagine . . .







# Aulos, City in the Sky

by Matt Riggsby

Dreamers may build castles the sky, but denizens of fantasy worlds can put entire cities there. Aulos is suitable for pseudo-medieval fantasy campaigns with a moderately high level of magic. Specifically, magical air travel should be possible, but not necessarily commonplace . . . although mundane air travel, such as hot-air balloons, large flying animals, or steampunkish ornithopters, may stand in its place.

## Geography and Land Use

Giant stones magically floating above the ground are not unknown, nor are castles in the sky, but Aulos is unique: an entire city built on the surface of an immense flying rock, just over a half-mile across at its widest and some 400 yards thick. The rock is shaped like an inverted mountain, flat on the top, tapering to a sharp ridge on the underside. The city has no fixed whereabouts. It drifts along at about 30 yards above the surface at the speed of a slow walk, sometimes following prevailing winds, sometimes drifting in directions which seem random.

The city sometimes rotates, but at no fixed speed or direction, so points of the compass and direction of turn aren't useful for giving directions. Residents usually navigate by landmarks ("Go to the back of the Private Palace, turn left and go until you get to the empty fountain . . . "). If general directions must be given, the city's own "compass points" are templewards (in the direction from the center to the Broken Temple), crystalwards (from the center to the Crystal Field), and palacewards (toward the Private Palace). Confusingly enough, in addition to the three cardinal directions, the city is divided into four administrative quarters.

Due to its physical size and intermittent supply problems, Aulos is relatively small in terms of population. It is typically home to about 45,000, packed densely into the small area, although periods of plague have caused the population to drop to at low as about 20,000. The top surface of Aulos is almost entirely covered with buildings.

## History

The earliest reports of Aulos indicate that it was discovered by explorers in a remote mountainous region, uninhabited and mostly undeveloped. Explorers found the Crystal Field, the Broken Temple (a ruin even then), and the bones of reptile-like humanoids. The floating mountain remained remote from the centers of civilization until it was encountered by growing empires centuries later. By then, it was inhabited by a tribe of winged bird-men who would hunt and gather on the ground, then return to their modest huts. Aulos remained an amazing but essentially useless curiosity until it caught the attention of the Sealed Collegium, a hermetic brotherhood of sorcerers whose members were in constant conflict with mundane authorities. Under the legendary Xiang the Silent, they seized the floating mountain, killed or enslaved the bird-men, brought up their own followers, and established a citadel where they could pursue their magic without interference.

Under the Collegium, Aulos became a threat to the countries it passed over, extracting tribute from those regions and reacting to resistance with increasing force. Worse yet, the Collegium learned to direct the movements of the city, making it a greater threat. At least one kingdom collapsed into chaos as Aulos made sure that its demands would not be resisted. At last, after nearly a century of terror, the Collegium set their sights on an empire with an underpowered military but considerable wealth. The emperor at this time was Tyrus IV, a formidable diplomat who had long been considering how Aulos might be defeated, and now he was forced to bring his considerable skill to bear on the problem. His overt steps were to hire mercenary armies and make arrangements with supernatural entities to harass the Collegium and slow their city's progress, but his master stroke was hidden until the very end. Aided by daring agents and informers, Tyrus played on tensions within the Collegium itself, forcing members' differences into the open and eventually precipitating violent conflict among them. Deeply wounded from internal problems and beset from without, Aulos capitulated in a carefully negotiated surrender and was occupied by the empire.

Determined not to allow the problems posed by a free-roaming Aulos, Tyrus hit on a plan to anchor the city. A group of wizards and giants (and, some say, demons) were employed to anchor Aulos to the earth with enormous adamantine chains. Aulos remained high in the air, but it was fixed over a single point. It grew long stairways and even water-powered elevators. In a few decades, a settlement grew up on the ground underneath, becoming Aulos' Shadow, counterpart to Aulos proper. A special governor (the Principe) was installed to oversee the city. The Sealed Collegium survived as a faint shadow of its former self, with the Grand Keeper of the Collegium reduced to a civic functionary, although a few former members who had secretly sided with the empire stayed on.

Although stripped of much of its looted wealth, Aulos remained an important center of magical learning, becoming all the more important as its less hostile administration allowed more communication and visitors from outside. But the empire slowly began to decay, as empires do. As it shrank under the incursions of barbarian migrations, Aulos became an important center for provincial defenses, and the Principe became a semi-independent military ruler. Eventually, the city was attacked by a massive horde with powerful magical support. The barbarians overran Aulos' Shadow and, in defiance and desperation, the Principe at the time, called Black Geraldus (he was reputed to be a brutal ruler, though others attribute the name to his preferred mode of dress), ordered the chains broken. Once unanchored, the city drifted away. With the chains broken and the elevators and stairways destroyed, the barbarians let it go and made themselves content with sacking Aulos' Shadow.

As the empire collapsed under it, Aulos was now a free city under the authority of the Principe. Initially, the Principe was an absolute ruler, with the city council serving in an advisory capacity. However, without the support of the empire, a succession of Principes found it necessary to allow more and more democratic elements in the government. First the office of tribune was created to counterbalance the Principe's authority, then the council's power increased to become the main legislative body.

For the past few centuries, Aulos has been a far more peaceful place than in its earlier days. It no longer has the magical might to demand tribute from the territories is passes over. Instead, it relies on trade to get what it needs. Supply is occasionally a serious issue when the city drifts over deserts, large forests, and other areas well away from farmers, but it has ample storehouses and enough magical resources to extend meager food supplies in a pinch. Of course, "peaceful" is a relative term. The city frequently finds itself dealing with jurisdictional problems when it floats over the territory of a ruler eager to tax its wealthy inhabitants, and it can find itself vulnerable to pirate raids when it is far from its allies.

## Government

Aulos is nominally ruled by a hereditary Principe. The Principe is the city's supreme magistrate and commander in chief of the militia. They appoint a number of governmental officials (or at least approve them), call and dismiss city council meetings at will, and have final approval over new laws and taxes. The current Principe is the elderly Vadina III, a brilliant politician and basically fair ruler but childless, ailing, and jaded. One of the major checks on the Principe's power is the office of the tribune, selected by lot annually from heads of household. The tribune doesn't vote with the city council except in cases of a tie, but attends their meetings, advises the Principe, and has the power to veto new laws. As occasionally happens, this year's tribune is a bit useless: Wexen the tailor, an affable, chubby man who tries very hard not to disagree with anybody.

The city council consist of a diverse body of officials: four guildmasters, each of whom must be from separate guilds, four quarter-judges (one for each quarter of the city), two members of the Sealed Collegium, the Master of the Palace, and the Colonel of the Militia. Quarter-judges are appointed for three years at a time by the Principe; quarter-judges are usually older citizens of established wisdom, but notable foreigners may be appointed to avoid favoritism. The Master of the Palace is appointed for life (or until voluntary retirement), while the Colonel of the Militia may be appointed and removed at will. Collegians are selected by the Grand Keeper of the Collegium, who may not serve. The current Keeper, Yllario the Red, is more interested in scholarship than politics, and his choices have been eccentric. The guildmasters are selected by a combination of lot, negotiation among the masters, and popular vote of the guilds. As a result, councilman guildmasters are usually career politicians or timeservers. A seat on the council is reserved for the King of the Dead, who has never attended.

In addition to creating new laws (to be approved by the Principe), members of the council act as magistrates for different sections of the population: quarter-judges for cases in their part of the city, guildmasters for cases involving guild members, Collegians for magicians and magical creatures, the Colonel of the Militia for soldiers, and the Master of the Palace for foreigners and trade disputes. If parties to a case cross categories, the case must be heard by an appropriate combination of magistrates. For example, a dispute between a visiting wizard and a guildsman from the third quarter of the city will involve the Master of the Palace, a Collegian, a guildmaster, and the third quarter-judge. These high magistrates may appoint deputies to hold cases in their stead. The Master of the Palace in particular maintains a staff of deputies. Councilors usually prefer hearing cases (and collecting judging fees) to deliberating legislation, so few new laws are ever passed.

Two members of the council have other governmental responsibilities. The Colonel of the Militia is the civic militia's commander in the field. While the militia is mostly for show, the Colonel does have day-to-day command over the militia's core, the cavaliers. The current Colonel, Aram Attuk, is a former mercenary captain; he has little interest in politics and a cloudy past, but he is a shrewd warrior. The Master of the Palace (the harried but inexhaustible Maisu Khano) oversees day-to-day administration of the Public Palace, including scheduling public events and assigning spaces to vendors. While this may seem a small task, she actually has considerable power over how commerce is conducted in Aulos.

*The power that holds the sky's majesty wins our worship.*

*– Aeschylus*

There are several other officials without councilman power. For example, the dockmaster oversees use of the Floating Docks and the loading and unloading of goods. The Keeper of the Field is charged with keeping the Crystal Field in good order and regulating its exploitation. The Constable (Tytos Chuk, sour and unfriendly but fiendishly clever) is a guardian of the public peace, a sort of chief of police with a commission to keep private problems from rising to the level of public problems: stopping brawls, quelling arguments before they become violent, keeping an eye on suspicious persons and activities, and administering a body of proctors (seconded from the militia) to prevent thefts and burglaries. These officials serve at the pleasure of the Principe.

The King of the Dead is not a position so much as a symbol, or at least a legendary character. He purportedly rules the catacombs under the city and keeps peace among the bodies of the dead. Tradition has it that the Sealed Collegium got permission from the King of the Dead (after a week of silent negotiation with Xiang) for the living to occupy the surface of Aulos, but there have been no credible reports of any meeting with him for centuries. He is generally regarded as neither hostile nor particularly friendly to the living, only concerned with keeping his realm in quiet order. He is also the object of occasional religious – or at least superstitious – practices, such as burning incense or dropping small valuables into deep holes as a means of ensuring a comfortable afterlife.

## *Armed Forces*

The largest armed force of Aulos is the militia, a part-time army composed of one able-bodied adult from each family. The militia has a theoretical strength of about 4,000, but almost never meets in its entirety. Members from each quarter of the city are called to assemble for inspection at the Public Palace once a month. They are to present themselves with arms and armor (requirements are loose; a spear, short bow, and leather jacket are sufficient) and drill briefly or face a nominal fine. Many end up paying the fine. Seven members of the militia in each quarter are also pressed into service each month to serve as proctors assisting the Constable, or they may sponsor another in their place. Many choose the latter, so the city has a semi-regular body of police.

The core of the militia is a special regiment called the cavaliers, a body of about 80 troops provided or sponsored by the wealthiest families. The cavaliers are full-time soldiers. They must provide their own arms, but are provided with board and lodging in the Private Palace, a comfortable stipend, and exemption from a number of taxes. Entrance is competitive; cavaliers must pass an elaborate examination including tests of strength, endurance, and marksmanship. The regiment drills frequently, and many cavaliers carry enchanted items, making them an even more formidable force.

Still, Aulos' main defense is the fact that it's difficult to attack a city on top of a flying rock. The militia is, at best, a semi-trained rabble, and the cavaliers are too few to have much effect in a pitched battle. In case of prolonged or serious threat, the city is perfectly willing to hire mercenaries, and the Sealed Collegium may, in extreme emergency, be pressed into service for magical support.

### Riding Gryphons

Aulos is home to a number of flying creatures, of whom the riding gryphon is a favorite, particularly among the cavaliers. Gryphons come in several different breeds, though they share the same general description: head, claws, and wings of an eagle on what is otherwise a lion's body. This particular type is the result of centuries of selective breeding of captive gryphons from around the world. The riding gryphon is the size of a large horse, somewhat larger than more often encountered lion-sized common gryphons, and it has a less wary, more tractable temperament. Still, they are prickly beasts, and they consume a costly diet of meat.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 23 | **HP:** 23 | **Speed:** 6.50 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 11 | **Move:** 6 (Air 12/24) |
| **IQ:** 5 | **Per:** 11 | |
| **HT:** 13 | **FP:** 13 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 2 |

**Beak (14):** 2d+2 large piercing, Reach C, 1.
**Claw (14):** 2d+2 cutting, Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Acute Vision 3; Bad Temper (12); Domestic Animal; Enhanced Move (Air); Flight (Winged); Quadruped; Restricted Diet (Carnivore).
***Skills:*** Brawling-14; Mount-14.
***Class:*** Hybrid.
***Notes:*** Riding gryphons are slow to trust unfamiliar faces, but can nevertheless be very expensive if they can be purchased. A riding gryphon egg or hatchling will go for $1,000 or more despite needing years of specialized training, and a mature one costs a minimum of $40,000. They are large and strong enough to carry an armed rider with reasonable speed over long distances, but ones with more ST or HT are sometimes available for even higher prices.

# Commerce and Industry

When it is near inhabited areas, Aulos does a brisk trade in fine manufactured items, magical labor, and the city's most distinctive export, high-quality crystals. The city's industries are dominated by the six major guilds:

*Clothiers:* Includes weavers, embroiderers, leatherworkers, carpet-makers, cobblers, and tailors. Because there is no water power to power looms and little space to put smelly trades like tanning, little raw cloth is produced. Instead, guild members usually import cloth and hides and turn them into fine clothing.

*Crystalliers:* The crystalliers are almost unique to Aulos. They work with material culled from the Crystal Field. They engage in shipping, manufacture of musical and optical devices, jewelry-making, and preparation of items for enchantment by magicians.

*Dockmen:* The dockmen are primarily employed in loading and unloading vessels landing at the Floating Docks. Carpenters may join as special members to maintain the docks and flying vessels.

*Merchants:* Any resident of the city who wishes to import or export goods in significant quantities must join the merchants' guild.

*Scribes:* The guild of scribes includes a number of learned professions, including scribes, bookmakers, and lawyers.

*Silversmiths:* This guild includes metalworkers of all kinds. However, most metalwork in the city is on a small scale, involving jewelry and small mechanical devices, such as water clocks.

Tradesmen operating more-or-less permanent establishments (bakers, grocers, furniture-makers, and such) are eligible to join a catch-all organization, the Lesser Guild. The Lesser Guild provides its members with no formal political representation, so it serves as little more than a drinking club for members of the lower middle class with unrealistic aspirations for power. Itinerant peddlers, servants, moneylenders, and most other people may not join any guild.

Magicians may not join a guild. Rather, they fall under the authority of the Sealed Collegium, which in turn is subject to intense scrutiny from the Principe (magicians who want to export enchanted items must, technically, sell them to a merchant who can, in turn, export them). The Collegium has only about 50 full-fledged members, but it exercises authority over nearly 800 students (mostly foreigners) and a similar number of spellcasters resident in the city.

Only natives of Aulos may join a guild, but resident foreigners may practice their craft if they are granted a license by the guild and pay heavy dues, equivalent to about three weeks of income (double what a native would pay). The major guilds encompass about 15% of the city's adult population (500-600 members each), with another 30% eligible for the Lesser Guild and the rest guildless, although many work for guild members.

Although the city's industries are dominated by the guilds, Aulos' lifeblood is commerce with a constantly shifting array of foreigners. Therefore, it is relatively friendly to outsiders. Inns and hostels abound near the Floating Docks. New arrivals are given a cursory search by the dockmaster's deputies to ensure they aren't returning exiles; docking fees are nominal. However, non-residents should know that they must initially enter the city through the docks. Landing elsewhere without a letter of permission will lead to fines and more detailed searches at the very least.

# Everyday Life

Civic life in Aulos has adapted to its unusual conditions. The city has its own fixtures and familiar faces and locations, but everything around it changes constantly.

## *Clothing*

Most residents of Aulos wear similar costume: sandals or slippers, tight leggings, a loose vest or shirt, and a front-opening belted tunic. When Aulos is in colder climates, boots appear, and layers of robes are added. Poorer citizens wear a turban, or at least a head-cloth secured with a pin or band. Wealthier residents wear fitted caps of various sizes and shapes based on their occupations – for example, small, floppy caps for merchants, skullcaps for people who engage in delicate crafts, tall cylinders for scribes. Physicians wear blue capes, while prostitutes wear red scarves. Magicians wear black robes with colored ribbons on their arms indicating their rank in the Collegium. Senior members traditionally wear masks while performing their duties. Initially, the masks were blank black cloth, meant to conceal the member's identity while acting as the embodiment of the guild, but they have since become elaborately personalized.

## *Cuisine*

Food in Aulos is, by necessity, eclectic. Because the city passes over so many different regions, there is little consistency in available ingredients. Therefore, instead of specific dishes, the cooks of Aulos have developed a broad style of cooking. The Aulos style involves preserved foods (salted, smoked, dried, or pickled) cut up finely, heavily spiced, cooked quickly, and served on a bland bed of cooked grains or wrapped in flatbread or vegetable leaves.

Homes in Aulos are often heated by small stoves which have a chimney with ceramic panels on the inside of the house. These panels are commonly used to cook a style of flatbread made from a slightly sticky dough rolled out and slapped onto the hot panel; when done, the flatbread stiffens and falls off. But the favorite dish of most people in Aulos is kursu, a cake of spiced meal with a dab of sweet fruit paste at the center and fried in oil. Kursu can be bought from itinerant vendors on any street corner.

## Local Specialties

With its significant elevation and constant movement, Aulos is often subject to cold, windy weather. To combat this, weavers have devised a unique weave which is very tight on one side and has a soft, warm pile on the other. Winter clothing (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures,*** p. 16) grants an additional +1 to Survival rolls in environments which are both cold and windy; +1 CF. It has a rough, dull appearance, though; when calculating the total cost factor of an outfit to determine reaction bonuses for *ornate* equipment, *subtract* one for Aulos fabric. Indeed, it's rarely embellished at all, but rather worn under a more attractive cloak or long coat with enough coverage to conceal the unattractive undergarment.

Aulos is one of the few places in the world where flying creatures and vehicles are readily available for purchase. Riding gryphons (p. 7), giant eagles (p. 82), and other flying animals are most common, but flying carpets (***GURPS Magic,*** p. 146) are reasonably common along with variants like flying brooms, and other vehicles, like levitating ships or magical dirigibles, may be found at the GM's discretion.

## *Buildings and Street Life*

Most buildings in Aulos are made from dark gray brick, three or four stories high. Ground floors are usually given over to stores and businesses, with residences on upper floors and brick-lined cisterns below. Instead of walls and doors, first-floor building fronts often have sideways-folding wooden shutters, letting occupants open up as much or as little of the building as desired. Roofs are often flat to allow easy landings to flying visitors, or simply for open-air gatherings. Many people keep small domestic animals (birds, dogs, friendly reptiles), but horses are all but unknown. Most heavy carrying is done by wheelbarrow.

The streets of Aulos are narrow (often little more than a single cart-width), paved with brick or cobbles, and unnamed. With a dense population and relatively inexpensive magical lighting, they are never completely empty, day or night. Even in the small hours, one can often find a few men on their way home from a tavern or a kursu vendor with a small brazier and pot of bubbling oil. A number of street corners are furnished with magical fountains, which consist of a narrow spout producing a constant, if sparse, drizzle of water and a deep basin below it. Collectively, they supply about half of the city's water. The water is freely available, but it is considered rude to take more than half of the water currently in the basin. Neighbors often meet by the fountains to gossip.

## *Recreation*

In addition to the usual recreations of drinking, dancing (the Aulos style involves many skipping and hopping steps, gestures with raised arms, and tight pirouettes), and gambling (tabba, a complex game involving pyramidal dice and colored plaques resembling dominoes, is a favorite), instrumental music is popular, particularly small horns and crystal chimes. Aulos has a long tradition of literacy, so reading aloud is common, but theatrical performances are rare. Still, performances are sometimes put on at the Public Palace. Wrestling and competitive climbing are popular sports, but there are few team sports, perhaps because there are so few large spaces in which to play them.

## *Places to Go and Things to See*

The city is full of notable landmarks.

### Public Palace

The public palace is Aulos' largest paved space. It consists of four tall stories of portico around an open area about 50 yards across at its widest. By tradition, the first two tiers are occupied by transient peddlers and merchants who have come to the city to sell their wares. The rest are used for small meetings of civic groups. The courtyard may be used as market space, room for popular assemblies, a sporting field, or an impromptu courtroom for particularly notable cases.

### Private Palace

The private palace (also called Tyrus's Hall), a luxurious and well-fortified building, is the seat of the city's government. It houses the Principe's apartments, a council chamber, offices for members of the city council, clerks, and other servants of the government, and the cavaliers' barracks. The lowest levels are used as a prison, and the outermost tower is often used as a courtroom, with executions performed from a large open window.

### Collegium Pyramid

The Sealed Collegium maintains its original headquarters, a black marble pyramid. In its heyday, it was reserved for full members of the Collegium, and it was richly furnished and decorated. These days, it houses a number of magicians, their apprentices, servants, and a number of large rooms used interchangeably as refectories, classrooms, warehouses, and laboratories. While it now serves a more utilitarian function, the building itself is still quite fine.

### *Impractical Magic*

One of the uses to which Aulos' crystals are put is as magical reserve components in enchanted items. The Sealed Collegium has a long history of experimenting with such effects as the various power reserve options in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables,*** pp. 47-48. Enchanted items from Aulos may have new variants not listed there, and it is rumored that the Collegium has the secret of non-personalized, self-recharging energy reserves (that is, Powerstones; see ***GURPS Magic,*** p. 69). That's mostly but not entirely false. The closest they've gotten are very quirky, finicky stones which burn out after a few recharges and even then are demanding about the circumstances under which they recharge. Still, even a temporary additional energy reserve can be a very welcome item in a wizard's tool kit.

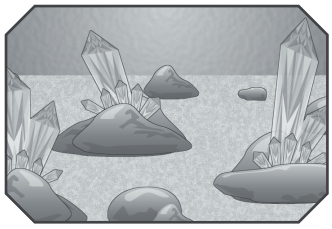
### Moorings

When the city was anchored, enormous holes were drilled in the underside of the city at four points to fasten the moorings, as well as smaller holes for anchoring stays and workmen's scaffolding. The anchors are long gone, but the attachment points are home to a set of shanty towns. The Moorings, as these neighborhoods have become known, are a collection of rickety wooden buildings held in place by ropes, chains, nets, and some wishful thinking. Because of the poor lighting, the difficulty of building sturdy structures, and the inherent danger of building over a fall of several hundred yards, the Moorings are the city's poorest district and treated as dens of footpads and murderers. However, respectable citizens go down the narrow stairways from the upper side for a taste of the wilder life.

### Crystal Field

The Crystal Field is the city's other large open space. The Crystal Field is an irregularly shaped area where clear and faintly colored bunches of crystals stand here and there, like stands of vegetation on a field of coarse white crust. The crystals appear in bunches with one or two large ones at the center and smaller ones clustered around them. The tallest are about 10 feet high, but most are three or less. A curious aspect of the field is that the crystals are growing. Growth rate is related to size, with small crystals growing fastest.

The crystals, which may be harvested with a bit of careful hammering, have a number of uses, from musical instruments (each chimes with a distinct note when struck) to magical adjuncts. The guild of crystalliers harvests about 500 pounds of new crystals (two inches long or less) each year, providing a significant source of income for the city. The removal of larger crystals is generally prohibited and can only be performed with the permission of the Keeper of the Field.



### Broken Temple

Older than any human construction in Aulos, the Broken Temple is a hexagonal building made from a single piece of a green jade-like material. The temple is carved with elaborate, fluid scrollwork in a unique alien style. The inside of the temple is open, furnished with nothing but a stone table 12 feet on each side in the center. Before human habitation began, the temple was apparently attacked, caving it its ceiling and part of the walls. The temple interior and its immediate surroundings are littered with blocks of green rubble. The stone is very hard but not unworkable, and it might be used to produce jewelry. However, the temple and its stone are generally held to be unlucky. For that reason, the area immediately around the temple is uninhabited and overgrown with weeds.

### Catacombs

The flying mountain on which Aulos is built isn't solid rock. It has a number of excavated basements, underground cisterns, and natural caves permeating the rock. Many of these structures are linked into a network known collectively as the catacombs. The upper layers of the catacombs are fairly well mapped, if little used. However, the deeper layers are poorly understood and largely avoided. There is reason to believe that the lower tunnels change from time to time, so map-making is a dubious enterprise. An honorable burial in Aulos consists of being carried into the catacombs and left. Bodies disappear in a matter of days and are said to have been taken by the King of the Dead. The few attempts to explore the catacombs in detail have failed (the tunnels seem to resist scrying magic), and some of the search parties have vanished without a trace.

### Bastions

While the top surface of Aulos is fairly level, it has a pair of steep stone outcroppings called the bastions for their resemblance to stumpy defensive towers. They are of slightly different sizes; the lesser bastion reaches a height of about 60 feet, while the greater bastion's highest point is about 90 feet. They are too steep to build on, but they are occasionally used as lookout posts.

### Floating Docks

Between the Crystal Field and the Private Palace is the center of Aulos' commerce, the Floating Docks. The docks are broad (about 20 feet across) wooden avenues which extend over 200 yards into empty air. No mundane wooden structure could stand the strain; the secret lies in the use of magical wood and reinforcing enchantments. Flying vessels of all kinds tie up here, and smaller fliers (flying animals, magic carpets, etc.) can descend on them like a road. The wood is quite thick, and is protected by magical fireproofing.

## Campaigns and Adventures

Aulos can be used much like any other city. PCs could, for example, become enmeshed in civic politics. The current Principe is in poor health and has no clear heir. Power could fall to one of four cousins; factions are already forming around them. Crafter PCs might campaign for increased privileges for their guild, or ambitious PCs might angle for appointments to civic offices. Warfare is also a constant possibility. PCs could be airborne raiders attacking Aulos for a little loot, soldiers of a kingdom over which Aulos is passing trying to seize it for their own, or Aulos' own soldiers defending it from outside threats or launching retaliations. The presence of wealth, trade, and a community of magicians makes Aulos a natural destination for merchants and PCs seeking specialized advice and equipment. Other adventures may arise from the city's unique situation. For example, heroes might attempt to contact the King of the Dead, explore the history of the prehuman reptile and bird-man inhabitants, or find out what makes the city fly. Here are some other possibilities.

### *Romancing the Stones*

While crystal harvesting is theoretically controlled by the crystalliers' guild, casual poaching is common. Most residents have a small crystal surreptitiously taken on a youthful dare or quietly lifted and given as a gift by a suitor. Removing larger crystals or batches of crystals is far more difficult, but that doesn't stop people from trying sometimes. PCs may decide to steal a large crystal (as a magical adjunct, the object of a quest, or simply because it's valuable). They may attempt a quick smash-and-grab, landing a flying vehicle in the field, grabbing a crystal, and taking off, but the whole city could see them and dispatch pursuit at a moment's notice. They may be more successful in taking a crystal out of the field under cover of a distraction and carrying it deep into the city, hiding it for a while, and smuggling it out, but even that will present considerable problems. Just getting a large crystal out of the field without being detected is a heroic feat, and its theft will trigger a massive investigation.

### *Herb Gathering*

It may be unusual soil conditions, or perhaps a natural emanation of magic, but nooks and crannies in the sloping underside of the rock on which Aulos is built are home to a variety of useful plants and animals. Though not in constant demand, many species are very rare, so some residents of the Moorings make a good if dangerous living by climbing along the underside in search of valuable wildlife. Most "hangers" are poor, territorial, and desperate enough to spend days at a time hanging from hand-made climbing gear, facing treacherous handholds and small but vicious animals who could cause them to lose their grip and plummet to their death. Gathering from the underside is unregulated by the Principe (although individual hangers won't hesitate to sabotage poachers on their turf), so PCs may enter this dangerous profession in order to find something vital for an important spell or, if they're down-and-out, try their hand as a risky way to raise some funds.

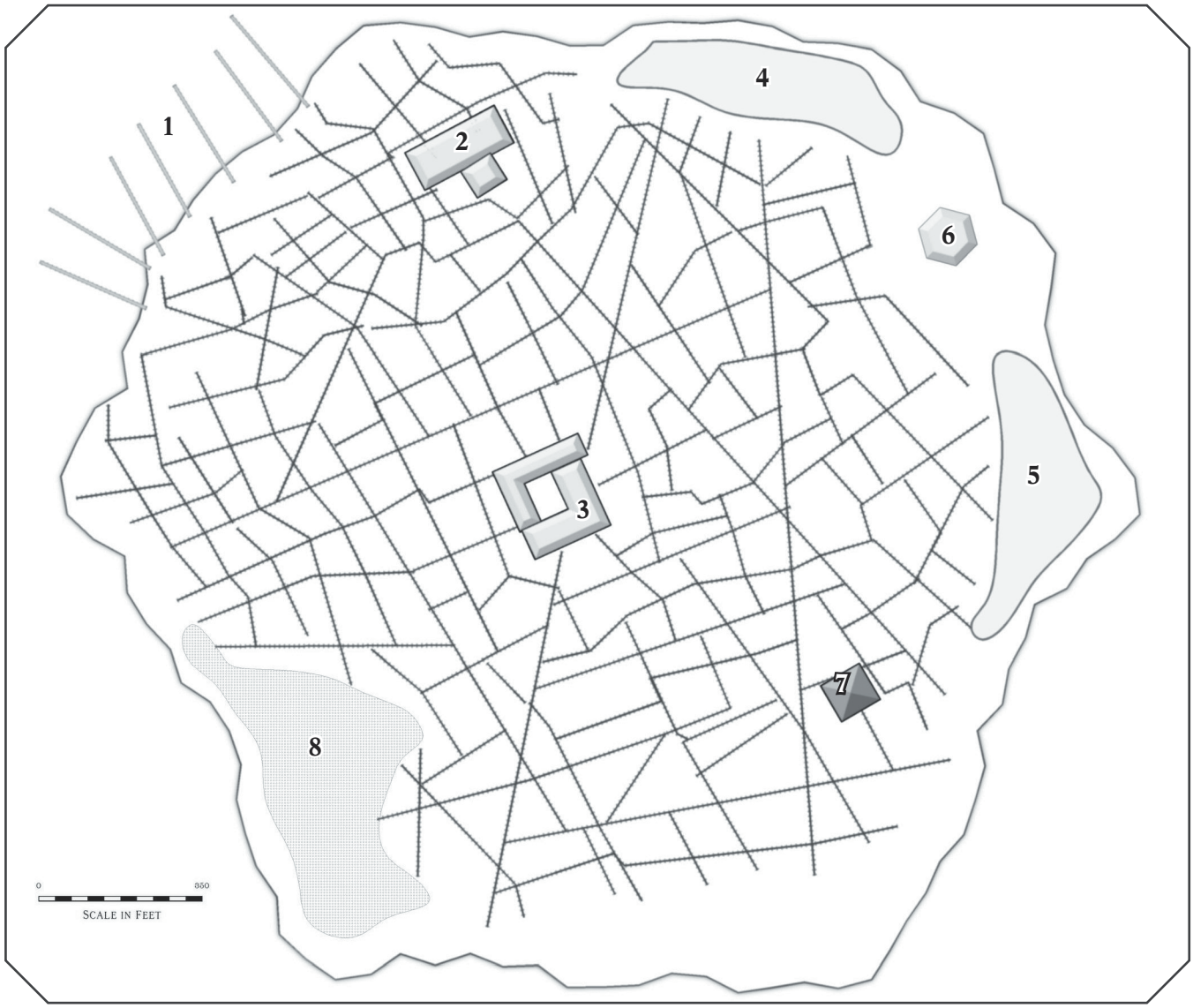
## *Taking the Wheel*

One of the long-lost secrets of Aulos is how the Collegium directed its movements. If PCs could unravel the mystery, it could be worth a lot of money or political power. A series of clues may lead them through the jealously guarded archives of the Sealed Collegium or on a perilous crawl through the catacombs to find missing parts of a magical manuscript. And even if they do reconstruct the method, they may have to convince others in Aulos that they've found the right method, a difficult task since people claiming to have the secret are likely to be regarded as either lying or insane.



## *Uprising*

The residents of Aulos have been depositing their dead in the catacombs for centuries and living in what they think is a silent but agreeable relationship with the King of the Dead. But perhaps they've gotten it wrong. Perhaps the King of the Dead has been gathering bodies so that he can unleash a huge army of zombies and drive the living from the surface. Or perhaps there are factions among the dead, and the King must deal with ambitious princes and princesses of the underworld, who may stage attacks on Aulos for their own reasons. Either way, adventurers may be recruited to fight off attacks and enter the still unpredictable but now hostile catacombs and the uncharted (and topologically impossible) realms farther below to find out what's going on and save the city.




# Map of Aulos

Nothing indicates north on the map. This is quite deliberate; since the city turns frequently, there's no single "north."

### *Key*

1. Floating Docks
2. Private Palace
3. Public Palace
4. Lesser Bastion
5. Greater Bastion
6. Broken Temple
7. Collegium Pyramid
8. Crystal Field

# Caerceol

## by Matt Riggsby

Caerceol is a secluded castle imbued with powerful, if largely passive, magic. This setting is appropriate for traditional fantasy settings and is amenable to a broad range of modifications to fit an existing campaign.

### Reading the Maps

The floor plans (pp. 14, 15) of the castle show broad outlines, but not a number of fine features. These include the precise locations of windows, small stairways often used by the servants (the clock tower, for example, is usually accessed through a ladder or set of steps from the stable), and lightweight partitions which may subdivide rooms, as in the rooms occupied by servants. No map is provided for the high tower, which rises above the center of the castle. The high tower is the province of the guards. It contains an armory and storeroom, a rarely used office for the Champion, and a common room and quarters for the guards themselves.

Areas on the map with an X drawn through them are open air, usually overlooking an area beneath which is open to the upper floor.

## History

Caerceol is the centuries-old seat of power of the mist elves, a reclusive faction of elvenkind living in a region of forested highlands. A legendary warrior queen exiled from her home and her followers carved a country out of a no-man's-land inhabited by monsters and barbarians, and they settled down to rule it. Their palace was constructed by a quiet, misty lake. From the beginning, the elves constituted a small ruling class over a mix of forest-dwelling elves, humans, and quasi-human creatures drawing a comfortable if unspectacular living from the forests and painstakingly cleared fields. The general population has attained elements of higher civilization (for example, a significant minority of peasants are at least semi-literate), but their neighbors are mostly barbarian clans who raid at any opportunity, and the small kingdom is weeks' travel from the closest civilized land. Though never great in numbers and power, the mist elves maintain their defense of the realm and the remnants of their ancient culture. The center of that culture is Caerceol. In its libraries, furnishings, and court rituals are preserved the glories of days past and the traditions of an ancient people.

## The Landscape

The kingdom is liberally wooded, and Caerceol is surrounded on its landward sides by six miles of thick forest. The woods themselves are magical: even if outsiders employ an army of woodsmen to cut down the forest, the distance from the edge of the woods to the castle remains the same. The region is also always wrapped in light mist, cutting visibility down to a half mile at most if you can climb above the trees; down among the trees, you're lucky to see 20 yards. The occupants of Caerceol have little use for roads, and there are no easily discerned paths through the woods. Between the thickness of the woods and the all-encompassing mist, it's easy to get lost. To anybody but an experienced woodsman or a lifelong resident, each dripping, moss-encrusted tree looks like another. There are, however, a number of rune-inscribed standing stones pointing the way. Visitors without a guide or a good sense of direction may spend days wandering through the woods, but they'll find the castle sooner or later.

Caerceol also overlooks a misty lake. A few small islands, hardly more than mossy rocks with a few trees on their steep sides, are visible from the shore. None are permanently inhabited, although occupants of Caerceol may sometimes steal away to them for a bit of privacy.

## The Castle

Caerceol is set on a low, roughly triangular hill bordered by a stream and the lake. The stream isn't wide (no more than 10 yards), but fast, cold, and too deep to wade. It broadens into a small reedy delta as it pours into the lake. Main access to the castle is a stone bridge across the stream. The water-ward sides are also the steepest sides of the mound. In fact, the curtain wall is over 30 feet tall along the lake face, but because the land behind is much higher, it only rises about four feet above the surface on the lawn inside. The third and narrowest side faces the forest. While the sides of the mound on the stream and lake sides have been kept relatively clear, the forest comes nearly up to the landward wall, with a gap of only a few feet of rough lawn between the wall and the woods.

The hill is partly artificial. The castle incorporates remains of the foundations of at least two earlier fortifications, and all lie atop an older earthen mound. Legend holds it to be the remains of an even older fortress or the burial mound of the first queen.

### *The Walls and Garden*

The curtain wall is made of roughly squared-off stones, dark with age and decked with ivy and lichen. The workmanship, though, is solid. The wall is fortified with several towers and encloses the keep and a well-tended lawn/garden.

Letters indicate locations on the overhead view. Numbers indicate locations on the interior floor plans.

*A. River Gate:* The river gate consists of a gatehouse on the far side of the stream, a stone bridge, and a second gatehouse at the curtain wall. Each gatehouse includes two narrow towers and a parapet over the gateway. The doors, usually closed but not barred, are heavy wood bound with black iron. Each gatehouse is manned by two or three sentries, although the terrain renders a lookout somewhat futile. The guards reside in the upper levels.

*B. Boat Tower:* Near the point where stream meets lake, this "tower" is really a raised parapet atop a small gallery along the wall. The gallery consists of three small rooms for storage space and pallets for the guards. It has arrow slits facing both inward and outward, and the door can be barred for independent defense in case the wall is overrun. It also has an outward-facing door about 15 feet above ground level. The doorway lets out onto a set of wooden steps descending to the lakeshore near a stone boathouse and dock. Most of the palace's daily supplies are brought from villages along the lake to the dock and are carried up through the boat tower.

*The mist elves maintain their defense of the realm and the remnants of their ancient culture in Caerceol.*

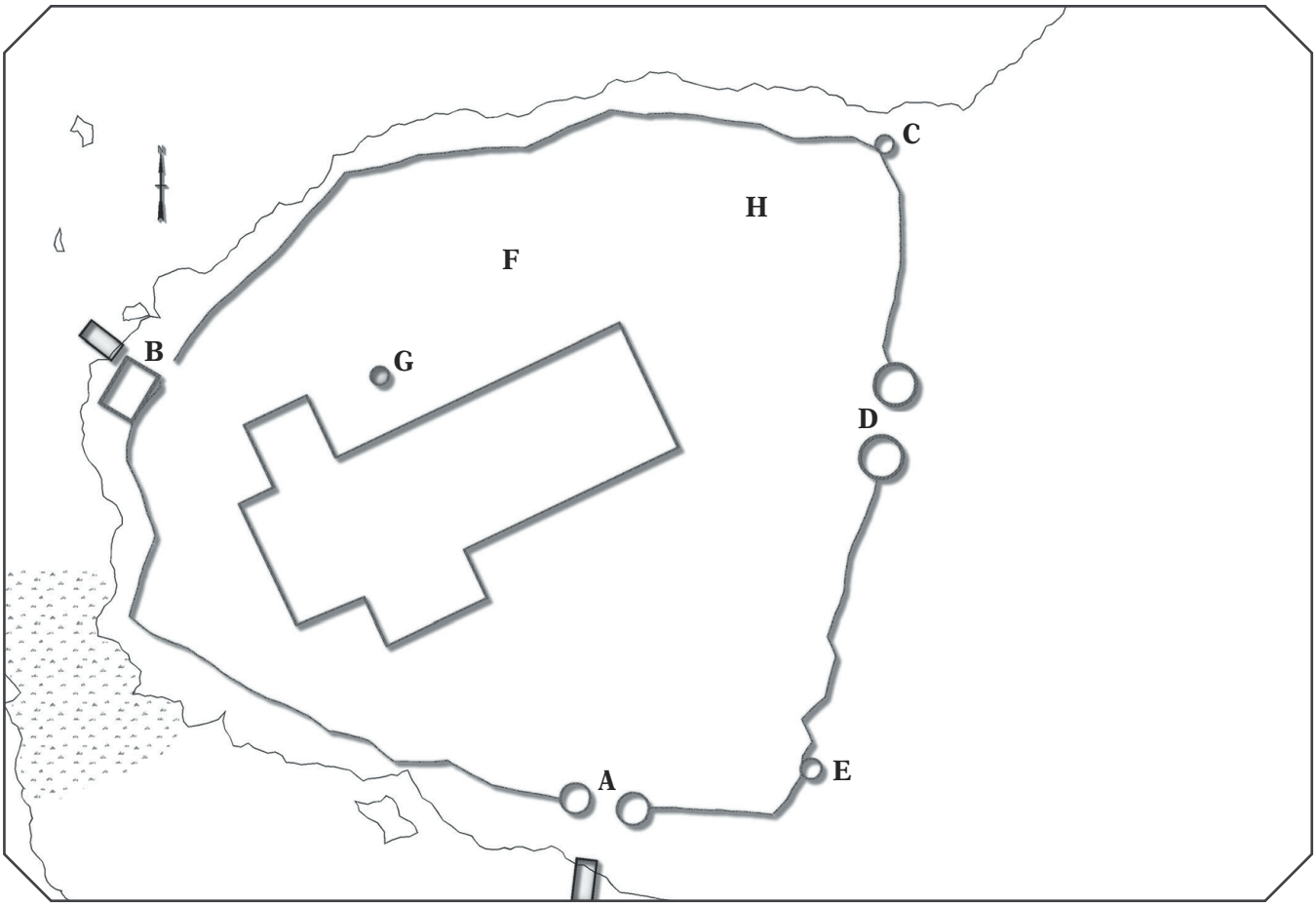
*C. Far Post:* The far post, at the other lake-facing point of the triangle, gets its name from being the fortification farthest from the keep. It is simply a small tower just taller than the wall, containing a small room.

*D. Kitchen Gate:* The kitchen gate, along the second land-facing side of the triangle, gets its name from being the gate through which fresh game is usually brought from the outside. It is a gatehouse similar to those by the stream.

*E. Small Post:* The small post, at the third point of the triangle, resembles the far post but is slightly smaller.

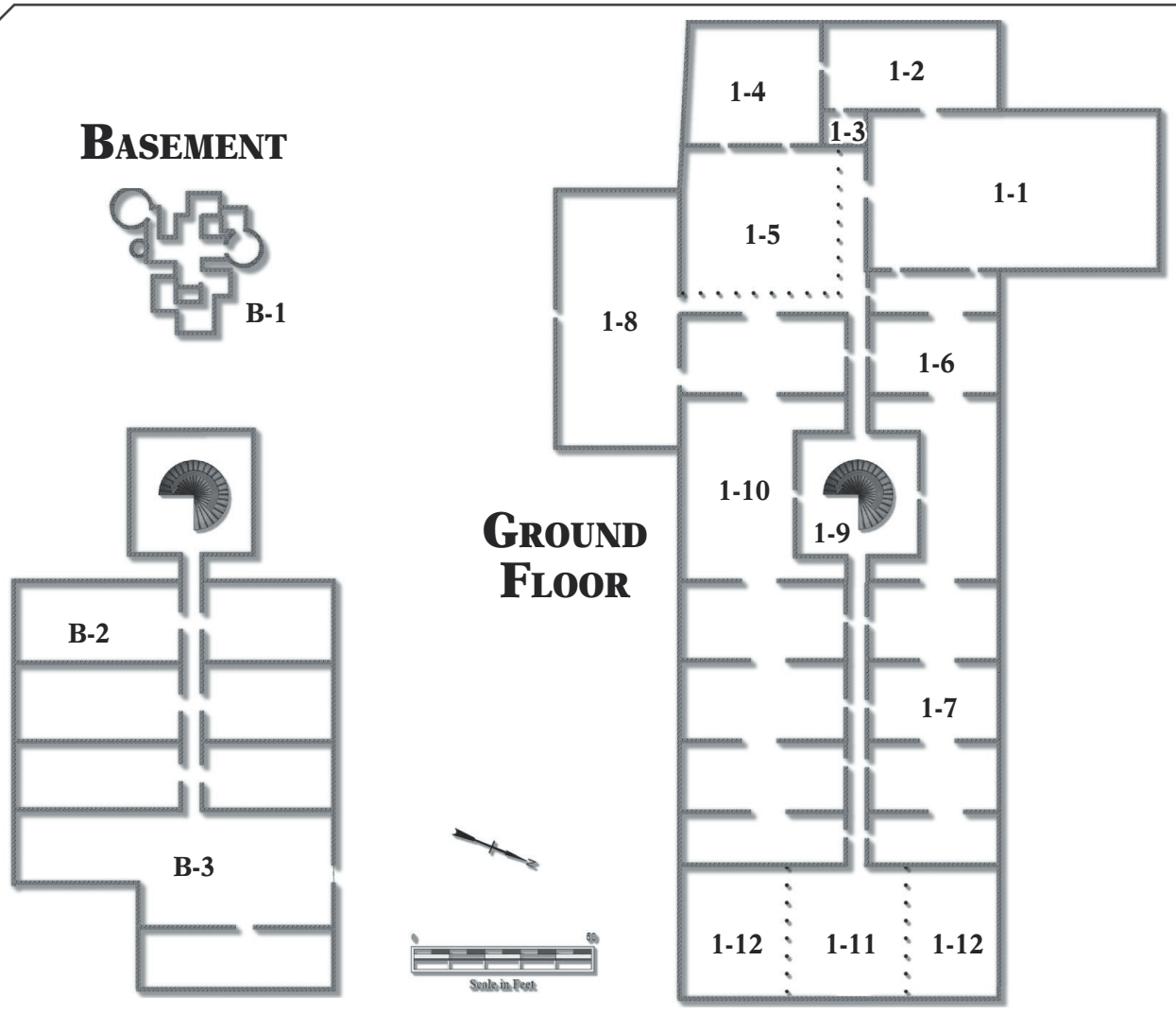
*F. Garden:* The garden (Americans would call it a lawn) is mostly well-tended grass, but in season, there are beds of flowers near the Great Room and patches of herbs by the kitchen entrance.

*G. Groaning Well:* Known locally simply as "the well," the Groaning Well is just a water source for most of the year: a wide stone-lined well of unknown depth. During the storms of winter, however, it produces a "voice" of groans and low booming noises. During those times, everyone avoids the well, except for the queen, who will stand by it for hours at a time in something approaching a trance. It is believed that the voice of the well will give her oracular insight and advice. The ordeal, though, is harrowing; a number of older queens have died by the well, or at least contracted a fatal chill there.




## Overview of Caerceol and Surroundings

*Scale:* 1" = 125'.




**Floor Plans of the Basement and the Ground Floor**

*H. Grove:* The grove is a stand of ancient trees near the far post. It is the only part of the garden which is not carefully cultivated. The densely set trees are a remnant of the forest's ancient days and are said to go back to the beginning of the world. Rumor has it that the grove is a magical portal; anyone who can squeeze between the intertwined branches can make their way to any other part of the ancient forest which remains wooded. The leaves, bark, and other parts of the trees are used for healing and magical purposes, but few attempt to enter the grove for fear of bad luck (the gardener is scrupulous about cutting the grass up to the grove but not touching the trees).

## *Basement*

This level is semi-subterranean; it's actually all under ground level, but a narrow ditch around the castle exposes a few high windows.

*B-1. Catacombs:* The original design of the catacombs was a square chamber adjoining four apses, each with shelf-like niches. However, chambers were added as more room became necessary. Queens and highly honored individuals have been laid to rest here for untold centuries. As a result, the shelves are crowded with bones and tattered remnants of once-fine burial shrouds. Every niche has at least a few bones, but as new spaces are needed, they are moved to other niches that still have room. If it became necessary, it might be difficult to find the bones of a specific individual. The catacombs are dark (no windows) and cramped, but surprisingly dry.

*B-2. Kitchens:* This is really a complex of rooms: two kitchens; a pantry for dry items; a buttery for casks of liquids; a wine cellar, with a locked door whose key is held by the majordomo; and a warren of small storerooms. The kitchens are cavernous, noisy, and busy from before dawn to sundown. They're lit partly by sunlight through the high windows and (in suitable weather) the open door, but mostly by cooking fires.

*B-3. Servants' Quarters:* This is where the downstairs servants live. This includes the kitchen staff including the head cook, the gardener, the gamekeeper, and their assistants. The junior staff sleep on pallets in relatively large, clammy dormitories. The more senior staff have cramped rooms to themselves.

## *Ground Floor*

This level contains mostly public or semi-public rooms, such as assembly and dining halls. Except where noted, floors are hard wood with occasional carpets, walls are covered with dark wood panels carved here and there in forest motifs or with grotesque faces, and the windows are arrow slits.

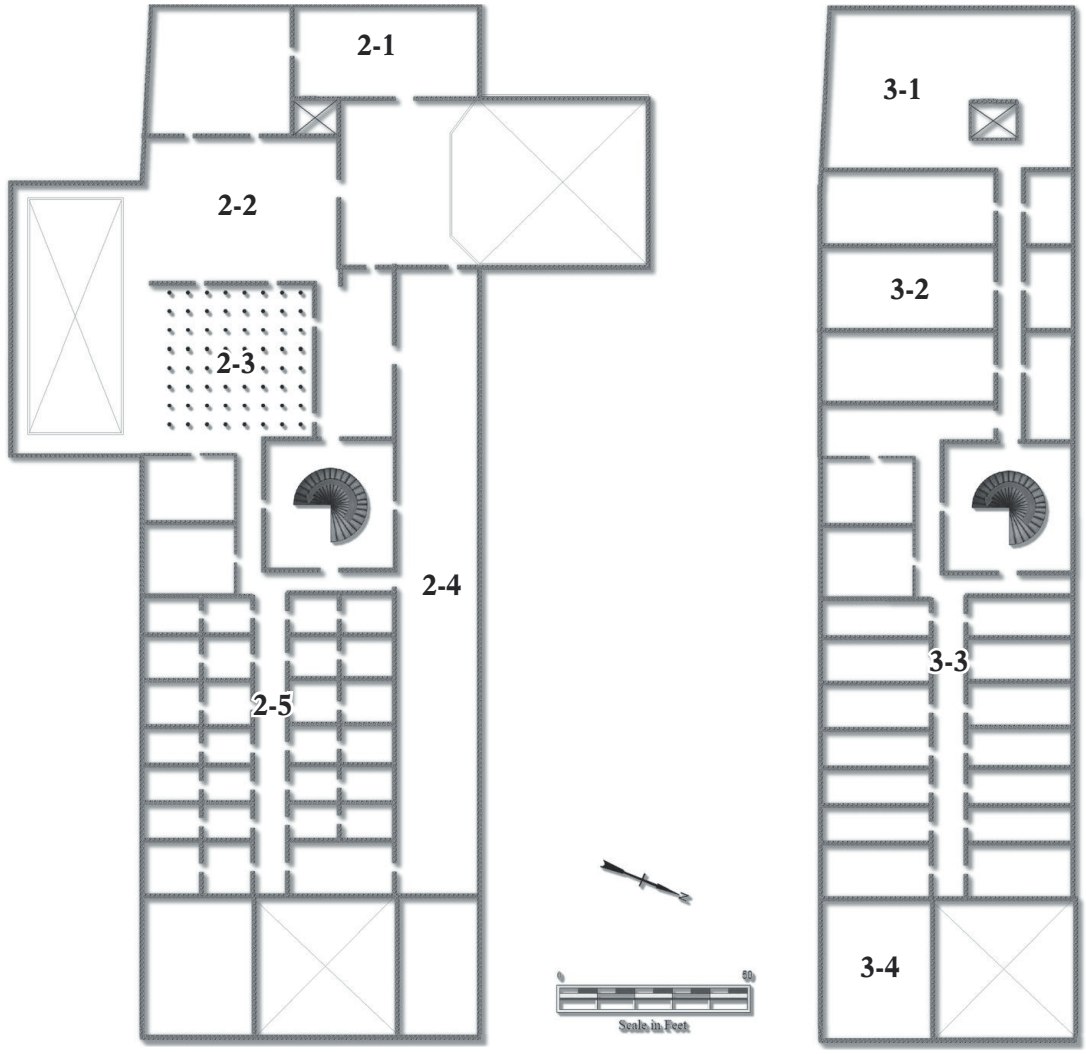
*1-1. Great Room:* If Caerceol has a throne room, it is the Great Room. It is here that the most important visitors are received, new laws proclaimed, and the highest business of state carried on. The walls are nearly 30 feet high, rising to a vaulted ceiling. Dark wood paneling alternates with high, narrow windows made from small panes of leaded glass.

*1-2. Chapel:* The chapel is a white marble-paneled shrine used for the private devotions of the queen and her inner circle. Compared to the opulence of the rest of the palace, the chapel is almost austere, with subdued geometric motifs carved into the marble panels. The room is windowless, lit by candelabras distributed liberally around the room. Behind an altar is a trap door covering the stairs to the catacombs.

*1-3. Secret Garden:* The existence of the garden is no secret, but its contents are well-hidden. Hardly more than an air shaft (no windows overlook it), the garden is filled with shade-loving plants and a few bits of stone furniture. It is the exclusive retreat of the queen. Only the gardener can come there at will, and the queen rarely brings visitors with her.

*1-4. Inner Court:* The inner court is used for semi-private audiences and conferences. If there's a war to fight, its strategy will be plotted out here. There are a number of small writing desks, at which senior clerks and ministers can often be found, but few decorations or luxuries.

*1-5. Banquet Room:* Permanently set with tables, this room is used for large feasts drawing nobles from across the queen's realm and notable visitors from abroad. The room is only partly encompassed by walls. On some of its sides, it is bounded by a row of carved wooden pillars with curtains hanging between them. There is a small spiral staircase at one side leading down to the kitchen and up to the higher floors.




**Floor Plans of the Second and Upper Floors**

*1-6. Drawing Room and 1-7. Lower Gallery:* These rooms are typically used for casual audiences, private performances by entertainers, and relaxation. They are among the best decorated rooms in the castle, with thick carpet, paintings along most of the walls, and heavy but comfortable furniture. They are also the best lit, with an entire wall taken up by tall, narrow windows as in the Great Room.

*1-8. Guard Room:* This room is so called because by tradition there are always guards stationed there. It serves more generally as a reception room for visitors coming in or leaving by the river gate. The room is two stories tall, with a balcony around the room at second floor-level.

*1-9. Grand Stairs:* This large, circular staircase, built around a thick central pillar, connects the first three floors. The thick walls around it support the high tower (see *Reading the Maps,* p. 12).

*1-10. Outer Court:* The Outer Court is where much of the day-to-day business of governance is carried on. There are many small desks distributed around the room, usually occupied by scribes dealing with correspondence, and the large niches between pillars can serve as offices or meeting areas.

*1-11. Keep Yard:* The Keep Yard is a small open area surrounded by the castle walls, with the doorway to the outer court on one side a gate outside on the other. Because of traffic in and out, the gate is almost always open.

*1-12. Private Stables:* Although Caerceol's main stables are outside the walls, there are a few stalls for mounts and a shelter for carriages on either side of the Keep Yard. They are usually kept partly empty should unexpected visitors need their use.

### *Caerceol Elves*

The region of Caerceol is inhabited by mostly wood elves and a few mountain elves, but the mist elves who inhabit the palace are essentially the same as high elves (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level,*** pp. 6-8), but with different features. Their skin, hair, and the "whites" of their eyes are shades of gray, ranging from near-white to charcoal.

## *Second Floor*

This level contains more private areas, such as apartments for the aristocratic residents and their guests. Decor is much like the first floor, but windows are somewhat wider.

*2-1. Queen's Rooms:* The queen's apartments are, of course, the most comfortable in the palace. They consist of inner and outer sitting rooms, dressing room, bed chamber, maid's room, and solar. The queen has covered the paneled walls with tapestries of battle scenes. By tradition, if the queen's consort dies, the solar's broad windows are covered with black curtains which are never drawn until a new queen is crowned.

*2-2. Open Gallery:* The open gallery, connecting with the balconies overlooking the great room and guard room, is a waiting area, semi-formal meeting place, and, in times of crisis, overflow work space for keeping the queen's advisers close at hand. It is liberally furnished with comfortable chairs and small tables and desks. The room is as close as many people get to the Queen's apartments.

*2-3. Pillared Gallery:* This is a trophy room, adorned with armor, weapons, and other relics of Caerceol's past. Every queen has hung at least a few items from the room's many columns, although it would take a thorough search of the library to determine the significance of all of them.

*2-4. Clerestory:* The clerestory is a semi-open walkway with a waist-high parapet above the drawing room. In particularly bad weather, servants install cloth canopies for shelter.

*2-5. Apartments:* Most of these rooms for residents and important visitors consist of a bed chamber and a sitting room, but others are more elaborate. Each has its own name and history. Some of the names derive from their decor or function. For example, the grand and small state rooms are usually reserved for important visitors, while the sea rooms are painted blue and green with ornaments in the shape of fish and ships. Others have names of more obscure derivation. The cold rooms once suffered from a draft, fixed decades ago, while the music rooms were once used as a conservatory. The origins of some of the names, such as the dragon rooms and the doctor's rooms, are lost in time, or at least in dispute.

## *Upper Floors*

These floors are mostly given over to more servants' quarters and a few special purpose rooms. Walls are whitewashed stone; floors are wooden planks.

*3-1. Library:* The so-called library is half museum, containing trophies and mementos of queens past as well as original copies of proclamations (sometimes borrowed by the chancery of the Outer Court), letters, monographs of court wizards, and other texts. The court wizard traditionally serves as librarian, and each imposes his own order on it, doing so in his own good time. As a result, he's usually the only one who can find anything.

*3-2. Storage:* The upstairs storerooms hold furniture not currently in use, rolled-up tapestries and carpets, broken items of all kinds awaiting repair, summer bedding in winter, winter bedding in summer, cleaning tools, and other odds and ends, all covered in dusty cloths and packed into a maze of long, narrow rooms.

*3-3. Servants' Quarters:* The upstairs servants live, naturally, upstairs. These rooms aren't dark and clammy like the downstairs quarters; they're uncomfortable in their own way. They are better lit, but stuffy and dusty. Again, junior servants live in segregated dormitories, while senior servants have tiny private rooms. The majordomo has a large office, which is packed with account books.

*3-4. Clock Tower:* Although the top of this tower serves as an auxiliary watch station, the interior is taken up by the gears and weights of a large clock. The secrets of its manufacture are long lost (or, at least, well-hidden), but the servants have passed down through the generations knowledge of how to clean the gears, reset the falling weights which power it, and reset the time (it typically loses five to 10 minutes a day). It is a great curiosity and has fascinated residents for generations.

## *Stable and Kennel*

Although the castle has a small set of stables, Caerceol's main stables are outside the walls. They have stabling for about 20 horses, plus kennels for hunting dogs.

Caerceol's dogs are a cross between the highly bred hounds brought by the first queen's followers and the wolves which once prowled the woods in large numbers but now prove elusive. The Caerceol dogs are large, shaggy beasts who appear intimidating but are surprisingly friendly and extremely loyal. They can occasionally be seen in the castle itself.

### *Consort's Curse*

A significant problem for the queen's consort lies behind the "at least once" expectation. The position of consort is one of great prestige, but it's widely regarded as cursed. No consort in recent memory has lived more than six years after marrying the queen.

## Residents

Life at Caerceol revolves around Queen Tanalta. Tanalta is what one would expect of a vigorous monarch. She seems at an indeterminate age beyond girlhood but before middle age, serious and reserved but not unkind, and firm but rarely forceful save in extremity. She is also in excellent physical condition (with good reason; the queen traditionally leads her people in battle) as well as strikingly attractive, with skin the color of storm clouds and nearly white hair. At the moment, Tanalta is unmarried, but she is expected to take a consort at least once in her life to produce an heir (the crown descends on the eldest daughter, but should Tanalta die childless, there's a well-defined line of succession passing through a number of cousins).

There are, however, a number of officials and hangers-on resident at the castle at any time. Several of the queen's cousins and close friends attend her needs and run official errands (the palace servants typically come into contact with her only to do the dirty work of cleaning and carrying). The highest official in residence is the Minister of the Purse, the venerable Siobad. Siobad, who served Tanalta's mother and grandmother in the same capacity, is old even for an elf; his lean, lined face (and often imperceptibly slow movement) makes him look a bit like an extremely well-preserved mummy. The Chancellor, who oversees a body of clerks, is also in residence. The current Chancellor is Dunciar, an energetic, driven man with an uncomfortably intense gaze.

The library is maintained by the wizard Lubiodon One-Hand. Lubiodon is rumored to have given his right hand in exchange for enormous power, but it is a matter he refuses to discuss. Lubiodon spends as much time as he can alone in the clock tower pursuing abstruse magical research. He rarely comes out unless summoned by the queen.

The final resident of note is the Champion, head of the queen's bodyguard. A new Champion is selected once every seven years from distinguished warriors through the realm. Candidates are subjected to intense examination and physical ordeals, so the Champion is a person of proven ability. Meldain, the current Champion, is typical: loyal, sharp-eyed, clever, and very, very dangerous. Meldain had suffered some embarrassing reverses early in his battlefield career, so he was doubly grateful to the queen for the chance to prove himself.

### *Servants*

The division between aristocratic residents and their servants is mirrored by a division in species. The residents are cultured, educated elves of long lineages. The servants are a mix of half-elves, humans, and off-breeds of faerie. There's an additional division between the "upstairs" servants, who look after the interior of the palace and the moment-to-moment comfort of the residents, and the "downstairs" servants, who cook and look after the outside.

Tulan, the majordomo, is the ultimate authority over the household. He spends most of his time personally looking after the chief residents, but manages to find time to criticize or, occasionally, praise the staff. Quiet and finicky, Tulan is notoriously difficult to read. Even his race and age are anybody's guess; his delicate-featured face is nearly unlined, but what little hair he has left is quite white.

Immediately subordinate to the majordomo are the matron, chief cook, gardener, and gamekeeper. Of those, only Panulia, the matron, is upstairs. The matron's special area is the supervision of the female servants, but she lives up to her title by serving as a maternal figure for most of the palace's population, resident and servant alike. She also serves as "the voice of the people" in the castle. That is, if there's discontent among the servants, Panulia is at the forefront of expressing it to Tulan or, in very subtle ways, to the queen herself.

Quedo, the quick-tempered chief cook, rules the kitchen staff with an iron fist, but he chafes under the authority of the majordomo and has an uneasy truce with the gardener and gamekeeper. Tulan and Quedo have quietly despised one another for decades, an arrangement which works well for everyone. Despite working closely intertwined jobs, they almost always communicate through intermediaries.

The gardener and gamekeeper are theoretically under Tulan's authority, but he rarely supervises them. Basbarro the gardener is an elderly man with apparent gnomish blood, but still quite spry, and his skill at tending the garden is legendary. He is a great favorite among the staff, always ready with an amusing story or song. He draws helpers as he pleases from the kitchen staff, much to Quedo's annoyance. Used to spending hours at a time stalking shy animals, Chullan the gamekeeper is as quiet as Basbarro is noisy. He isn't actively antisocial, but he has been observed going for days at a time without speaking.

The guards hold an intermediate position between the servants and the aristocratic residents. Usually seen rather than heard, they answer to the queen and her champion. The most important thing about the guards is that they are all formidable veteran warriors, selected for skill, bravery, and loyalty. There aren't many, but each is worth any number of regular men.

## Caerceol in the Campaign

Caerceol offers many possibilities for adventure, and can be modified to fit different moods and situations. For example, although the residents are here called elves, they can just as easily be some other flavor of magically adept aristocrats, low-tech Tymbrimi, or merely gloomy, reclusive humans. Here are just a few possibilities for modifications and adventures.

*Mood Options:* As written, Caerceol is a quiet, even lonely place, appropriate as the last outpost of a dying race, where conflict is social and political rather physical. However, it could easily be the lofty center of a dark, moody, but still vigorous nation. In that case, replace some of the mist with thunder and storms and increase the traffic in and out. Bloody duels and torrid love affairs will be frequent distractions. Its relationship to PCs may also call for some modifications. The palace may serve as a refuge or allied stronghold (more lights, friendly inhabitants) or a prison or enemy stronghold (fewer carpets and tapestries, hostile inhabitants, shiftless servants).

*Easily modify the castle and its residents to fit your campaign.*

*Haunted Option:* Caerceol is unimaginably old, the grounds contain catacombs and two locations which house spirits, and the entire region is faintly magical. It would be surprising if it *weren't* haunted. Ghosts at Caerceol will be sufficiently unobtrusive that the castle can still be inhabited (unless you want to make it a crumbling ruin, which is a valid choice), but they may take a particular interest in the PCs. Do they want the PCs out, or will they keep the PCs from leaving? Are they trying to accomplish something, or keep a secret? Is there a connection with the permanent mists and forest, the catacombs, or the apparent curse on consorts? Ghosts and other secrets buried under the castle may also make Caerceol appropriate for Gothic or Cthulhuesque horror.

### *The Wooden Dungeon*

Caerceol offers a few possibilities for conventional dungeons, such as extensions to the catacombs under the castle or the burial mounds of the region's pre-elven rulers (draugr and draug lords, from ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1,*** p. 12, are very appropriate here), but the forest itself might provide scope for a dungeon of a sort. Though technically above-ground, very dense regions of forest might be filled with a network of passages between the trees, roomlike clearings, and any number of monsters.

*Mundane Option:* In a low-magic or historical campaign, Caerceol can keep much the same atmosphere while shorn of magical elements. Both servants and aristocrats can be human, but with a social division which may as well make them separate races. The mist may not be permanent, but the site may be prone to frequent fogs and overcast, giving it a gloomy look most of the year anyway. The well, the grove, and so on may not have magical powers, but it's certainly realistic that they be *believed* to have them. But without the magical forest, Caerceol isn't well defended. The position on the water is good, but the walls are too low to withstand strong assault, and the windows facing the lake are too big. If used as presented, Caerceol is a noble retreat in a peaceful era. If conditions are more warlike, the large windows should go away and the walls should come up five to 10 feet.

## *Adventure Seeds*

*Upstairs, Downstairs (the Steel-Cage Death Match):* There's no reason the warriors and aristocrats have to have all the ancient mysteries. The broom closets and kitchen stoves have their own stories to tell. This is one of them: Every time a new batch of soup stock is made at Caerceol, the remnants of any old batches are added to it. Those leftovers contain the remains of previous stocks, and so on back. Cooks in many societies reserve older stocks expressly to include in newer ones, since they create a richer, deeper flavor, a property which is subtly magnified with each successive batch. Some of these soup stocks can be traced through batches for decades or even longer. Caerceol's "mother stock" has a lineage that goes back for centuries, perhaps as far back to the first meal served when the castle was built. And now, on the eve of a feast in honor of the visit of a potential ally against the barbarians, the mother stock is missing. It is usually divided among four containers stored in different places, so no clumsy pot boy can break them all and destroy the precious essence. All four have vanished, and the kitchen staff faces the horror of having to present a substandard meal. Unless, of course, some able adventurers can save the day.

*In the Cold, Cold Ground:* Any adventurer knows that tombs and catacombs on the grounds of your palace are a terrible idea, yet the aristocracy keeps building them. Even if the bones of your ancestors don't reanimate themselves to take some kind of terrible vengeance, they'll certainly attract some kind of malevolent force. In this case, it's the latter. The catacombs themselves aren't the problem. Not directly, anyway. What is a problem is the malevolent forces coming through the groaning well and attacking the castle on the way to the catacombs. The spirits of the enemies of Caerceol's founders have found a way out of the netherworld, and they're trying to get their revenge. Somebody's going to have to go down the well and find a way of stopping them.

*Marriage Politics:* This is not an adventure so much as a series of adventures. The need to produce an heir will, eventually, require the queen to marry. If there are no daughters, vicious dynastic wars involving the queen's sisters and nieces traditionally follow, a situation everyone would rather avoid. However, selection of a proper mate is a process fraught with political implications, and candidates may be reluctant to take the position. Adventurers might join one faction or another, each supporting their own favorite (mostly by working against the others), or even try to achieve the position themselves, counting on their own consummate abilities to protect themselves from a probably nonexistent curse. The situation is ripe for tragic romance as well. The queen may be torn between being with the man she loves and quite possibly dooming him by marrying him. She may marry someone she doesn't love to keep the one she does alive, opening the door for juicy scandal as they carry on a secret affair.

*Clearing the Woods:* The woods around Caerceol aren't all fairy dances and quaint cottages. There are still dangerous things in the forest. Small farms are being destroyed and lone travelers killed, and common folk are crowding into the castle's protective walls. The queen must send warriors and mystics out into the wilderness, knowing that whatever properties of the forest protect the castle from outsiders will likely also protect whatever beast or villain is lurking out there.

# The Goblin Market

## by Matt Riggsby

Dangerous but irresistible, the Goblin Market is a place to get anything you need, but it may cost more than you think. In a typical fantasy game, the market is a traveling entity, a veritable town of colorful tents, wagons, and booths which springs up overnight at a crossroads or in a field somewhere (or perhaps adventurers come across it by turning down an alleyway in town they've never seen before and may never see again) and vanishes just as quickly some time thereafter. In any case, it's a source of endless wonders and an infinite array of magical goods. But don't bring your money; the charge may be anything from a fresh flower to your soul.

## The Market and the Merchants

Whatever form it takes, the Goblin Market doesn't stay in one place very long. It lasts at least three days, allowing potential customers time to hear an offer, consider it, and come back the next day. It may even stay for a week or a season, but eventually it moves on to a new location, perhaps vanishing altogether for a while like a commercial Brigadoon. Nevertheless, its location is, to some extent, predictable, or at least knowable. It may not be completely common knowledge, but those who pay attention to the Goblin Market will be able to tell you when and where you can find it next. For someone trying to find the Goblin Market, rolls against Current Affairs or Area Knowledge can let someone recall when it's likely to appear nearby. This is also the kind of information mystically inclined guilds like delving companies, hermetic cabals, wizards' guilds, and spiritual societies (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds***) keep track of and would be readily available to members.

The market carries many hangers-on with it: fortune tellers, alchemists, and mystics of conventional races. Indeed, better than half of the people setting up shop at the market are simply followers, distinguished by their much plainer wares. The market also attracts itinerant jugglers and entertainers, sellers of wine and ale, and others catering to the often wealthy travelers who come to buy.

However, at its core are a number of members of no known species (the number changes, but it's typically between 30 and 60), a peculiar array of creatures ranging from hideous goblin to radiant faerie, each apparently completely unique. They are rarely seen away from their booths at the market, and some have suggested (on, admittedly, paltry evidence) that the market is itself a kind of magical entity, of which the merchants are really just appendages, like fingers on a hand.

Whatever their nature, they do have individual personalities but share a decidedly unusual sense of value and a cruel sense of humor. They are pleasant enough, or at least rarely overtly insulting and even then only as part of their sales patter, but usually have an air of knowing more than the buyers they deal with. They do keep their promises to the letter, although they sometimes enjoy perverting the intent, particularly if they believe someone is trying to cheat them. Some have suggested that the market is made up of capricious spirits playing an obscure practical joke on mortals, or perhaps attempting to teach them a painful lesson about greed and desire. Then again, they may be creatures who are vaguely similar to mortal races in shape but very alien in thought, trading (to them) flashy geegaws for riches that their buyers are too foolish to recognize.

Security at the market appears lax, at least on the surface. When the market comes to a new location, a few people are sometimes hired from the vicinity to help out in that regard. Dungeon delving adventurers may be engaged for such work, potentially in return for some modestly miraculous item at the end of the fair, though most delvers are wildly overqualified for the work. These temporary constables are charged with carrying off anyone who becomes excessively intoxicated on wine or faerie-dust, breaking up any fist-fights that may arise, and dealing with other run of the mill disturbances, rather than investigating and proactively heading off more devious thieves. Among wiser and more powerful visitors, it's generally understood that there's a sort of truce at the market, with violent disputes put on hold until the participants are outside its bounds, but that's a matter of social convention. If a demon prince and a grand high priest happen to run into one another, nobody's going to stop them from fighting.

The merchants themselves are quite sharp-eyed and will usually spot anyone trying to shoplift (Per for vendors starts at 16). It is said that some thieves are successful in the short term, but that stolen objects carry terrible curses with them. The visible security is also typically in no position to resist a concerted armed assault, as from dozens of bandits or a small army. But there is no record of such a thing happening; the rumors of curses may have something to do with that. Or, more ominously, perhaps no one who has attempted such a thing, or any witnesses, have lived to tell the tale.

# What You Can Buy

Everything sold at the Goblin Market is, in some way, otherworldly and at least faintly magical. The Goblin Market doesn't traffic in common goods, or even conventional riches such as gold, silk, and spices. Only the unique and, often, the impossible are on sale here.

Some of the items on sale at the market are relatively mundane (that is, without inherent exceptional powers) but made out of improbable materials. Most of the booths sell items like crystallized dreams, stone swords, bottled whispers, and cloaks made of mist. Such items will be roughly comparable in performance to their normal counterparts or somewhat superior, but may display some special properties (an ice sword will be cold to the touch but not melt in the sunlight or break any more than a metal one would; a cravat made of woven sunlight would choke and burn a vampire).

In addition to the exotic, the Goblin Fair sells the truly potent. Charms, talismans, potions, and all manner of other magical items are on sale here. Some are interesting but of minimal practical value: rugs with moving figurative patterns woven into them acting out a story, a "sundial" that indicates time by changing color rather than casting a shadow, a cooking pot that hums quietly to itself when warm. Others, though, will have immediate application: magical weapons and armor, fireball-hurling devices, charms of protection, and anything else one might find in a listing of magical items for a fantasy game.

All, though, have an unusual form. Some have a certain appropriateness. For example, an invisibility charm might come in the form of a candle, which casts a "light of invisibility" on its carrier as long as it is lit. Others are just peculiar. Instead of a flying broom or carpet, one might buy a spoon that will grow large enough that its user can sit in the bowl and fly away, or a cyclops' skull might have an impossibly large internal capacity, giving it the same uses as an enchanted bag of holding.

To create items for the Goblin Market, the GM could do worse than to roll on or at least consult the item tables in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables*** to pick peculiar objects and/or the tables of implausible materials in ***Dungeon Fantasy 8*** or ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 1: Glittering Prizes*** to pick weird materials. The implausible material tables might likewise be used by themselves to determine an object: a seashell, a block of wood, or a small, vibrating bundle of screams.

## Smash and Grab

Sooner or later, someone's greed will get the better of them, and they'll fall back on violence to put a shopkeeper down, grab a bunch of stuff, and run. What happens then? The mundane security is geared for drunks and rambunctious but unremarkable customers; guards from ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen,*** p. 21, wearing little or no armor and carrying not very lethal weapons like clubs and staffs are about what one might expect. The vendors themselves are a mixed bag. Some may be pushovers. Something resembling sages or cultists (***Dungeon Fantasy 15,*** pp. 15 and 18) with added Merchant skill is in order; they've got some mystical knowledge but very little useful in a fight. Others may be full-fledged wizards or other mystical professionals, built on standard 250-point templates or better, *plus* a few powerful abilities like Unkillable.

If rash thieves actually make off with some goods, the Goblin Market is unlikely to chase after them, but it may not have to. Given the inherently unusual nature of the goods sold there, anyone sweeping a bunch of loot into a bag and running off is likely to end up with some intriguing but incomprehensible geegaws which, as fate may have it, are not susceptible to the Analyze Magic spell. Indeed, many items have effects based on something other than the strictly magical (see *Supernatural Origins Table,* ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables,*** p. 50). And, of course, some of them might be cursed, sought after by formidable enemies, or have minds of their own. And anyone known to have stolen from the Goblin Market will never be able to return to get more information or have curses lifted . . . except, perhaps, for a *very* high price.

# What It Costs

The merchants of the Goblin Market do not covet gold and silver, or whatever is usually used for money in the setting, and they will sneer at anyone who offers them. They have some fondness for gemstones, though, and are willing to trade lesser items for them.

More often than not, though, the price of an item is an unusual object in trade. These objects may be of a quite common type (a daffodil, a copper coin, a lock of hair). However, there will almost invariably be conditions on the object's location, ownership, attributes, and the method of obtaining it which will make getting it unexpectedly difficult, or at least make the buyer suspect he's getting more than he bargained for. Some examples:

*Location:* A flower from Farmer Brown's field, a stone from the top of a distant mountain, a pound of dust from the moon.

*Ownership:* A lock of hair from the first stranger you meet; the finger-bones of a saint; the crown stolen from a dragon's hoard.

*Attributes:* A lock of hair from the tallest man at the market; a blue rose; a flaming pie.

*Method:* A lock of hair cut with a pair of golden shears; a flower picked at midnight; a child taken from its mother by an honest man.

Often, the object will have multiple conditions: for example, the tallest tree in the forest, cut down with a herring; or a lock of hair from the Great Cham's beard, cut with a silver razor at midnight by a singing woman. Not surprisingly, even the simplest conditions often result in difficult challenges. For example, if a buyer is told to get a lock of hair from the first stranger he meets, that stranger is likely to be a member of a hostile family or country (and will therefore be unlikely to do anything to help the buyer) or perhaps just a member of an intelligent species of amphibians or reptiles, and therefore completely hairless.

On the other hand, some things which seem impossible (hen's teeth or a stone which floats to the top of the sea) may eventually become available to particularly clever and observant buyers.

But the most powerful items (or at least the items that potential customers want most) require the buyer making a significant personal sacrifice, for example:

- Everything you own.
- Everything you have on you.
- Your spouse, best friend, firstborn, parent, or someone else in a close relationship.
- Your hand in marriage.
- A period of service (a year and a day, until the next full moon, etc., during which the customer must follow all of the merchant's orders; watch out for leap years!).
- An appendage (finger, foot, eye, etc.; see also "hand in marriage").
- Everything you know about a particular subject (may or may not be trivial: being 10 years old, boating, swordplay; depending on the price, this may result in the loss of skills, attribute points, or other traits).

The peddlers of the Goblin Market do not haggle. It's a "take it or leave it" kind of place, and Merchant skill is largely moot at the Market. Vendors may entertain *one* counter-offer for lesser items, but in general, their price is fixed. However, it won't change over time if the exchange can't take place on the spot. If a PC strikes a deal for a singing harp in exchange for that hair from the Great Cham's beard, he could spend decades (or longer, if he's immortal) obtaining the hair and be able to count on getting his harp. It's not clear how, but the merchants will know on sight if an object offered in exchange is counterfeit.

## In the Campaign

In a lower powered campaign, the market may be the only place where magical items can be readily purchased. In a higher powered campaign, the market will be a place to buy particularly notable or specialized magical items, or perhaps a place to attempt to buy powerful magical items at a better price; a cash-strapped adventurer in dire need of a Mace of Sharpness might decide that a purple daisy cut at dawn on the solstice, no matter how far he has to go to get it, is easier to get than a million gold pieces. Either way, the Goblin Market may be the only place to find the seemingly paradoxical item necessary to kill or at least stop an otherwise unstoppable monster. Is there a vampire who is only harmed by the sun at midnight? This is the place to get a ball of sunlight to use at any time.

Because of the peculiar nature of its wares and their prices, the Goblin Market generally works better as something that appears occasionally in adventures rather than being the magic shop down on the corner. It could easily be the object of quests, both in order to reach it and in order to pay its unusual prices. Even if the PCs don't intend to buy anything, it makes a good backdrop for other events. Magicians and would-be miracle workers flock to the market, hold secret councils on its outskirts, issue public challenges, settle duels and other affairs, and so on. And those who don't go in for mystical folderol can still meet all manner of interesting people there.

The market could, though, be the focus of a campaign. It presents many mysteries to be solved: who are the merchants, really? Are they in charge of their own destiny, or are they compelled by another power? Where do they get their wares? Why are they trading for the peculiar things they do, and what do they do with them? Anyone who can shed light on any of these questions is likely to be able to profit from their knowledge, but getting that knowledge means getting through a lot of hostile territory.

An interesting variation is to use the market as the center of a campaign, with adventurers as faerie merchant princes or hangers-on; they might act as a sort of cross between a merchant house and a hermetic cabal, doing business but in ways incomprehensible to ordinary mortals for very obscure ends. The market may be the result of a curse the adventurers will want to release themselves from, the very tip of an otherworldly commercial venture or magical rivalry (perhaps competing with gods, demons, and lone merchants trading livestock for magic beans), putting the heroes in conflict with other great powers, or a sophisticated tool to monitor and control the world, making the delvers spies and political manipulators.

> *"Dad, will they ever come back?"*
>
> *"No. And yes." Dad tucked away his harmonica. "No not them. But yes, other people like them. Not in a carnival. God knows what shape they'll come in next. But sunrise, noon, or at the latest, sunset tomorrow they'll show. They're on the road."*
>
> *– Ray Bradbury,*
> ***Something Wicked This Way Comes***

## Further Reading


Bradbury, Ray. *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (Simon & Schuster, 2017). The carnival in the tale resembles a Goblin Market gone very, very bad.

Gaiman, Neil and Vess, Charles. *Stardust* (HarperCollins, 2008). The action begins and ends with events around a traveling faerie marketplace. The floating market in *Neverwhere* bears some resemblance to the Goblin Market as well.

Rosetti, Christina. "The Goblin Market." An allegorical poem written in 1862 about the delights and dangers of otherworldly commerce.

Underkoffler, Chad. *Dead Inside* (Atomic Sock Monkey Press, 2004). The Exroads Market resembles a relatively benign Goblin Market.

Vance, Jack. *Lyonesse* (Berkley, 1984); *The Green Pearl* (Berkley, 1985); *Madouc* (Underwood-Miller, 1989). The books feature a stationary marketplace where wonders are sold.

# Kunruk Above/ Kunruk Below

## by Matt Riggsby

Kunruk is a ritual center, the object of pilgrimages and grand ceremonies. Temples and sacred enclosures dominate its skyline. A constant stream of pilgrims makes its way to Kunruk to bathe in the holy waters and be transported in religious visions.

Kunruk is a center of industry. Rich deposits of ore are close at hand, and volcanic vents provide the heat necessary to turn it into fine metals. The metalwork of Kunruk is known far and wide.

Kunruk is two cities. Kunruk Above, the center of worship, sits under the baking sun, open to visitors from all directions. Kunruk Below, the center of industry, is a settlement of dwarves, mining and manufacturing in natural caves and tunnels dug through softer stones deep underground. They coexist, with the surface-dwellers wary of what the dwarves might be doing underground and the dwarves skittish about the volume of human traffic so close above their heads. But many feel that the coexistence is a fragile thing, and is little more than a technological development or religious movement away from being shattered.

## Geography and Land Use

Kunruk is situated in a patch of jagged hills between areas of rolling grassland in the west and desert in the east. In a few places, deep wells provide irrigation which turns prairie into good farmland, but for the most part, the land is better for herding and supports a great many goats and sheep. A significant amount of water now makes its way to the city through a network of small canals and, closer to the town itself, raised aqueducts and tunnels for water, so farming is declining while herding is on the increase.

The site of the town itself is set on several low, rounded hills which are surrounded by higher, sharp-ridged ones, with gaps providing natural approaches from several different directions. This puts Kunruk in a poor defensive position (attackers could easily cut off the city by taking the surrounding hilltops), but it provides a bit of an advantage for bringing in water. A number of temple complexes in Kunruk are surrounded by walls, and some are even practical defenses rather than just symbolic dividers between sacred and profane space, but the city as a whole has no defensive walls.

Kunruk's geology is jumbled and chaotic, with a complex of volcanic pipes intruding into limestone and surprising patches of granite and metamorphic rocks. Water activity has cut through a great deal of limestone, leaving caves and underground reservoirs. A low level of volcanic activity has continued, sufficient to heat some of the water to high temperatures and bring lava close to (but not up to) the surface. The region is given to frequent minor earthquakes, although serious ones are very few and very far between.

Kunruk Above has a population of about 15,000 permanent residents, with at least 5,000 visitors at any given time, rising as high as 35,000 during particularly favorable months. Most are pilgrims, but some are "seasonal" residents who support the pilgrim trade. The region around it is dotted with small villages. Kunruk Below is significantly smaller, with a population of about 4,000 dwarves, all of whom live in and around a single grand cavern.

## History

A small oracular temple could be found at Kunruk at least as far back as seven centuries ago. Religious pilgrims took advantage of gases arising from fissures in the ground to have ecstatic visions. The site is also relatively rich in water, with a number of pools on the surface, so it served as a landmark for some cross-desert trade, though most trans-desert travel used easier routes well to the north and south. A small town, hardly more than a village with facilities for travelers, supported the temple and caravanserai.

Kunruk became more prominent three centuries ago, after the ruler of a nearby kingdom passed by the temple, dedicated to the goddess Syvella, and sought guidance on his choice of marriage partners. The wife he chose based on that experience quickly bore him several children of notable abilities, and with each one the king endowed a new shrine at Kunruk, which together came to be known as the Four Sisters (confusingly, only the first three children were girls, but nobody thought the Three Sisters and One Brother sounded good). The royal attention soon attracted other visitors to the shrines. Once an obscure backwater and stop along the way, Kunruk became a destination in its own right.

As Kunruk's fame grew, so did the number of visiting pilgrims and the facilities to accommodate them. Inns were constructed, the existing temples grew into large temple complexes, new shrines sprang up around the fringes of the town, and programs of spiritual exercises developed to meet the needs of the pilgrims. Tiled tanks were constructed to hold water from the sacred springs, and enclosures were built so that pilgrims could breathe their fill of sacred, hallucinogenic vapors in an orderly setting.

The town also evolved something like a government. The leaders of the various temples formed a council for regulating visitors, negotiating for food imports, and so on. Since other enterprises in Kunruk depended on the temples, the operators of inns, food stalls, and so on accepted their authority.

The next significant events in the history of Kunruk took place about 200 miles to the northeast, where a mountain range cuts through the desert. About 200 years ago, a dynastic conflict in the large dwarven community there stopped just short of civil war. A large faction accepted exile and set out to find a new home.

They traveled through miles of previously unexplored caverns, scouting for favorable conditions. After a long journey (famously lasting two years and three days), they came upon a suitable place and their High Chief (so the leading dwarf was called) declared that they had found their new home. Large caverns would provide suitable space for growing nutritious mushrooms and building new homes. A fast-running underground river turned out to be a distant tributary to a network of subterranean waterways which could connect them to other dwarven settlements. Iron ore was plentiful, and there were scattered but rich veins of copper, lead, and other metals. Volcanic vents provided them with useful sources of heat to supplement standard furnaces. No orcs or other monsters were evidently at hand. It might not support a dwarven metropolis, but it was more than enough for a good-sized town.

It came as quite a surprise to everyone involved, then, when a team of dwarven workers digging a ventilation shaft emerged in the middle of a temple courtyard. The confused reaction which followed, with hallucinating pilgrims describing monsters rising out of the ground and dwarven miners who hadn't been on the surface in years describing a palace full of madmen, did not get the relationship off to a good start. Although hostilities might have broken out, cooler heads eventually prevailed but the tension didn't entirely go away.

Both sides had anxieties about the other. The surface-dwellers were horrified at the possibility of the dwarves diverting the hot springs and volcanic vents and cutting off what they saw as sacred emanations of the earth. The dwarves, already insecure about the poor economic footing of their new settlement (at this point, they had constructed at best makeshift homes and had only the beginnings of an agricultural system), feared that they could be overwhelmed by a horde of well-supplied religious fanatics.

Both fears were at least a little justified. The first 50 years or so saw a series of crises as vents and hot springs were, in fact, interrupted, albeit largely inadvertently. The complex geology of Kunruk Below, as it was coming to be called, made it difficult to predict how the dwarves' underground work would affect the surface (and, some believe, they didn't put in much effort to find out anyway). There were inevitable retaliations, with attacks on dwarves resulting in deaths on both sides.

It was commerce which eventually calmed things down. Though the tension between the dwarves and the temples continued at a low level, the merchants made many new friends. As they do everywhere, the dwarves produced high-quality manufactured goods, and they needed a market. The aboveground merchants quickly found that the dwarves had a taste for mutton and a need for wood and charcoal, which they could produce faster and cheaper than the dwarves. Merchants who made Kunruk a regular stop on their routes grew increasingly wealthy as they solidified their relationship with the dwarves.

Of course, this has led to other conflicts. Over the past century, the merchants have become wealthy and powerful enough to challenge the authority of the temples in some ways. The merchants are still dependent on the temples to provide them with customers, but the temples rely on the merchants to supply the pilgrims who enrich them both, and the merchants have a significant income from trading in dwarf-made goods. Underground, the dwarves are facing their own problems. Despite being a conservative group among a conservative people, the need for extensive trade has caused cracks in their old social order.

Finally, there's a recent trend which is setting people on edge more often: monsters. Over the past three or four years, there's been a notable uptick in the number of dangerous beasts in the region, both in the tunnels underneath and on the surface. Some believe it's a consequence of high levels of traffic attracting creatures eager for mortal flesh, others blame the dwarves for opening tunnels which should have been left alone, and some just regard the whole thing as signs from the gods about a variety of moral matters. No matter what the cause, though, there's pressure growing to increase the number of official guards, and mercenaries to escort pilgrims are in demand.

*All of us are pilgrims on this earth.*

*– Maxim Gorky*

## Politics and Government

Kunruk Above is an unabashed religious government, though it's government by religious officials rather than government operating under specific religious mandates. Traditionally, the greatest power in Kunruk Above is the alliance of the five largest, oldest temples, whose policies are determined by a body called the Synod. The Four Sisters each send a single representative, while the temple of Syvella sends two. Decisions of the Synod require no more than one dissenting vote, essentially giving the temple of Syvella veto power.

The Synod acts as both a government and a sort of corporation, organizing food and water supplies for the major temples and their extensive facilities for visitors. Priests are all empowered to oversee legal proceedings and mediate disputes, although the Synod will claim jurisdiction over particularly sensitive issues and sometimes acts as a court of appeal.

As the major economic power in its area, and without significant neighbors, Kunruk's authority extends as far as the Synod can project force, a radius of perhaps 30 miles. There are no formal borders (Kunruk's authority slowly gives way to villages too small for anyone to care about and traditional tribal authorities), but Kunruk will take a dim view of blatant criminality close enough to the city to cause problems with the pilgrim routes.

The increasingly powerful merchant class has yet to directly challenge the power of the temples. However, the trade in dwarven goods makes them less beholden to the temples for contracts and other approvals, so they've been driving increasingly hard bargains. Rumor has it that some have used their new wealth to influence priests whose opinions and morals seem sufficiently flexible. It seems unlikely that a merchant or association of merchants would make a direct play for power, but one never knows.

Kunruk Below's government is based on dwarven forms which are still being adapted to a relatively small population. The position of High Chief is theoretically open to the head of any family upon acclamation by the people and examination by a council of elder craftsmen. In practice, the position has proved hereditary, with the five High Chiefs of Kunruk Below over the past centuries being one another's siblings or children. The High Chief has a wide range of unquestioned judicial and executive powers, but new laws, particularly new taxes, must be approved by the council of craftsmen. The position is also a lifetime appointment, but it is customary for High Chiefs to retire before their health declines with age.

Although the succession of High Chiefs has never been seriously contested, a class war is simmering over membership on the council of craftsmen. The craftsmen are heads of extended households, chosen for a combination of seniority, wisdom, and demonstrated ability in their crafts. Usually, the available pool of senior craftsmen is a tiny fraction of the population. In traditional settlements, households are very large, and many families spend more time digging tunnels, mining ore, or growing the mushrooms which form the bulk of the dwarven diet. However, the conflict which formed this faction split any number of families, resulting in a large number of small households. Perhaps more importantly, the extensive existing cave networks and close economic ties to Kunruk Above mean that poorer households, which might otherwise have to concentrate on lower-class trades, can work on metalcraft themselves. The result has been that, just as in Kunruk Above, a growing middle class is threatening the power of the traditional aristocracy.

### *Armed Forces and Law Enforcement*

Although it has no regular armies (Kunruk lacks both territorial ambitions and nearby enemies), Kunruk Above maintains a small force of guards to protect the considerable riches of the temples. Most are mercenaries, but mercenaries paid well enough to ensure their loyalty. The Synod usually leaves the guarding to the guards, not bothering with petty operational details, but command is ultimately in "civilian" hands. The Synod has foresightedly hired guards as individuals or small groups and changes assignments frequently, to help prevent other loyalties from arising. Likewise, there is no overall military commander who might gain the loyalty of all the troops. Instead, several officers in charge of various day-to-day operations answer to the Synod. It would be a poor arrangement in wartime, but it seems to work well enough for the simple security work the guards do. Priests act as a judiciary, with the Synod acting as a court of appeal.

The guards are occasionally called on to help priests enforce the law outside of the temples proper and in the hinterland (for example, to collect taxes from an uncooperative family compound), but merchants employ guards of their own to help keep order in the markets and inns. Privately employed guards work for individual merchant houses, but by the laws of the city may be called on to help keep order in case of general disturbances. There are about 700 professional fighting men in the city, split about two to one between temple and private guards. There is no regularity in equipment or fighting style, but most are veteran warriors.

Kunruk Below has slightly more formal security arrangements. Every family is required to send an adult, traditionally the youngest adult in the household, to regular (every 10 days) drills with weapons and armor. If required to send out forces, Kunruk Below could field a reasonably skilled if mostly green troop of around 400 heavy infantry. If directly attacked, all able-bodied adults would be called on to fight as well, bringing the number up to something like 1500. Since the elders have spent their time in the militia, they'd be relatively skilled fighters as well.

Although the militia could theoretically be called on to quell disturbances, the need has never arisen in Kunruk Below. Instead, law enforcement is carried out by a group of censors, magistrates answering to the High Chief. The censors investigate wrong-doing and political orthodoxy, as well as inspect craft work before it goes to market. Nobody likes the censors (they're very nosy, which is doubly annoying in clannish dwarven society), but they carry a great deal of responsibility to ensure that standards established by the council of craftsmen are upheld.

## Industry and Commerce

Kunruk Above's largest industry by far is religious tourism. Most inhabitants of the town make a living working in hostelries and drinking shops, selling provisions, acting as guides, making amulets and other religious souvenirs, and so on. The temples regulate much of this traffic, though they only directly control a portion of it. There are also more than the usual number of scribes and artisans involved in building trades. Many pilgrims come in search of divine healing, so in addition to oracular and general religious services, the temples provide a great deal of health care. The pilgrims engage in more or less complex regimens of prayer, ceremony, diet, and rest or exercise. A large minority of priests have some skill in medicine.

The temples also bring in a great deal of food from both the surrounding region and abroad. The nearest navigable stream (and that only by barges with very shallow drafts) comes within 11 miles of Kunruk. A small town, casually called "Kunruk Port," has grown up at that point on the stream for the convenience of both travelers and shippers, and on the last leg of its journey most commerce travels along a road between Kunruk and the transshipment point.

Kunruk Below produces fine metalwork: weapons, armor, tools, jewelry, and so on. The bulk of their work is in iron, which is particularly common in the most accessible tunnels, and they are best known for producing fine armor and small quantities of remarkable stonework. A family of dwarves has done a notably good job decorating the facades of several buildings at one of the Four Sisters, and there is talk of hiring more for other buildings, including the increasingly luxurious homes of merchants. Their jewelry is only middling quality by dwarven standards, but excellent for any other race; most of their items are of a more practical nature.

Most valuable metals must be imported, since there's currently not enough native supply to meet demand. Kunruk Below also imports significant amounts of wood and charcoal and most of its food.

This last has been a point of contention among the dwarves. Although the council of craftsmen has traditionally favored the contact, since it enriches them with a high volume of trade, the High Chiefs have regarded it as a strategic weakness, and a vocal minority of the lower classes is notably xenophobic. A majority of dwarves is torn on the issue, uneasy about dependency on outsiders, but unwilling to return to the low-status jobs they'd have to perform in order to become self-sufficient.

## Religion

For a town built around religion, Kunruk Above is surprisingly nondenominational. The reason for this is that the spot it occupies has typically been surrounded by regions following different but all theologically permissive faiths. That is, the societies most likely to send people to Kunruk (and to build temples there) may have their preferred gods, but none of them hold that those are the only gods. Consequently, one can find temples and shrines dedicated to an earth goddess native to Kunruk, a harvest god from a region to the southwest, a trio of faceless principles of nature (fire, wind, and water) from the east, and so on.

This is not to say that there is no competition between religions. Each temple quietly promotes the virtues of its own deities, listing miracles which have been performed and souls enlightened. However, the competition is carried out in the form of advertising, not violent sectarian conflict. Moreover, it's the smaller, less influential temples and shrines which shill for visitors. The members of the Synod are more restrained in their self-publicizing, relying more on reputation and control of public affairs.

The dwarves, for the most part, keep themselves apart from aboveground religious issues. They're willing to accept that the gods worshiped in Kunruk Above exist, but maintain that those gods are not the gods for dwarves. Instead, they venerate their ancestors, believing that they are far more interested in the welfare of their descendants than any distant deity would be.

## Shopping in Kunruk

Kunruk Above is a good place to pick up a broad variety of religious goods: holy symbols (regular, blessed, or high), portable shrines, etc. It's mostly imported, but it all collects there. Unless they require custom decorative embellishments of +10 CF or greater, unenchanted items of a religious nature do not count as special orders in Kunruk. Kunruk is also an excellent place for medical care. Its temples of healing can relieve any mundane affliction. Wound can be healed in any number of temples for $2 per HP, curses removed for $100 each, and crippled or lost limbs restored for $1,500.

Likewise, dwarven gear and high-quality metalwork are easily available. Dwarven weapons, armor, and other items like the dwarven theodolite (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables,*** p. 24) as well as fine-quality weapons made mostly or completely out of metal (swords, knives, axes, but not bows, arrows, spears, or polearms) are not just available over the counter rather than as special orders, they're even available at a 10% discount! Of course, anyone selling such gear in Kunruk receives a 10% lower price.

## Society and Culture

Kunruk used to have a social character defined by tight-knit family groups living independently of one another in large compounds, herding animals or growing grain, fighting the occasional feud eventually settled by marriages and payments, and making donations to temples in return for mediation of otherwise intractable disputes. Because of the growth of the temples and the rapid transformation of Kunruk into an important pilgrimage site, much of that has eroded. Traditional family compounds in the hinterland still supply the city, but the extended family in Kunruk is under heavy attack. Eager younger family members frequently strike out on their own to make personal fortunes as tour guides, hostelers, and the like. Some families have survived by creating networks of businesses: a guide directs travelers to his uncle's inn, who recommends buying provisions from his brother, and so on.

Since literacy is relatively high as a result of religious education, Kunruk Above has developed the rudiments of popular literature. Pamphlets, usually four to 16 pages, are rented for a pittance (plus refundable deposit) from "wordshops," small booths where the proprietor keeps a chest of chapbooks and a ledger of rentals. Visitors read selections of useful prayers and healthful regimens, while natives go more for favorite folk tales and stories of adventure.

Despite increasing class struggle, the dwarves have maintained one core value: pride in workmanship. Craft skill is still the sign of a suitable candidate for marriage, political office, and general wisdom. They have nothing in the way of performing arts and this particular community has retained only a few of the classics of dwarven literature, but there is constant silent competition in the form of craft. Relief frescoes on houses, elaborately crafted lanterns, ornate buckles, and so on are always noted and the appearance of one's house and ornaments is always subtly judged by other dwarves.

## Cuisine

The native cuisine around Kunruk is fairly dull, consisting largely of flatbread, several onion-like vegetables (frequently simmered to enhance their mild sweetness), various beans cooked and mashed to a paste, and small quantities of mutton, often spiced, cured, and used in small shavings as a flavoring rather than a substantial ingredient on its own. The region produces a moderate quantity of wine, which is a staple of the local diet, usually watered down.

Nevertheless, the fame of the temples and the heavy traffic in pilgrims have introduced a great many new ingredients and cuisines. A quick pass through the markets of Kunruk Above can turn up a variety of other meats and meat animals, vegetables, whole grains and flours from a variety of cereals, even fish (smoked, salted, or dried, of course). Enough pilgrims come from nearby nations that several inns cater to their tastes, so it's easy to find food to suit just about anyone's tastes.

For the dwarves of Kunruk Below, staple foodstuffs are varieties of fungus which need only rock to grow, taking the place of grains in human societies. However, the tunnels of Kunruk Below don't support as many strains of fungus and their byproducts as the tunnels from which the dwarves came, so the traditional dwarvish diet is restricted to a monotonous few crops. The basic foods in Kunruk Above and Below are therefore quite similar, but are prepared in traditional dwarven styles Below, with large cuts of meat more common than seasoned mutton shavings and most foods roasted or fried rather than boiled, and the dwarves prefer ale they make themselves to the local wine.

# Things to See and Do

The upper and lower parts of the city have different attitudes toward visitors. Since it's a pilgrimage site, Kunruk Above is as welcoming to visitors as a low-tech city can be. Kunruk Below, though, is more of an industrial facility, and the residents aren't necessarily trusting of outsiders.

## *In Kunruk Above*

There are plenty of places to find a meal fitting just about any dietary requirements, a place to bed down for the night to fit any budget, entertainments and conversation in many languages, and merchants who won't bat an eye at foreign currency. Here are some specific points of interest.

### The Synod Temples

The temple to Syvella and the Four Sisters have similar designs. Each has a triangular plaza in front, with gates into a walled compound at the apex and elaborate reliefs and statues along the two sides leading up to it (the side of the triangle opposite the apex is open to the streets). Through the gates is a broad, paved walkway flanked by gardens and small shrines, leading to the temple proper. The temple and central avenue are surrounded by special-purpose shrines, lodging for priests and important (or high-paying) pilgrims, offices, buildings for baths and taking vapors, treasuries and storerooms, and gardens. The temple complexes are open to all during daylight hours, but some parts (treasuries and private offices, for example) are closed to the general public, and only clergy and selected pilgrims may stay overnight.

### Sacred Baths

Several hot springs under Kunruk have been harnessed for neatly tiled and decorated nympharia in the temples. The baths are famous for healing powers, and visitors to the temples frequently wash or soak in the waters during their visits. They're typically attached to sizable temple establishments with space for many pilgrims, but some, particularly beyond the outskirts of town, are tiny shrines which claim to combine the power of the healing waters with favorable geomantic influences.

### Holy Vapors

The original attraction of Kunruk was underground chambers where one could breathe vapors coming from the ground and receive sacred visions. Each of the temples of the Synod has several cells where pilgrims may, for sufficient donations, have their own mystic visions.

This is a trying experience. The process involves about an hour of vivid hallucinations (see p. B429) followed by a loss of 8 FP, which may be regained normally. Roll against HT to successfully piece together enough recollections to work with, then against IQ to make sense of them, as with the Oracle advantage (p. B72). A session costs about $100 if available at all (lots of people want to know the future), though adventurers working for a congregation may request such a session as an AR (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds,*** p. 7). Delvers who have Doesn't Breathe or Immunity to Metabolic Hazards are resistant to the vapors and cannot have oracular visions.

### Gateway Circus

The way from Kunruk Above to Kunruk Below is at the southern outskirts of the city, the Gateway Circus. The Circus is a circular pit about 25 feet deep and over 150 feet across. A 15-foot-wide spiral ramp, adorned with an ornate stone railing, makes a grand curve almost entirely around the pit. The floor at the bottom, well below ground level but still open to the sky, is used as a marketplace; this is the first place to go to buy goods from the dwarves.

## *In Kunruk Below*

Kunruk Below is less well adapted to visitors, and the dwarves themselves aren't terribly happy to see strangers. Technically, humans are only allowed to visit the central market in Kunruk Below freely. Special permission is required to enter the deeper tunnels.

### Residential Cavern

The ramp from the Gateway Circus continues in a broad spiral down a tunnel another 40 feet or so, through fortified gateways to an opening 20 feet above the floor of a large, domed cavern, with the ramp extending down to a plaza the size of the Gateway Circus. The cavern, a vaguely oval blob about 250 by 300 yards with a ceiling up to 50 feet above floor level, houses most of the dwarven settlement. Though this would be fairly small for a human settlement, the dwarves have made the most of the space. The cavern is filled with tightly packed stone houses three or four stories tall lit by bioluminescent fungi or magically glowing crystals, with semi-public workshop spaces on the ground floor and residential spaces higher up. A few extended families, distributed between houses, have built covered walkways over the streets or access tunnels under them, allowing them to move from one house to another without going "outside." Outsiders don't formally need permission to come here, but they'll be questioned and watched closely, and they can't enter any other tunnels without permission and an escort.

### Ore Tunnels

Several large tunnels lead out from the residential cavern and quickly branch and twist, following veins of various ores. The dwarves have an elaborate set of symbols indicating where the tunnels lead, but someone not intimately familiar with dwarven mining practices will quickly become lost. Even other dwarves are likely to note that they don't know the specific conventions of the Kunruk system of marking tunnels, even if they are, broadly speaking, familiar with the symbols in use. Mined out tunnels are also in use growing edible fungi. They typically cover the walls and ceilings, with a carefully tended path on the ground kept clear so that people can pass through easily. Though most of the population lives in the residential cavern, a few small families, stand-offish even by dwarven standards, have established homes in disused areas of the ore tunnels.

### Vent Shafts

All of the tunnels, residential and otherwise, are punctuated here and there by ventilation shafts leading to the surface. They're often concealed, but since most are excavated by hand (except for those taking advantage of natural fissures in the rock), they're usually large enough for someone to squeeze through. Small smithies are set up in a number of locations in the ore tunnels immediately beneath ventilation shafts.

### Foundry

In addition to the ore tunnels, there's one other major branch off of the residential cavern. It heads north and sharply downwards, leading to what's usually called the foundry. Every dwarven home has at least one small hearth suitable for metalwork, but there are also large industrial centers such as this one. In an extremely hot cavern, the dwarves take advantage of roiling pools of lava to raise the temperature of furnaces or simply increase air flow through them. This volcanic resource allows them to reach high temperatures more quickly and cheaply than the norm and is a point of pride among the dwarves of Kunruk Below. Unfortunately for outsiders, the design of the furnaces is a dwarven craft secret, so no one other than the natives is allowed in.



## Kunruk in the Campaign

Kunruk is, first and foremost, a destination. It's a good place to go for decent equipment (particularly for characters who are otherwise in the middle of nowhere), provisions, trade opportunities, and mystical advice. If they're not going there for reasons of their own, PCs could easily be hired as guards for a caravan of merchants or pilgrims. Kunruk is also an excellent venue for diplomacy and, therefore, intrigue. Adventures could include negotiations between the Synod and the High Chief, mercantile wrangling, class, occupational, and generational conflict among the city's factions, diplomats from nearby nations meeting on Kunruk Above's neutral and sacred ground, and fighting the occasional monster popping up from the tunnels.

Kunruk might also serve as a base of operations, although that's perhaps not the best use. It's a long way from anything else interesting, and hardly anyone in Kunruk is from Kunruk, so while it's a nice place to visit, not nearly as many people actually live there. Still, PCs could be agents of the Synod, merchant importers resident in Kunruk, or among the few dwarves who go much beyond the Gateway Circus. Here are some other ideas for adventures involving Kunruk:

*Holy Cleansing:* An oracle has spoken, and Kunruk must be cleansed of the impure. That means the dwarves. This causes a considerable ruckus in Kunruk Above, where the population is divided on the authenticity of the oracle. It causes an even greater ruckus in Kunruk Below, where the dwarves have blocked the tunnel from the Gateway Circus. If this turns into actual fighting, it will likely become an ugly guerrilla conflict, with outnumbered dwarves trying to fend off less skilled but far more plentiful humans invading their dark, narrow tunnels.

*Missionary Man:* For all the decades they've lived there, the dwarves have appeared immune to the fumes which seep through the rocks and cause ecstatic visions in humans. That's about to change. A few dwarves, working in obscure corners of the Foundry or the northern ore tunnels, start to have visions themselves. They now claim that their ancestors and distant gods of the earth are providing them with guidance. They'll almost certainly be at odds with their elders, and definitely with the Synod. As if the old factions aren't complicated enough, a new line of revelation will cause them to split into more factions, both above and below.

*"Historically, Taunton is a part of Minehead already":* In the centuries since the dwarves of Kunruk Below settled in their caverns, things have changed in their homeland. An expansionist faction has taken control, they've tracked down their exiled faction, and they want to take control. The dwarves of Kunruk Below are looking at a likely invasion, and the people of Kunruk Above are looking at, at best, a violent conflict beneath their feet. Will they aid their stand-offish neighbors? Will they have a choice?

# Saroo

## by Matt Riggsby

Somewhere in the tropical seas is Saroo, the fabled source of the world's finest ambergris. Though difficult to locate, even with good maps, you may eventually find it. From a distance, it appears to be a steep-sided island of moderate size, covered with deep green vegetation with a few rough, rocky outcroppings peeking through. A small town, which seems to be built on piers and pontoons, hugs the edge of the island, with a few small huts barely visible through the vegetation here and there on the island itself. As you approach it more closely, you may be surprised by a distinctive, although not necessarily unpleasant, musky odor. But you'll be more surprised when the island opens some of its eyes and looks back at you.

## Geography and Land Use

Saroo is roughly oval, about two miles long, with surface area of about three square miles. It is comprised of a single hill with a sharp central ridge reaching a height of up to 300 feet along the length of the oval. The terrain is relatively steep at the shoreline and along the ridge, but fairly level, if a bit bumpy, in most of the interior. The island is covered with a very dark, exceptionally fertile soil which supports a wide range of extremely thick vegetation. Indeed, the vegetation grows all the way down to the shore with no sandy margin by the water.

The land appears to be completely uncultivated, with multiple layers of underbrush and jungle canopy. While it is true that the land is not tilled, a great many of the plants have some practical use and most of those are edible. It seems likely that generations of inhabitants have selectively removed less desirable plants, leaving only more useful ones behind. As a result, although the inhabitants make extensive use of the jungle and get a great deal of food from it, they are ultimately gatherers on the island, not agriculturalists. Nevertheless, they get the bulk of their food from fishing and supplement their fishing and gathering with several varieties of cultivated seaweed. That said, plants grow with exceptional speed here; the effect is similar to the Essential Earth spell (***GURPS Magic,*** p. 53), though the effect does not persist with soil samples taken away from the island.

Only a fraction of the island's buildings are built on the island proper. Instead, the inhabitants maximize the amount of valuable jungle available by anchoring complexes of floating piers around the edges. They build homes and storehouses atop the piers and grids for the cultivation of seaweed underneath. The buildings on land are mostly temples, homes of the rich and, inland, shelters for the ambergris mines. The total population is about 9,000, and there appears to be room and resources enough for at least a few more.

The disconcerting thing about the island is that it moves. And rather than just drifting with the current, it moves under its own power. Saroo, or more properly the Saroo, is a vast living being of such tremendous age that it has accumulated layers of soil from blowing dust and organic debris (it is rumored that some trees grow as well as they do because their roots have penetrated Saroo's skin and draw nutrients from it). The Saroo follows a long annual migration through tropical seas, never coming too close to the mainland, although it passes well within sight of small islands. It goes at an average pace of about five knots, sometimes speeding up, sometimes slowing down or even stopping. It has been known to travel at several times that speed on occasion, outpacing the fastest ships.

> *You cannot speak of ocean to a well-frog, – the creature of a narrower sphere.*
>
> *– Chuang Tzu*

## History

It is believed that the first inhabitants of Saroo were simple islanders who lived by fishing and desultory cultivation. Conflicting legends cast those inhabitants variously as refugees from war, chosen people rescued by their god from a cataclysm, and simply fortunate wanderers who happened to find a convenient home. However they came there, they settled down quickly, feeling that a moving home was a small price to pay for plentiful fishing. Moreover, they found a number of goods for lucrative trade with more civilized nations, most notably ambergris deposits.

The original residents had no leaders as such, only "big men," notably persuasive and charismatic individuals who usually managed to get their way when group decisions needed to be made. The closest thing they had to authority was the shaman, who was charged with propitiating the many spirits controlling various aspects of the world and interpreting omens. It's fairly clear that the shamans' first duty became maintaining relations with the Saroo, who had become by far the most important figure in an infinitely large pantheon. With an increasing focus on the Saroo as their primary divinity, it was inevitable that the shamans began to exert more influence over the day-to-day lives of the islanders.

More and more, they came to direct the use of goods, public and private activities, and the organization of society in ways they believed would please the god on which their people lived, justifying it on the grounds of direct communication from the Saroo itself.

Although some residents may have grumbled under the increasingly heavy yoke of religious domination, the shamans may very well have been onto something. The inhabitants of the Saroo certainly enjoy remarkable wealth, good health, and a pleasant climate. Moreover, the Saroo has never been occupied by a hostile power. Not for long, at any rate. A few centuries ago, the Saroo passed near the territory of an aggressive kingdom with a strong navy. An expedition of several ships was sent to seize the island to secure its resources, take the natives away to sell into slavery, and if at all possible learn how the Saroo might be guided or otherwise put to more practical use. Not being great warriors, the inhabitants were quickly overcome and many fled to hide in the jungle.

The shaman at the time, who had fallen captive, was told to order his people out of hiding or else serve as an example of what would happen to those who resisted the invaders. The shaman defied them, claiming that his god would protect him and anyone who shed his blood would be cursed. The invaders reacted predictably and set out to drag the hiding natives out of the jungle. Within the hour, the story goes, there was a great shaking, and the Saroo sank quickly under the water, drowning the invaders and dragging their ships down in the resulting whirlpools. The only survivors were a number of natives who had hidden in natural gaps under the Saroo's surface, which, to their surprise, sealed themselves up when the Saroo submerged. The event left the island partly defoliated and the few survivors gasping for air, but they were free of foreign domination.

But despite some evidence of divine favor, the shamans also showed an increasing tendency toward madness. A number of shamanistic rituals in regions the Saroo passes through, the likely home of the early inhabitants, involve self-induced trances and frenzies. It seems likely that the shamans' altered states of consciousness did, in fact, attune them to the Saroo's thoughts. However, those thoughts were sufficiently alien as to make the unprepared human recipients less and less sane. At the height of their political power, they became so unhinged as to be incapable of directing their society. The shamans became something like figureheads, with interaction with the people filtered through a small priestly bureaucracy. Their decrees still have the force of law, but their obscure meanings have become the subject of contentious interpretation.

The stage was set for the return of the big men. Behind the proclamations of the shamans, the big men remained important figures in society, helping to arrange marriages, mediate disputes, organize work parties, and so on. With the shamans unable to coherently order their people, the big men rose to prominence, and this time in a society with a more established sense of social order. Calling themselves "elders," (although there were no particular age requirements; many so-called elders continue to be as young as their late twenties), a number of prominent individuals slowly took over the day-to-day tasks of administering the island and, more importantly, making decisions about how to distribute the considerable income from the ambergris trade.

For the past two centuries or so, the elders have administered, if not ruled, their island in relative peace. It has not been completely without problems, of course. Harsh weather is an ongoing concern, and the town has had to withstand some particularly damaging typhoons. And despite the storied fate of the foreign invaders many centuries ago, the Saroo appears not to notice quick raids, even particularly violent ones. Pirate raids are a constant danger; two generations ago, a particularly vicious group managed to put large parts of the town to the torch, requiring the natives to cut a great many floating piers loose to save the remainder. More subtle influence is also a danger. Where force of arms will not succeed, more than one foreign power has attempted to buy rulership of the Saroo, either through fomenting civil unrest or directly influencing the elders.

A more severe threat to the elders has arisen in recent years. Though they have been gibbering recluses for centuries, the shamans may be returning to their senses. The past three shamans have had an unusual number of lucid moments, and they're starting to issue proclamations which the elders can't talk their way out of. And in recent years, the Saroo has been visiting cooler waters. There have been no huge changes yet, but there's an uneasy feeling on what is usually a carefree island that what it's all leading up to won't be nearly as sunny as the past years.

## The Saroo

Although the natives regard it as a living god and leave it at that, the nature of the Saroo is a matter of considerable debate for outsiders. Many question that it's a god, but its extreme resistance to magical scrying is undeniable. It is difficult to locate with information-gathering magic, and such spells are utterly incapable of penetrating its substance.

In some ways, the Saroo appears related to reptiles or fish. Beneath a substantial layer of soil, the Saroo's surface is a tough, rocky layer five to 10 feet thick, in interlocking scales 10 to 30 yards across. However, there are numerous pores and gaps between the plates, providing limited access to subskin layers. Those areas seem warmer than one would expect underground areas to be, making some suspect that the Saroo is warm-blooded.

*Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean – roll!*
*Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain . . .*

*– Lord Byron*

These conjectures are not helped by a near total lack of information about the Saroo's anatomy. Something like two thirds of the Saroo is submerged, and most of it, so far as observers can tell, is covered with thick layers of barnacles and coral-like growths and trailing forests of seaweed many yards long. Patterns of current suggest that it has between 16 and 22 fins or flippers deep underwater with which it propels itself. It also has a flexible, segmented tail, about a mile long with a flattened paddle at the tip, which may play a role in steering. The tail is usually submerged, but it rises above the water every few months to slap the water a time or two, then sink again. It is not even known whether or not the Saroo has a mouth, although it is generally assumed that it consumes a great many fish from the shoals through which it swims. One possibility is that the Saroo has many mouths around its underside.

There is also little indication what kind of sensory equipment the Saroo has. It is unknown if it can hear, smell, taste, sense heat and cold, the force of currents, or almost anything else. The only sense it does fairly clearly possess is vision. It has a number of knobby, domed outcroppings the size of modest huts distributed around its perimeter, several yards above the shoreline. These are immense compound eyes, which open from time to time and look around. They don't seem to do so in response to any particular stimulus, but they do clearly track the movements of large or distinctive objects. Some believe that it has a telepathic link to the shaman, sensing what he senses, and perhaps even to everyone on the island.

The Saroo follows or perhaps even anticipates seasonal migrations of large shoals of fish, though some believe the scent of ambergris lures fish there. Either way, it seems as though the Saroo is always in excellent waters for fishing, much to the delight of its inhabitants.

### *Fighting Saroo*

Attacking Saroo itself is more than a daunting task. Hitting it is easy (SM +18), but that's where the easy part ends. Most of the Saroo that isn't underwater is covered with a layer of soil one to three feet thick (providing cover DR from 36 to over 100). Once that's out of the way, the Saroo's heavy chitin provides at least DR 60*. Finally once through all that DR, the Saroo has about 40,000 HP. Worse yet, the Saroo's internal functions are decentralized. It has Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) *and* Injury Tolerance (No Blood); the Saroo does have internal fluids of various kinds, but doesn't lose HP to bleeding.

### *Finding Saroo*

This is harder than one would expect. Knowledge spells cast on the Saroo are at a minimum of -5, rising to -10 for Seeker and Trace, and magical attempts to see inside the Saroo fail automatically. Mystically, the Saroo is a person or thing, not a place, so Pathfinder doesn't work on it either. However, the passage of the Saroo through a region is something which excites comments, so successful Current Events rolls can let seekers know if it has been around recently and possibly where it might have been heading.

## Trade

Saroo's greatest source of wealth by far is the ambergris mines. This tremendously valuable waxy substance is usually found, when it can be found at all, floating in the ocean or washed up on shores all over the world. Its ultimate origin, however, has been a mystery. The natives of the Saroo have found its source, or at least one source. Deposits of particularly fine ambergris have been found filling some of the Saroo's pores. The Sarooites, when they discover these deposits, dig them up and trade them for a great deal of money. It nominally sells for $35/oz., though given their impact on supplies wherever they go, Sarooites frequently realize only half of that.

The ambergris trade is supplemented by a small-scale trade in a variety of spices available on the island, notably turmeric and ginger, and other natural substances used in medicines and alchemy. Indeed, the reputation of Sarooite spices and ambergris is such anyone trying to sell them to a magician or alchemist gets +3 on Merchant rolls. The island produces many fine woods as well, but most of it is used locally for homes and boats. These goods, though, are quickly and easily gathered. Most people are occupied in fishing and seaweed cultivation.

Sarooites also produce small quantities of intricately woven textiles decorated with maze-like geometric motifs. They produce similarly decorated wooden screens and panels which are used to define spaces in their homes. These are objects of considerable social regard, and craftsmen can spend months or even years on them off and on. They're rarely available for sale, but fetch high prices when they become available. Most, though, are exchanged as gifts (see *Society and Government,* below).

In return for its valuable exports, Sarooites import cloth and raw fiber, precious metals (mostly in the form of jewelry), dyes and paint pigments, and a range of goods which require mineral resources and high heat to produce: metal, ceramics, and glass. The island lacks ores, sand, and good clay, and lightweight wooden buildings on floating piers are not a great platform for forging metal or firing pottery.

## Society and Government

Although the settlement on the Saroo is big enough that not everybody knows everybody else, most people at least know a close relative of anyone they're not personally acquainted with. That, the lack of ethnic and religious diversity, and the lack of long-term contact between Saroo and any other one larger society may have prevented its own society from becoming more stratified. There are no legally recognized classes, and while men and women are recognized as having separate roles in home life and ritual contexts, they receive approximately equivalent legal protection.

The town has no legislative body as such. Its laws, though unwritten, are enshrined in tradition. Those laws can only be modified by a shaman's declaration, and it has been generations since a shaman has been sane enough to make one.

The elders form not a government so much as an executive council which can only operate with continued popular support, which is not always forthcoming, and the Sarooites are entirely willing to ignore the elders if they feel that too much is being asked of them. The greatest power of the elders is in their capacity as managers of the ambergris trade. The elders decide who to trade with, negotiate prices, and determine how the income is spent. This power, though, is mostly external; the Sarooites need to be cajoled, not coerced. They look for a minimum of trouble, buying off powers they pass by or giving them favorable prices in exchange for protection from pirates and other diplomatic concessions. Policies of appeasement have served Saroo well, although the elders are certainly not above hiring one group of foreigners to fight another if it comes to that.

The ambergris income goes first to pay for stockpiles of necessities like drinking water, manufactured items, and diplomatic expenses. The income is also used to pay for what might be called capital spending. The floating platforms which make up most of the town may be built elsewhere and towed to the island, or more materials may need to be imported. But even after that, there's usually a sizable surplus left over. That surplus is distributed more or less evenly among the families of the island, making the Sarooites unusually affluent relative to the peoples they pass by.

Because of the steady influx of imported wealth and the relative ease of obtaining subsistence goods (the average Sarooite spends a mere four to six hours a day fishing, cultivating seaweed, or gathering vegetable produce), they have retained aspects of their ancestral gifting economy. They understand market economies, certainly. Big men are quite adept at negotiating trades, and the average Sarooite is as good as any other city-dweller at bargaining. However, among themselves, the Sarooites exchange precious items as an indication of social regard. It is believed that notable early Sarooites exchanged elaborately decorated oars, jewelry, and spiritual fetishes with one another. Big men became known as big men by negotiating the exchange of one particularly well-known or striking new object for another. The steady influx of outside wealth has increased the stakes: elaborately lacquered screens, corner posts for homes with carvings depicting mythic cycles, even gilded and jeweled doors are exchanged for one another. The elders are the leaders in gifting cycles, trading the best-known objects, but just about everyone participates at some point in their life.

There are two ways to enter the cycle. One is to obtain a notable old object, usually as a gift from a parent or grandparent to a child. The other is to make such an object oneself. Either way, that provides a first bargaining chip and a way to get into trades with other people. Participants attempt to trade for other well-known or attractive objects, usually in ceremonies accompanied by feasting and pageantry, and usually with relatives and potential allies. Doing this, if properly performed, enhances the reputations of both people and objects involved. Famous people make their items famous, and notable items are a point of pride and notoriety for their owners. The Sarooites are sufficiently sophisticated that they aren't impressed by money itself, as participants in gifting economies usually are, but they can sometimes be induced to trade one of their items for a particularly attractive foreign object.

## Military and Law Enforcement

Saroo has no formal army and has never gone in for military aggression. People of appropriate age are expected to pitch in if the island is attacked, with elders serving as informal officers. Particularly fashionable young men style themselves "guardians" and swagger around the island wearing swords and armor. Their eagerness puts them in the forefront of Saroo's defense when they are called on, but they have no official status. Typical armaments are short, broad, machete-like swords, short spears, light bows and large but lightweight shields (see *Saroo Shields,* below).

Saroo likewise has little formal law enforcement. Smaller matters are settled through mediators, often elders. If criminals need to be apprehended, the act is carried out by the injured parties and their friends and relatives (and, at times, interested bystanders; it's considered good fun). Elders also act as judges in more serious matters such as large-scale theft, with material reparations being the most common punishment by far. Only in extreme cases, usually murder, are extreme penalties meted out. Exile is the most common punishment, but particularly unpleasant wrongdoers may find themselves becoming offerings to the Saroo.

### *Saroo Shields*

Shields on Saroo are surprisingly light for the protection they provide, but are relatively fragile. They are the same size and cost as large shields and provide DB 3. However, they weigh half as much (12.5 lbs.). Moreover, when used to block, they're subject to the rules for weapon breakage as if they weighed 3 lbs.

## Religion and Magic

The average Sarooite says occasional prayers to minor spirits and burns incense and makes other symbolic offerings at a household shrine for personal favors: good health, luck at gambling, easy childbirth, and the like. Beyond that, however, religion is regarded as a matter for professionals. The shaman has received years of training in dealing with gods, so they let him do it.

Despite the growth of the Saroo settlement from a small village to a town of respectable size, there is still only one shaman at a time. It is his job to deal with gods in general and the Saroo in particular. Being a shaman is a lifetime job held for as long as the shaman is physically competent to perform his duties. These conditions are not mutually exclusive: if the shaman becomes physically disabled from age, illness, or accident, he is sacrificed to the Saroo. New shamans are chosen from a number of "apprentices" who learn from and, in these days of mad shamans, care for their superior. When an apprentice dies or is promoted, a child is chosen to replace them, purportedly according to divine guidance.

*Some of us, regarding the ocean with understanding and affection, have seen it looking old, as if the immemorial ages had been stirred up from the undisturbed bottom of ooze.*

*– Joseph Conrad,* ***The Mirror of the Sea***

Though probably initially quite peaceful, religion on the Saroo has become a bit bloodthirsty, with human sacrifice being a more-or-less annual occurrence. Victims, gaily decorated with flowers, fine clothes, and precious objects (as well as bound, drugged, or both), are taken in a grand procession to the front of the Saroo, brought to the top of a tall platform built for the purpose, and thrown into the water. They are believed to be swallowed by the Saroo to become favored servants. In living memory, victims have usually been criminals or attractive virgins, although there is historical precedent for others. Indeed, a number of stories about ancestral warrior-heroes end with the protagonists volunteering themselves as sacrifices to the Saroo.

Men do not use magic; what the shaman and his apprentices do is regarded more as a social interaction than direct manipulation of power. Magic is the province of women, who as girls learn charms and curses along with cooking and sewing. It's questionable how effective most of them are as spellcasters, but old women are respected and feared. Sarooites are broad-minded enough to regard it as something that they do in those peculiar foreign countries, but they're still at heart baffled by male spellcasters from abroad.

## Architecture

The floating platforms on which the town proper is based are connected with thick ropes and rope bridges, allowing them to shed runoff into the water and move semi-independently in rough seas, although occasional severe storms can cause considerable damage. However, the shamans and wise women of the town seem to be able to protect it from harsh weather most of the time. Most platforms are only big enough for one home, although several may be roped together to provide a sort of plaza.

The typical Sarooite home is a long building with a single undivided room, doors in front and back, and a high gabled roof. The floor of the house is usually raised a foot or two above the platform on which it is built. The front has a set of broad steps, sheltered by the roof extending some distance beyond the house itself. The steps are often used for socializing and entertaining guests. The house has no permanent walls inside, but spaces are divided up by lavishly decorated folding screens. The household shrine is behind the house, again sheltered by an overhanging roof, as is a small paved area used as a hearth for cooking.

The few homes on the island itself are roughly similar in overall shape, but have a different arrangement. They are generally drawn together in compounds, with one particularly large house and a few smaller buildings, usually connected by a wooden fence, facing a courtyard. These homes are occupied by elders and their extended families. The out-buildings are used as housing for notable visitors and storehouses for imported goods and items for export.

The one stone structure on the island, sitting about 20 yards inland at the center of the starboard side of the island, is the shaman's temple, with materials imported at immense expense over the course of a century. Resting on a large stone platform, the temple is a roughly square building with a pyramidal roof and a pagoda-like spire rising above it. It provides housing for the shaman and several apprentices, storerooms for votive offerings, a few sturdy cells for prospective sacrificial victims, and both indoor and outdoor spaces for ceremonies. It is rumored that there's a hidden door in the temple leading into the Saroo.

## Everyday Life

Diets on Saroo consist largely of fish, which have always been plentiful. The fish are accompanied by cultivated seaweeds and a variety of semi-wild foods growing on the island itself, mostly fruit and edible roots, fungi, and leaves. Sea birds have long been captured by the Sarooites, kept in cages, and fattened on local berries, and eventually served as a particular delicacy. Grain is not cultivated on Saroo.

Probably the only major factor preventing the Saroo town from growing any larger is a lack of water. As it is, the natives drink relatively small quantities of pure water, mostly collected from run-off from the central ridge which collects into well-like pores. Instead, they get liquid from fruit juices, water-rich tubers, and a water-filled gourd which grows in clusters on tall trees, vaguely resembling a coconut palm. They also import casks of water when the opportunity arises.

Native costume for both sexes on Saroo consists of baggy shorts or short skirts and open vests or short-sleeved shirts, or occasionally belted sarongs for women, often in brightly dyed or embroidered fabrics. However, most people are happy to wear colorful clothing of any kind, and the island's extensive trade allows them to indulge their tastes: silk robes, broad-brimmed hats, colorful sashes, and other foreign garments are common. Nevertheless, as befits the climate, clothing is a matter of display, not protection from the elements, and bodily modesty does not rank high among the virtues of the Sarooites. People hard at work often wear simply a loincloth, and not even that when swimming in the sea, a popular recreation.

Sarooites are also very fond of jewelry, which is often worn even when clothes are not. Rings and necklaces are common, and most wear at least one earring or nose ring. Every Sarooite receives a tattoo emblematic of their family on reaching the age of majority. Shamans and their apprentices are subject to ritual scarification.

Loaded with wealth and possessing a culture which features giving things away as a means of increasing one's own status, Saroo isn't a bad place for small groups of short-term visitors. A flotilla will be politely invited to travel on to its next destination, but interesting-looking foreigners are likely to be afforded reasonable hospitality. Visitors require the permission of an elder to stay in town or on the island, but that's easy to obtain if the foreigners don't look immediately threatening. There are no inns or public houses, but they may be taken in by a family with spare room or given the use of a vacant house. Still, the Sarooites have a sense of proportion, and unless there's good reason for visitors to stay on (for example, ongoing negotiation with the elders), quiet hints to move on will start to arise after several days.

*All the thoughts of a turtle are turtles.*

*– Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## Saroo in the Campaign

As presented here, Saroo makes a possibly lucrative, if occasionally frustrating to locate, destination for trade and a pleasant port of call for travelers on their way somewhere else. On one hand, it's a very comfortable place to spend a few days and the natives are fairly friendly. On the other, the Sarooites have a well-developed sense of identity, and people from the outside will always be foreigners. Moreover, while the Sarooites are interested in trade, there's a lot of competition. The elders have a seller's market for their ambergris and many of their other goods, and outsiders will find themselves in fierce competition for the goods.

Adventurers inclined to pursue occult research could find endless mysteries to unravel on and in the Saroo. What is the nature of the Saroo: huge dumb beast, relatively benign Elder Thing, or god? Have the shamans been in communion with another mind, or are their brains simply incapable of withstanding the Saroo's psychic emanations? Is there a passage into the Saroo under the temple (or elsewhere on the island), and if so, what is inside it?

Saroo is also an interesting target for pirates and thieves. It is, obviously, wealthy and not terribly well defended. However, even if you ignore the possibility of a curse by the living god Saroo (such things are rumored, although not well documented), Sarooites are very capable of buying powerful friends. Anyone who raids the island runs the risk of gaining naval powers as enemies.

For the same reasons, Saroo could be a destabilizing factor in international diplomacy. Consider this scenario: a kingdom in financial difficulty gears up to sack Saroo. Saroo, in turn, hires ships from a neighboring kingdom's fleet. The affair could quickly spiral into full-blown war. It could even happen without the Sarooites being directly involved, with different nations maneuvering for a superior position and undercutting one another's moves against the town. The power politics of it all may mean little to dungeon delving adventurers, but that can also mean employment for such people as raiders or defenders of Saroo.

Although Saroo has long been peaceful, recent events could destabilize it. The elders have contrived to keep Saroo society comfortable, well-fed, and too preoccupied with trading famous trinkets to have greater ambitions or broader worries. The return of the shamans could change that. What if the current shaman's madness cleared and he began to issue clear proclamations that the Saroo wanted no more contact with foreigners? Or outlined a plan to manipulate outsiders to destroy one another? At the very least, it would set off ripples of fear and resentment, and it could easily lead to a violent rift in Saroo's society. Likewise, if the island's migrations into increasingly cool waters also take it away from its traditional fishing waters and the tropical climate in which its plants thrive, the town of Saroo will find itself suddenly much more dependent on outside supplies.

Finally, Saroo could become a threat. Gripped by religious fervor, the Sarooites could become fanatical pirates, raiding and destroying ocean-going shipping. The Saroo itself would be more than a base. It would be the most dangerous pirate ship ever known, ramming not just enemy vessels, but entire fleets, and slapping others underwater with its vast tail. The Saroo could be a Great Old One, currently only sleeping, but when awoken will drive all of its inhabitants mad and compel them to violence. Perhaps the only way to stop it would be for a brave band of characters to infiltrate the island and find their way inside to find the hidden source of the Saroo's life-force. But beware of the ranks of now-immortal ancient warriors guarding the interior.

## The Living Dungeon

Even without a rising Elder Thing with an immortal army, a band of heroes may need to figure out some of the mysteries of Saroo. If so, they'll likely discover that the Saroo is the location of a dungeon complex. The Saroo is, after all, two miles across and several hundred yards from top to bottom. There's a *lot* of room in there for tunnels through the flesh.

There's little telling what delvers are likely to find there. There might be ancient creatures preserved in a mystic amber and freed to fight off invaders, ferocious things made of spines and venom acting as the Saroo's immune system, weird parasites living off of the Saroo's substance but happy to consume any adventurers who might happen by, and other forms of life, intelligent or not, which might come closer to revealing the Saroo's true nature. And in addition to the problems Knowledge spells face, Sense Life is useless inside the Saroo because it's *all* alive, and Earth spells, which can manipulate stone and dirt in conventional dungeons, can't reshape the flesh of the Saroo's tunnels.

# Tanir Aesayya

## by Matt Riggsby

Though some elves live in towns and cities immediately recognizable as such, with marble spires and thick stone walls, the majority of the elven population lives in settlements deep in the forests of the world. Many are small settlements, little more than extended households, but a few rise to the size of towns and cities. Tanir Aesayya is one of the largest.

## Geography and Land Use

Tanir Aesayya lies a few miles inside a large ancient forest in a relatively warm part of a temperate zone (with summer highs in the 90s and winter lows in the 30s). The closest land beyond the forest is poor for farming but good grazing land, so it is occupied mostly by shepherds with a few small villages scattered here and there. From the edge of the forest, it is perhaps a day's travel from Tanir Aesayya to the nearest small stronghold or town of more than 2,000 people, and four or five days to the nearest human city. The land on which the forest grows is fairly even, with only small hills and overall a gentle slope falling down toward the edge of the woods.

Past a relatively thin border zone, the forest itself is remarkably dense and multi-layered. At ground level, there is thick but patchy shade-loving undergrowth: ferns, scrubby bushes, ivy-like vine plants, and the like. Rising above them, particularly closer to the edges of the forest, are smaller trees (50 feet or less), mostly gnarled oaks but with a large minority of firs and a small number of others. Towering over those is a taller layer of unusually tall, thick oaks, with a minority of various evergreens, an assortment of deciduous trees including a remarkable variety number of fruit- and nut-bearing trees, and a few unusual trees seen only in elven forests. Aside from the elves, the forest is inhabited by small animals: birds, rabbits, squirrels, and the like. There is a handful of bears and small deer, but the density of the vegetation means that one is unlikely to encounter anything bigger than a moderately sized fox or boar. There are also a few more unusual animals, including a number of unicorns, which are surprisingly capable at slipping through the underbrush; some believe that it opens up for them as they pass. The forest is rumored to contain walking, talking trees, indistinguishable from other trees in the forest save when they want to be noticed, though not even all the elves are certain they exist.

Because of the great density of growth, a number of paths through the forest are kept clear by the elves. Many of them, though, are at least partially hidden or require the people following them to climb up into the trees for part of the way, so those who don't already know their way around and don't have a good eye for detail may stumble onto paths that appear to lead nowhere. Other breaks in the growth include a number of streams cutting through the forest, although many are hidden by particularly tall trees spreading their branches overhead, and a few intentionally cultivated clearings.

The town itself has a population of about 12,000. The most densely populated core section covers about a half of a square mile, although a ring of sentry posts, inside which just about all the elves spend most of their time, defines an area about three times as large, with several streams running through it. There are no constructed defenses like towers or walls, but there are areas of particularly dense vegetation which can provide much the same defensive benefit, with resilient hedge-like growths instead of stone barriers.

## History

There have been elves in the forest for as long as anyone cares to remember (which, among a population of immortals, is saying something), although not always large settlements. Originally, it appears that the elves lived in extended households in groups of up to 50 or 60, although most were much smaller. Occasional market days, held at a particularly large clearing, brought larger numbers of elves together temporarily, sometimes with the addition of humans and others who had come from the outside to trade.

About 1,500 years ago, the edges of the forest came under pressure from increasing numbers of orcs: hunting, cutting trees for construction or the sheer joy of destruction, and so on. The orcish incursion was causing human kingdoms to collapse around the forest, but the elves, largely disconnected from and unconcerned with the outside world, managed to hold their own line. In order to do so, they had to spend more time near the edges of the forest and increase coordination among what had previously been completely independent households. This coordination took the form of adopting the old marketplace as a meeting place and central headquarters and appointing war leaders to coordinate the defense of the forest. The institution of the dukedom originated at this time, as did the use of the clearing at Tanir Aesayya as a settlement ("Tanir" is a word in the local dialect for "marketplace").

For the next few centuries, the forest was cut off from direct contact with the outside world, since the region around it was occupied by orcish hordes. Apart from a small handful of notably brave individuals venturing in or out, communication with the outside was largely magical, and the few attempts to find allies against the slowly advancing enemy failed. The forest itself slowly shrank under ongoing if somewhat desultory assaults, although a spirited elven defense combined with a lack of coordination by the orcs prevented the shrinkage from becoming severe.

About 600 years ago, the situation began to change as a growing human presence began to push back against the orcs. Ambitious new kingdoms with superior weapons and coordination rolled back the orcish occupation. Ciaranon, the duke at the time, struck an informal alliance with some of the humans, lending out archers and the occasional master magician to support the humans, whose forces were lacking in that department. A number of elves resented Ciaranon's drawing what little strength they had away from their borders, and during this period they did suffer some grievous losses both in terms of elven lives and ancient trees, but ultimately Ciaranon's judgment seems to have proven sound. About 300 years ago, after a climactic battle, a last united horde of orcs was smashed by a combined human-elven army, effectively ending the orcish presence (although mopping up took a few extra decades). Ciaranon, who personally led the elves into battle, was killed, and was succeeded by his nephew Tylaleas.

With the outside world once again opened up, Tylaleas set about instituting more outward-looking policies. He retained his uncle's alliances, justifying increased dealings with the (to elven minds) unpredictable and transient human dynasties by the belief that a united front would be necessary to prevent future orcish incursions. Tylaleas has also actively looked for elves displaced from their homes by similar misfortunes and invited them to Tanir Aesayya to help repopulate the forest and cultivate replacements for ancient trees destroyed during the centuries of orcish wars. These "refugees" now constitute about 15% of the town's population.

In the years since the end of the wars, Tanir Aesayya has largely retained the form it had at that time. Since habits die hard among the immortal elves, the move to "stand down" from a war footing has been slow. Patrols around the borders of the forest are still maintained, even though orcs haven't been seen for nearly two centuries; they mostly prevent poaching and illicit wood cutting. Because of the casualties suffered during the wars and the influx of new residents, a majority of the current population has only known life in the town, not in the widely separated "tree-holds" which preceded it, so there was little pressure to move back, although older elves do tend to spend longer periods of time walking through the woods and even maintaining private retreats in the deeper forest. The elves have made accommodations for increased visitors from the outside, but difficulties in communication persist, and outsiders can often feel slightly uncomfortable even though they find nothing but smiles and courtesy.

## Society

Imagine a small town. Everyone knows everybody else, their families, their business, their stories about the great flood of aught-six. Now extend that knowledge to a small city. That, more or less, defines society in Tanir Aesayya. Sooner or later, everyone ends up dealing with everyone else, and after a century or three, that adds up.

Humans often see elven culture as complex, sometimes incomprehensibly so. But though elves do seem to have fondness for ceremony and elaborate social displays, part of it is simply that elven communities tend to build up a great deal of social shorthand: private jokes that are repeated so often that they can be communicated almost by vague allusion, social conventions invented to take into account this or that individual's personal preferences which have been well known to the community longer than most humans have been alive, shifting hierarchies of social precedence which only make sense if one knows all the players intimately. Dealing with the elves of Tanir Aesayya might be compared to dealing with members of a devoutly religious society who have a relevant passage from the Bible or the Qur'an on their lips for every occasion. You may speak the language, but you may not have the context to understand the nuances of what anybody says.

*There is no creation without tradition; the "new" is an inflection on a preceding form; novelty is always a variation on the past.*

*– Carlos Fuentes*

Another ramification of immortality is that the conflicts and prejudices of the past are still there in the present. Refugees are still refugees despite having lived in Tanir Aesayya for multiple human lifetimes, some elves hold Tylaleas as responsible for the deaths of family members as his predecessor, and a few elders still privately grumble that the office of duke was supposed to be temporary, lasting for centuries rather than millennia, and should be dissolved now that the war is over and the orcs are gone.

So, then, the society of Tanir Aesayya is more or less egalitarian, with no legally recognized classes, but there are nevertheless social divisions and political factions. The main division is between natives and refugees. Neither can really be said to have higher status than the other, but they tend not to socialize with one another as much as they do within their own groups. Although they've had enough time to learn one another's ways and customs, there's still social friction expressed in varying degrees of accommodation. Subtleties of dress and language are used to express solidarity with one group or another. For example, just about anything can be said using a relatively neutral expression or one from either native or refugee dialect. While the statements have approximately the same meaning, the one chosen indicates a preference for one side or another. Outsiders, of course, have a very hard time picking up on the subtleties.

There is a lesser generational division as well, between pre-war elders, elves born during the wars, and those born after the wars. The first group is relatively conservative, smallest in numbers, and increasingly solitary, the second is slow to make friends but prizes personal loyalty, and the third is split between isolationist conservatives and more worldly wanderers. However, all of these differences are largely just faint tendencies. Because of the low elven birth rate, children tend to be assimilated into the culture as a whole rather than identifying with very rare age-peers.

### *Cuisine*

Visitors to the forest expecting meals along the lines of elven rations are in for a series of peculiar surprises. There are inns serving conventional outsider food, but what the elves make for themselves is very different from what adventurers usually get. Often, they eat modestly but frequently during the day, taking a fruit here, a few nuts there. Some barbarians, used to hunting and gathering lifestyles, can find this familiar. However, their formal feasts are complicated affairs, lasting a whole day while running through surprisingly little food. They're artful arrangements of subtle differences of flavor, texture, and aroma, often silently commenting on similar feasts in the past, in much the same cloistered, self-referential manner as a lot of the forest town's culture. If outsiders are invited, it might be best to send just bards and innkeepers.

## Trade, Industry, and Economics

Though they have great love of all manner of plants, the elves around Tanir Aesayya are mainly interested in the cultivation of trees, although cultivation may be too strong a word for it. They watch the development of trees, encouraging their growth in various ways, but do no planting and very little harvesting. Rather, they adapt themselves to the trees as much as they adapt the trees to their own needs.

Over slow centuries of management and subtle magical alteration, the elves have perfected their environment. The tall trees bear sweet acorns (sweet, in the sense that they aren't laden with the tannins which render some acorns toxic), nuts, fruit, and edible flowers, a favorite item in the elven diet, all rounded out with herbs and edible mushrooms. All grow in superabundant quantities. That, and the fact that the tall trees allow the elves to take advantage of a third dimension in their subsistence strategy, gives the elves the ability to support many more individuals on far less land than the societies around them. These foods are occasionally supplemented with birds and game shot in the forest; the elves of Tanir Aesayya are not, by inclination, herders. Meat is not eaten frequently, and when it is, it's usually used in small quantities, smoked or otherwise preserved, to provide flavor more than substance.

Most of the goods the elves export are fine woodwork: furniture, ornaments, musical instruments, and high-quality bows. They also produce high-quality textiles, some from vegetable fibers harvested inside the forest, others from imported wool. Tanir Aesayya produces small quantities of a unique, extremely fine and durable fiber believed to be derived from spider silk and enhanced by mystical means. Important imports include metal tools and glass objects. The elves have returned to the custom of weekly market days, but those now mark peaks in commercial activity; traveling merchants and craftsmen are allowed to visit at any time. Most exchanges are barter rather than cash, although the elves will accept money if they can't trade for goods. They are exceptionally patient bargainers with a good eye for quality, but they do ultimately offer fair exchange.

The internal economy of Tanir Aesayya is rather different. The elves know the value of a gold piece. Among themselves, however, they don't see the point of using them. Goods are rarely transferred in reciprocal exchanges. Rather, they're given to whoever appears to need or desire them. Chalk up another one to immortality, perhaps, but after centuries of contact between individuals and families, the elves are disinclined to keep close track of every jot and tittle. Goods change hands like resources in an extended family, moving around fairly freely as needed with the expectation of eventual reciprocation. However, dealings between natives and refugees are often characterized by actual bargaining.

## Government and Politics

The town is officially ruled by a noble whose title probably translates best as "duke." There have been seven dukes so far, six of whom have died in battle. Tylaleas has been in office for longer than any of them, and at this rate may be duke longer than all of his predecessors together. The duke's primary duty is as defender of the forest realm. He commands the guards and may call up additional forces when necessary. In that capacity, he also has executive authority over external affairs, negotiating alliances with outsiders, and serving as the sole court for affairs concerning outsiders. So far, that's a task which has been well within his capabilities, though there's talk of delegating the job of hearing disputes involving outsiders to a subsidiary judge.

The duke also acts as a judge for internal disputes, but here his power is that of an administrator or moderator rather than a ruler. When parties to a dispute cannot settle it themselves, it becomes a matter for public debate. Regular "courts" are held in which the parties involved present their cases and the neutral parties present attempt to come up with a solution. The duke imposes discipline and formality on the process through elaborate ceremonies (calling the disputants to be heard, asking certain ritual questions, administering traditional oaths, and so on). He has the power to impose a solution of his own if the disputants can't agree on one themselves after a period of time, traditionally from one full moon to another, although that power is rarely used.

This process seems to serve the elves well, and internally they seem quite content, except for the lasting division between natives and refugees. The problem here seems to be one of natives being reluctant to accept the refugees as equal residents of the forest and refugees reacting negatively to that. Many disputes which must be settled publicly are between natives and refugees. Since the duke granted new homes to the refugees, they tend to be his supporters politically, so the duke has been at pains not to display any favoritism toward them in his pronouncements.

There are also external issues which fall outside of the process which cause considerable dispute. Formally, no outsider is allowed to enter the forest without the duke's permission, although these days there is a blanket grant of permission for merchants traveling to the market along designated paths. Anyone not entering the forest through approved routes and submitting to inspection by guards is presumed to be a spy, thief, or poacher and will be apprehended and brought before the duke. A controversial exception to these general rules allows a certain amount of timber harvesting at the edge of the forest by the humans living nearby. This has caused endless quibbling both with humans and between elven factions about its allowable extent.

The humans seem somewhat blind to the markers the elves have set up indicating which trees may be taken, and many elves, particularly those who survived the war, don't want anyone cutting down any trees at all. At the moment, the discontent is just grumbling, but it is quite widespread.

## Military and Law Enforcement

The town keeps a standing force of 100 guards who patrol the forest and man the sentry posts. On reaching adulthood, every resident of the town is required to take one-year turns as a guard on a rotating basis. At present rates, that's about once every century. This is less a standing army than a first line of defense. In the event of war, everyone is expected to do their duty (although it may be the duty of some not to fight) whether it's their turn or not.

When the elves do go on the march, they're a formidable force. For one thing, the long, slow growth of the trees doesn't need constant tending; thus, as long as they're defending their own territory, the elves can put the majority of the city's adult population into the field, which is in turn the majority of the city's total population. Where a human civilization can rarely keep more than 1% or 2% of its people in the field for any length of time, elves can, if need be, hit the high nineties.

Second, though few have the temperament of professional warriors, most elves have several human lifetimes of experience with bows, stealth, and living off the forest, and most can bring some sort of useful magic to bear. It takes a brave outsider to face an elven guerrilla war, and a foolish one to face it for very long.

## Architecture

Unlike some other elves, the wood elves of Tanir Aesayya don't go in for building in a big way. Their homes are constructed flexibly in and around trees. The elves describe their building technique as a negotiation between tree and inhabitants. The trees grow without cutting, but the elves coax the tree's limbs to grow in ways that make them easy to build in. Except for a few small grass-covered plazas, there is little visible sign of habitation at ground level. Inhabited trees mostly have ladders and spiral staircases, with steps fixed around the trunk of the tree, leading up into the branches.

Living and working spaces start only where substantial branches begin, and at any rate at least twice the height of a person above ground level. At that level, the platforms start. Livable spaces are built on platforms made from planks and beams individually cut to fit on and around the limbs of the tree, which often has branches which conveniently interweave to form stable platforms anyway. Elven carpenters make heavy use of dovetail joints which lock structural members around supporting limbs, never resorting to metal nails. The platforms work their way up and around, with many small patches of floor arranged in a step-like fashion spiraling up the tree, and they are frequently reworked as the tree grows. Walls, such as they are, are likewise placed to take best advantage of the tree's limbs, although given the relatively warm climate during most of the year, the tree's canopy of leaves is sufficient to provide privacy. It's often difficult, therefore, to say whether one is inside or outside in a tree occupied by elves. Only during the coldest days of winter do enough walls and tapestries go up that rooms, in the conventional sense, can be distinguished. Many of the inhabited trees are hollow, and those spaces are frequently used for storage of particularly vulnerable goods such as books and alchemical ingredients.

Though most of the construction the elves do is inside each tree's canopy of leaves, and therefore invisible to most observers, they do provide external decoration. The fashion in Tanir Aesayya is to make brightly colored banners and ribbons and fasten them to a tree's outer branches. When the wind blows, densely inhabited trees become a riot of motion and color as the banners unfurl themselves.

The only piece of "permanent" architecture in Tanir Aesayya is, some elves would say, the only part of the settlement which really should be called Tanir Aesayya. At the center of the settlement is a large clearing surrounded by some of the tallest trees in the forest, the ancient marketplace which was pressed into service as a military headquarters. Once again, it serves its original purpose, hosting foreign merchants who have come to buy and sell. The permanent installation here is a large paved mosaic covering about a hundred square yards, decorated with a variety of scenes from elven history and legend. At one edge is set a tall marble throne, occupied by the duke when he holds court. Academically inclined visitors may come from hundreds of miles away to see the exquisite but unidentified workmanship.

### *Adventuring Types*

Whether facing them as opponents or working with them as allies, adventurers may be interested in how the capabilities of the elves of Tanir Aesayya run. Most, in ***Dungeon Fantasy*** terms, qualify as druids, scouts, swashbucklers, or wizards, with a lot of crossovers: scouts with the scout-druid lens, swashbucklers with the swashbuckler-scout lens, and so on. Most are wood elves with a smattering of high elves, plus a few other elven types mostly among refugees (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level,*** pp. 6-8).

## Tanir Aesayya in the Campaign

Tanir Aesayya is a pretty nice place. The GM may want to emphasize the quiet (but not dead silence; there will always be bird sounds, leaves rustling, and the like), the usually warm weather, the lush greenery surrounding the small patches of well-kept meadow, and so on. There's plenty to eat, and the natives are generally polite. The forest is not a bad place to rest and recuperate if the adventurers can behave themselves.

However, many travelers should feel a little uncomfortable. There are few if any physical threats present in the town, but outsiders are likely to feel that they don't belong there (even other elves, though outside elves are at least more likely to understand why). The lifestyle will be unusual and either boring or frustrating for faster-paced mortals, and all the residents clearly know a great deal that outsiders don't.

Visitors will often feel that they're being condescended to, and they are almost certainly correct, although they might not be able to say exactly why.

Tanir Aesayya, therefore, is more likely to be a stop along the way than a permanent base of operations. It makes a very good destination for trade, particularly to find items which are unusual but are not, say, powerful magical artifacts. The market is a good place to pick up high-quality mundane goods, all of which are likely to have a unique charm, and the occasional enchanted object. Knowledge would be another commodity travelers could acquire there. Centuries-old elves may remember lost secrets, know the answers to historical riddles, and have personally met ancient heroes; there are any number of people to consult in case one needs some Hidden Lore.

The town would also be an interesting "x-factor" in a diplomatic setting. Outside travelers might have to appeal to the elves for extraordinary aid to gain the upper hand in an otherwise purely human dispute, attempting to sway the elves to favor an alliance with them instead of a different kingdom. For their part, the elves are likely to have a very different set of priorities in the usual give-and-take of gold and power over territory, making them difficult to negotiate with.

Here are some other adventure possibilities:

*Forest Rangers:* In this scenario, the elves might oppose the heroes of the adventure, or at least be an obstacle, without necessarily being enemies. The adventurers need to gather rare herbs and mushrooms, unicorn horns, or other semi-mystical materials for reasons of their own. The forest around Tanir Aesayya is probably the most accessible source for such materials, but there's a problem: the elves don't want anybody taking them. Natural-born conservationists, they take a dim view of anyone baiting meadows with virgins or clear-cutting roads into the forest in order to find the rare purple mandrake root. Adventurers have the choice of either trying to talk the elves out of a few remarkably rare plants and animals, which is hard, or trying to sneak around them, which is harder.

*Monsters, Monsters:* After centuries of guarding their borders, the elves are safe from attack from the outside, which makes an apparent attack from the inside that much more terrifying. With the long focus on the outside, the deep, dark center of the forest has been ignored for centuries, and something has appeared there which doesn't like elves any more than the orcs do. A number of elves who have tried to cross the forest lately have not returned, and some have been found bloodily killed. Perhaps a nest of demons has established itself in the depths of the forest, or perhaps a group of trolls, to many minds little more than the cousins of orcs, have come out of tunnels deep under the forest to establish themselves above ground. What is at the root of the problem? And more importantly, what can a bunch of dungeon-delving adventurers do to help?

*Trouble With the Neighbors:* The elves aren't the only ones living in the forest. Some of the glades around the forest are the domain of a variety of faeries. These are less places where they live and more the front lawn of domains in other dimensions. They contain portals to faerie realms with their own peculiar lands. The elves and faerie generally tolerate one another, since the latter tend to keep to themselves. However, recently a notable elven wizard has vanished into one of the faerie realms, taking with him some historically significant tomes. Was he kidnapped? Did he go willingly? Someone has to infiltrate the other side of the veil, and to maintain deniability, the elves have to engage outsiders to investigate.

*Return of the Orcs:* It's been a few quiet centuries, but no more. News has arrived that a vast new orcish horde is advancing from what was once a safe distance. Can foresighted elves rally the complacent humans around them in time to preserve the long work of rebuilding? Adventurers could act as scouts and "special ops" fighters sent to evaluate and delay orcish progress, ambassadors and messengers for the elves sent to try to convince the humans to forget their own squabbles, or humans whom the elves are trying to convince of the need for unity with their untrustworthy neighbors.

*Forest Rebellion:* The silent majority has finally had enough. They're staging a coup d'etat against Duke Tylaleas. Will they replace him with their own candidate for the office? A ruling council rather than a single ruler? Or dispense with the office altogether? The insurrectionists will probably have factions favoring each solution. Tylaleas, of course, won't take this lying down (unless they kill him, but his supporters will still be around). The coup will bring all the factions hidden underneath layers of ceremony and etiquette to the surface, and it won't be pretty. Heroes could be rebels against the duke, loyalists (probably refugees, possibly able to call on aid from outside), or outsiders, probably caught up in a new wave of isolationism and anti-mortal sentiment.

## Local Specialties

Elven gear is readily available in Tanir Aesayya. Any item listed as elven doesn't count as a special order (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers,*** p. 25), and it comes at a 10% discount as well. This is *not* cumulative with the Elven Gear perk; everybody gets the discount here. Other wooden items which are fine quality or better likewise may be purchased here at 10% off. Of course, elven goods and wooden items also *sell* for 10% less. With its reputation for fine woodworking, wooden items with decorative embellishments provide an additional +3 to Merchant skill when selling to people outside the forest.

Extensive knowledge of magic and natural magical technique makes magic cheap here. Someone can be found to cast any druid or wizard spell at $4 per point of energy, and just about any potion can be found in an inexpensive (half price!) version made with Herb Lore.

Tanir Aesayya also produces a fabric known as Impenetrable Spider Silk. While not *entirely* impenetrable, it is remarkably resistant to being cut or pierced. Treat Impenetrable Spider Silk armor as regular giant spider silk armor, but it provides DR 3 against cutting damage and DR 4 against impaling and all types of piercing damage. It's +199 CF if available at all outside of the forest and qualifies as a special order, but in Tanir Aesayya, it costs a mere +149 CF.

# The Triple City of Amadan

## by Matt Riggsby

Amadan is, in one sense, a single city. Its inhabitants share a common culture and language, are ruled by a single government, and can stroll around town, seeing everything worth seeing over the course of an hour or two. In another sense, it is three cities, three different settlements separated by thousands of miles. What makes this possible is a set of three magical portals linking each to the other as though different continents were only a short walk away from one another.

## Geography and Land Use

Amadan consists of three settlements: Cold Amadan, Amadan by the Sea, and Hot Amadan.

Cold Amadan is not just north of the other two parts of the city, but quite a way north in absolute terms. Summers are short, and winters long, cold, and dark. Cold Amadan sits in the middle of a broad plain between tundra and grassland. The land is poorly watered and the growing season is short, so agriculture is difficult, but it is home to herds of large grazing herbivores and the predators who hunt them, all of whom have thick, attractive pelts. There are also considerable forests a few days' journey to the south, providing access to a considerable quantity of wood, and small but rich deposits of copper and other ores.

Amadan by the Sea is well south of Cold Amadan, in the warmer reaches of a temperate zone, and well to the west (about a half day's time difference). It sits on a small, steep-sided island at the extreme eastern end of an archipelago whose islands grow larger as they approach a nearby continent. Like the other islands nearby, it could support a population of fishermen and a little gardening and grazing (the sandy soil and lack of water sources would preclude any other kind of agriculture), but as it stands, the island is almost entirely built up. In fact, there have even been some efforts to artificially increase its size with pilings, rocks, and sand filling in some shallow spots by the shore. Some nearby islands serve as suburbs, with large comfortable villas for wealthy residents who want to get away and clusters of smaller homes for poorer people who can't afford to live on the main island.

Hot Amadan is just a bit east of Cold Amadan (about an hour's time difference), but far to the south, in the tropics just below the equator. The weather ranges from hot and mildly humid to very hot and oppressively humid. The city's immediate surroundings are largely farmland, but its surroundings are a lush rain forest, dotted with clearings around outlying villages. There is also a large river a few miles away.

The city's population is about 70,000; on average, each settlement has about a third of that total. However, there are seasonal shifts, with fewer in Cold Amadan during that settlement's winter and more in its summer. No segment of Amadan is particularly large as cities go, but because of allowances for the shifting population, they are relatively spacious, with relatively broad streets and large plazas in both Cold and Hot Amadan. Amadan by the Sea, of course, has relatively narrow streets and small public places, given the limited room.

## History

Amadan was never intended to be a city. About 1,200 years ago, three sorcerous siblings (one brother, one sister, and one who was both) attempted a magical experiment to link their widely separated strongholds. Their goal was to create permanent magical portals through which they could travel and communicate easily. They succeeded, in a narrow sense. They were able to establish their portals, but an unexpected and immensely powerful backlash destroyed them.

Natives of the three regions, sensibly enough, avoided the sites for many years, but eventually the memory faded and people began filtering back. Legend has it that nomads near what would eventually became Cold Amadan were the first to happen upon their portal. Looking through one side, they saw a sandy slope leading down to the sea, lit only by the stars when it was mid-day on their side. Through the other, they felt a breeze hotter than their warmest summer melting the snow on their side. Some brave soul ventured through and found himself half a world away, then turned around and, with a single step back through an identical portal, was home again.

Whoever went through first, nomads from the north soon met tribal villagers from the south, and soon thereafter they met fishermen working their way up the archipelago. Cautiously at first, but eventually enthusiastically, they began trading with one another: furs and wood (some of which turned out to be outstanding for boat building) from the north, fish and metal goods (traded up the island chain) from the slightly higher-tech islanders, and a variety of exotic woods, fruit, spices, and other goods from the south. Small settlements of traders, craftsmen, and amenities for travelers soon sprang up around the three portals, and they began to take on an unusual hybrid ethnic character as the racially and culturally disparate natives of the three areas developed a common language and began to intermarry.

Though the portals became important local centers, each was quite remote from any center of population, so they grew slowly. The island was probably closest to civilization, but the nearest nation, a kingdom with theoretical dominion over the island chain, was collapsing under internal warfare and a general economic depression. The first significant threat to the growing settlement was a group of pirates who, without the dying kingdom's navy holding them off, were raiding their way down the coast and up the island chain. Had Amadan by the Sea been simply an island town, it certainly would have fallen to the raiders. However, it was impossible to blockade because it could be easily supplied from the other segments of the city, and raiders who attempted landings were deeply surprised that the meek fishermen they had expected to find were reinforced by fierce jungle bowmen and enormous axe-wielding warriors from the far north.

Still, Amadan by the Sea was, at the time, the settlement's only real port and closest link to civilization (several days sailing in good weather, as opposed to weeks of arduous overland travel to the empires closest to the other parts of the city), so some stronger defense was in order. A number of pirates were contracted to serve as a sort of mercenary navy to defend Amadan by the Sea, and the arrangement worked well enough that a decade later, when raiding by neighboring tribes in the area of Hot Amadan became an issue, several of those were retained as mercenaries as well.

## *Wild Life*

Amadan's unusual configuration may be useful for commerce, but it carries a downside as well. For centuries before people settled down around the portals, they lay open to anyone or any thing which wanted to go through. This included a good number of monstrous creatures. Many wandered to the other side and back after a short time or died soon after passing through. Some, though, survived and adapted. The magical background around the portals being what it was, a few even cross-bred with other creatures already there. As a result, the wilder areas beyond the segments of the city proper are filled with all manner of unusual creatures, like enormous jungle-dwelling stags, giant snow-dwelling apes, and tiger sharks which are part tiger. Monster-hunting adventurers around Amadan can always count on finding something new and unusual.

In the century that followed, Amadan's reach grew slowly but steadily. Around Hot Amadan, the city's merchants began to build a network of trading stations defended by its mercenaries; those settlements formed the nuclei of a network of small towns concentrating trade and agricultural production under Amadan's economic hegemony and, effectively, political control. With a fleet and no one to stand in their way, the Amadanese established more direct control over their archipelago and nearby coastal areas of the adjoining continent.

At its height, after three centuries of expansion, Amadan had direct control over perhaps a million people, about a tenth of whom were actual residents of the city, and influence over as many more in allied and dependent territories. The only area in which Amadan's control was not strongly felt was around Cold Amadan, and that largely because the population was simply too sparse in the cold wastelands for anybody to be firmly in control.

And then the rotting plague hit. A terrible ailment swept through the region around Hot Amadan; traditional accounts say that one in three people died painfully, and as many others fled. Worse yet, many victims arose as fungal masses which coagulated into larger, aggressive masses and tried to consume any survivors they could find. The plague spread to the other segments of the city, killing many in Cold Amadan and Amadan by the Sea. However, the virulence of the plague was apparently vitiated by climate. Although as many people inside the other segments of the city died as in Hot Amadan, hardly one in 10 in Amadan by the Sea's archipelago contracted the plague, and hardly any people in the small settlements established around Cold Amadan were affected. Indeed, the monstrous masses of plague victims often froze and could be safely chopped into chunks and burned. A small popular movement pushed for blocking the portals to seal plague-ridden Hot Amadan off from the rest of the city, but in a defining historical moment, the city's ruling council refused to shut out their afflicted brethren, electing instead to send through as much aid as they could gather.

Several more waves of plague passed through the city in succeeding years (on average, once a decade for the next century), although none were quite as deadly as the first. Nevertheless, it was a serious blow to Amadan's power. The population of its breadbasket region was severely depleted and its shipping suffered. The region of Cold Amadan, though relatively healthy, grew as it became a refuge for those fleeing the plague, but living was difficult there.

Moreover, trade networks frayed and the power vacuum left by Amadan's temporary decline was quickly filled. Hot Amadan's neighbors had become more sophisticated over the years (the Amadanese believe that, ironically, this was the direct result of their influence), and various alliances took control of the remnants of the towns and trade networks isolated from their mother city. The kingdoms near Amadan by the Sea were also starting to revive around this time, putting a damper on Amadan reclaiming its coastal territories. And even Cold Amadan began to suffer. Long regarded as an unpleasant but safe region, a series of particularly cold winters began, accompanied by the appearance of huge, shaggy wolves prowling the tundra and snow wyrms raiding outlying settlements (fur-maned serpents with icy breath, not to be confused with larger, more worm-like ice wyrms).

Nevertheless, Amadan has managed to establish some sort of stability. The plagues have passed for now, so the population has had a chance to return to something like its previous levels. The regions around Hot Amadan and Amadan by the Sea are now occupied by potential rivals rather than easily subjected villagers and tribesmen, but they make better trading partners, and despite their ferocity the predators around Cold Amadan yield very valuable pelts. Moreover, a number of kingdoms and empires at a moderate distance from Amadan are experiencing periods of growth.

In the far south, a region of powerful city-states east of Hot Amadan has resolved certain internal problems which have plagued it for the past century or so, and trade in that direction is increasing. In the north, a number of northern tribes have become part of increasingly sophisticated trade networks and are visiting Cold Amadan more often to purchase goods for sale to growing kingdoms farther south.

At the moment, Amadan is both reasonably secure and prosperous. The question, then, is how long it will last. The city lacks powerful allies, and its trade ties are still a bit shaky. More unrest in any of its markets could still cause severe economic problems, and despite the city's defensibility in the short term, war with the southern tribes or the kingdoms near Amadan by the Sea could be more costly than the city could afford. But until that becomes a threat, there's money to be made.

## Society

The people of Amadan are divided into three social classes: citizens, residents, and pirates. Citizens are members of a number of families in residence since the formal founding of the city, an event somewhat lost in the mists of time. Any child of two citizens is also a citizen.

Citizens are divided into three "clades": the Djatami, the Tevik, and the Leoti. Each clade is loosely identified with the original residents of each segment of the city (the Djatami with Hot Amadan, the Tevik with Cold Amadan, and the Leoti with Amadan by the Sea), although intermarriage has long since made the ethnic associations nearly meaningless. Clade membership is transmitted via seniority. A first child inherits the clade of its older parent. Later children alternate, with even numbered children inheriting the clade of the younger parent and odd numbered ones inheriting the clade of the elder. The clades are groups of broad civic importance. They sponsor charitable efforts, form teams for various competitions, arrange celebrations and other ritual events, and so on. They also serve as electoral bodies, electing members to civic offices associated with the clades.

About a third of the people living in Amadan are citizens. Most of the remainder are residents, people without the political representation or ritual obligations, but who are permitted to live within city walls or on Amadan by the Sea at the cost of a few additional taxes. Legitimate children of one citizen parent and one resident parent are granted resident status but are not charged the usual resident fees.

Amadan's first line of law enforcement and the core of its armed forces are its third class, the pirates, comprising about 10% of the total population. The relationship between Amadan and the pirate mercenaries of its early days was formalized in a long-term arrangement. The pirates were granted the right to settle in Amadan free of any taxation in return for providing military service. The term "pirate" simply stuck. Pirates are organized into households; each household has a hereditary charter obligating all able-bodied adults to service in return for privileges. Someone who doesn't want to be a pirate can simply choose to live elsewhere. Because of high mortality during wartime, entire households can vanish, so the city commissions new charters from time to time. Despite the danger, a charter is a desirable honor; during peacetime, a pirate can become quite wealthy, since they can import goods free of duties.

### *Secret Pirates of Amadan*

In addition to acting as Amadan's armed service, the pirates act as the city's covert and special forces. If information has to be gathered or some dirty deed needs to be carried out, it's a pirate who does it. This might, of course, be an excellent occupation for adventurers and the basis of a campaign.

### *The Toll*

The magic powering the portals is not without its problems. On rare occasions, perhaps one or twice a year, someone going through a portal will come out the other side changed. This change is called the Toll, the small price that must be paid in order to make use of the portals.

The change is usually a small physical alteration: skin or eyes (either the iris or the entire eye) change to an unusual color, hands acquire extra fingers, hair starts to writhe and twist slowly like a stand of undersea plants, the body is covered with a zebra-like pelt, and so on. In more extreme cases, the change might involve a noticeable shift in abilities. For example, one person acquired a set of wings which allowed her to fly, while another acquired the ability to see in absolute darkness, but his vision dimmed in increasing light, making him essentially blind in full daylight. Occasionally, the changes are mental instead. Someone might come through the portal having forgotten one set of skills but learned another or speaking a different native language. In any event, all recorded changes have so far been unique.

*A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.*

*– Chinese proverb*

The traits imposed by the Toll are hereditary, although not necessarily dominant. Consequently, many families have at least a few members with unusual features, and some are distinguished by the Toll imposed on them. Even the mental alterations are passed on in some way. For example, one family descended from a former cobbler seems to have an innate grasp of woodworking but are utterly hopeless at work with shoes, mirroring their ancestor's loss of his cobbling skills and commensurate understanding of barrel-making. The unusual appearance of many Amadanese can confuse visitors, but while people from Amadan may seem to represent countless different races, they are entirely human.

# Politics

Amadan is a republic with rather complex electoral politics. Each part of the city has a number of "plaza lords" (21 in Hot Amadan, 12 in Amadan by the Sea, 18 in Cold Amadan) selected by lot annually from senior members (above the age of 45) of a corresponding clade (from Djatami for Hot Amadan and so on). The title derives from their nominal responsibility over the various plazas at the centers of the city's neighborhoods. Changes in the city have erased half of the plazas (and new ones have sprung up in their place without change to the political structure), but the administrative districts they represent remain.

*But your art creates a window into another world . . . That is a true gift, to help others see the world in a different way.*

*– Rebecca Ross*

Plaza lords retain the authority to approve public works in their district, inspect goods sold there, supervise tax collection, officially record births, deaths, and marriages, and other small duties. They are compensated by being allowed to retain a portion of the taxes they collect, which is mostly spent in support of their duties. Frequently, this involves hiring clerks, professional inspectors, and others to whom they delegate authority.

The plaza lords select five members from their clades to serve on the ruling High Council for the year. The High Council serves as a legislature, executive branch, and final court of appeal. They appoint judges to hear cases beyond the competence of the plaza lords, handle foreign affairs, and so on.

Theoretically, this arrangement provides equitable government for all families and classes of citizens. In practice, there are occasional instances of election fraud, in the form of rigging the lot drawing for plaza lords. More often, less politically active citizens are persuaded to decline office, requiring a new lot to be drawn and giving more prominent citizens more chances. The result is usually a government which is often conflicted enough to achieve relatively little (save in wartime) but has many of the same faces, or at least family names, appearing year after year.

## *Law Enforcement and Armed Forces*

As already mentioned, the city's pirate class constitutes the core of the city's armed might. In peacetime, they serve as a constabulary and as marines on shipboard. During wartime, they function as elite troops and an officer corps, leading units made up of citizens and residents called up as a militia. The pirates are officially only junior and mid-level officers and operate under the orders of citizen generals, but most of those generals have the good sense to follow the military advice of their technical underlings.

Amadanese are generally excellent sailors, and on land field reasonable heavy infantry with good archers. However, their native cavalry is limited to individual scouts; there's no room for horses in Amadan by the Sea, and they don't long survive tropical diseases in Hot Amadan. Nevertheless, the city is wealthy enough to hire mercenary reinforcements of whatever kinds become necessary.

Amadan's chief military advantage, though, is that since its foundation it has been practically impossible to blockade or besiege. As the pirates who first attempted to raid the city quickly discovered, any one segment of the city can be reinforced and resupplied by the other two. Barring overwhelming force, Amadan can defend itself until its considerable monetary resources run out.

# Economy

Amadan's economy relies heavily on trade, and the city is in a particularly advantageous position to do so. Unlike many other trading cities, it does not insist on its merchants having a near-monopoly on trade within the city. However, it charges stiff tariffs on shipments of goods through the city not undertaken by a citizen. Foreigners must pay duties amounting to, depending on the specific goods in question, between 7% and 10% of the value of goods shipped. Citizens pay only a fraction of that, and pirates none at all.

The city and its merchants have historically made most of their money moving raw materials: woods, furs, and so on. It is particularly well known as a source for rare materials used by alchemists and enchanters. In more recent years, though, as the neighbors of Amadan's more southerly parts have grown more sophisticated, more and more manufactured goods have been finding their way through the city.

Amadan is known for relatively few high-quality products of its own. For example, it produces good painted pottery (Cold Amadan is near some good clay deposits) and a variety of wines based on mixtures of fruits native to the Hot Amadan region, but neither has caught on elsewhere. However, it is notable as a producer of perfumes and incense. Amadanese perfumers combine tropical flowers and aromatic woods with near-Arctic musks in ways not possible for most others.

# Science, Learning, and Arts

With almost unlimited access to the night sky (Hot Amadan's evening overlaps Amadan by the Sea's morning, and Cold Amadan is dark well into the day during the winter) and a wide range of longitudes, Amadan is a center for astronomical observation. Amadan's wealthy have constructed sizable observatories containing large sundials, astrolabes, and other equipment for tracking the stars, and its scholars have worked out some remarkably sophisticated theories about timekeeping, navigation, and the movement of heavenly bodies.

Despite that, Amadan seems a bit underdeveloped when it comes to other sciences and technologies. Glassblowing isn't an advanced art (none of the three segments of the city have appropriate sands for glassmaking), so optics is a perhaps surprisingly undeveloped science. Likewise, there are few deposits of metal ores in any neighborhood, so local metalwork is of average quality but rarely better. But the people of Amadan rarely care, since they can generally trade for what they want.

Literacy is also not particularly widespread except among the upper classes, and the written word is largely restricted to account books and technical records of astronomical phenomena. The general opinion is that mere words are insufficient for art. However, what Amadan lacks in written works, it more than makes up for in theater and visual arts. Amadan has developed several distinctive theatrical forms, ranging from two-person plays, often of a popular sentimental or satirical nature and performed in taverns or homes, to productions with large casts, elaborate sets, and a complicated formalized structure of stock characters and other conventions.

And just because Amadan doesn't go for written works doesn't mean it doesn't have books. Picturebooks, telling stories by a series of wordless (or nearly so) pictures are immensely popular among the upper classes. They are frightfully expensive, but generally exquisite and easily sold to people who don't share a language.

Painting is likewise popular. Buildings are decorated inside and out with murals and elaborate geometrical patterns in a wide variety of colors. This does a great deal to spruce up otherwise relatively dull architecture (most buildings in Amadan are fairly boxy wood or mud brick without much decorative detail).

As a center of trade, Amadan is used to visitors. It has a number of inns, hostels, and other facilities to accommodate travelers for as long as necessary. But, obviously, Amadan has its own distinctive civic features.

The most notable sights in Amadan are, of course, the portals. Each segment of Amadan is built around a portal, a metal ring with an inner diameter of 20 feet, set on its edge. Each side of the portal provides passage to the other two parts of the city. For example, in Amadan by the Sea, one may stand east of the portal and see Cold Amadan (and walk through into it), or go around to the west side and see Hot Amadan. Their material resembles a highly polished bronze deeply inscribed with mystic symbols. Practical experience suggests that the metal is much harder than bronze, if not harder than steel, although direct experimentation is forbidden. The rings are set into the ground for stability, so at ground level they provide a passage about 10 feet across (making the opening over 18 feet tall at its highest point). Each is at the center of a large plaza, allowing plenty of room for carts and draft animals to get around.

### *Local Specialties*

Amadan's major advantages derive from the location of its segments rather than any innate properties. A variety of luxury goods cost (and sell for) 10% less at Amadan than elsewhere, including furs, exotic woods, and perfumes. However, since it's an active trading hub with unusual reach, special orders (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers,*** p. 25) can be found with no delay or extra cost on a successful Merchant roll at -1 for every $1,000 (or part thereof) of the item's value.

## Daily Life

For reasons of convenience which should be obvious, the people of Amadan go for layered clothing in a very big way. Baggy trousers, originally common around both Cold Amadan and Amadan by the Sea, and a short robe-like tunic, combining styles originally common around Hot Amadan and Amadan by the Sea, comprise the basic modern costume, but all manner of other garments can be used with them: close-fitting undergarments, long and lightweight robes, heavy coats and furs, capes, and so on. Most people wear three or four thin layers at a time, though fewer are common in Hot Amadan and a greatcoat of leather and furs is common in Cold Amadan. Versatile leather or fabric shoes are common footwear around town, but fishermen and people around Hot Amadan often go barefoot. Civic officials have the right to wear specific patterns of colored sashes, while pirates wear boots with a knife carried in the top.

Food in Amadan is quite varied, making heavy use of spices and fruits grow around Hot Amadan, usually with seafood caught around Amadan by the Sea or herd animals hunted in the wild around Cold Amadan. The former are often "cooked" by marinating in acidic fruit juices, while the latter are often made into hearty and sometimes punishingly spicy stews which warm the body in the frigid north and facilitate sweating in the hot south.

The largest structure in Hot Amadan, ignoring its wall, is the Gran'Labari Theatre. It is a semi-circular, open air theatre taking advantage of a depression in the middle of a low rise to provide a performance space with good acoustics and shelter from the sights and sounds of the city around it.

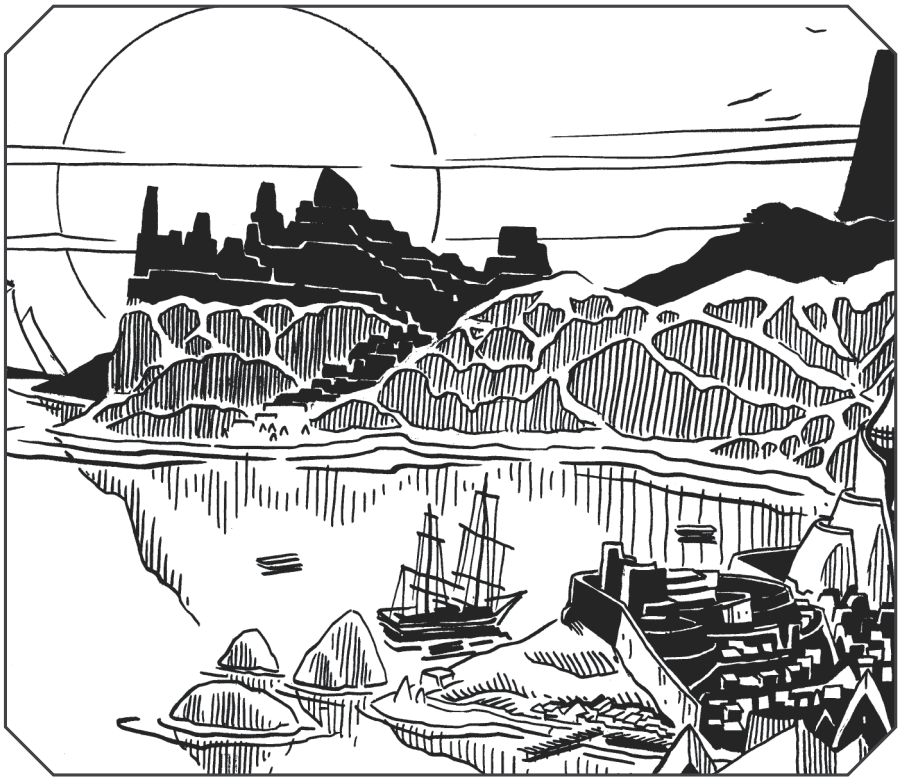
Hot Amadan is also home to a large public garden, containing distinctive plants predominantly from its own region, but also some from the environs of the other two segments of the city and a few from farther afield. It is a favorite spot for romantic assignations.

Amadan by the Sea's most notable structure is Ovolo's Lighthouse, a tall tower built on the island's highest spot. A fire is kindled nightly to make it visible in the dark, and it is clad in alternating bands of blue- and yellow-glazed brick to give it a distinctive appearance in the day. The top-most level is dominated by a platform for the nightly bonfire, but people with appropriate connections have been known to use windows on the upper floors for astronomical observations.

Cold Amadan is home to the Council Hall, the nominal seat of civic government. Large public meetings are generally held out of doors, but the Council Hall has large chambers for meetings of the plaza lords and the High Council, as well as separate rooms for trials, archives, cells for scribes and clerks, and the rest of the machinery of government.

Amadan celebrates a number of civic festivities. For example, the Consecration of the Portals is a solemn ceremony held in late summer during which officials anoint the portals with a variety of sacred substances (daubs of aromatic powers, sprinklings of blessed wine and oils, and the like). In the month following it, citizens will try to pass through the portals barefoot at least once in a tradition whose origins have become completely obscure.

A more interesting civic event is the Tmbeya, a race around the city held in late spring. Three people are chosen from each clade to compete. The course starts in Hot Amadan, goes around the city, through the portal to Amadan by the Sea, around its shores, back to the portal to Cold Amadan and to its gates, and then back again by the same route. To ensure that the racers go around all three parts of the city, they must collect colored ribbons at various points and tie them to long poles they carry with them, reaching the finish line with brilliantly colored banners. The ribbon-collecting checkpoints are set by tradition, but the route the runners use to reach them is up to them, which leads to considerable speculation and strategizing as each race approaches. Most of the city turns out to watch every year, and betting is intense.



## Amadan in the Campaign

Amadan could be used as a minor player in any fantasy world or an occasional destination or stop along the way, but it's particularly well-suited to being the base of operations for a group of PCs. Its multiple locations put it close to a variety of locations suitable for adventures: squabbling kingdoms in a temperate zone for Amadan by the Sea, monster- and barbarian-filled tundra and forests near Cold Amadan, and exotic jungle for Hot Amadan.

At the very least, it's a good location for the starting point for a campaign. At the crossroads of the world, the GM can justify characters of just about any background: questing knights, adventurous faux-Vikings, pseudo-ninja on the run, magicians searching the world for new knowledge, all could justifiably show up in Amadan, and plausibly share a table at a tavern where an old man stumbles in with a treasure map . . .

An Amadan-centric campaign might feature merchants (and their hangers-on) venturing all over the world, a group of pirates carrying out special ops-style missions to eliminate potential threats, or simply monster-hunters out to gather pelts in the far north or keep trade routes through the jungles open. As described, the city itself is more or less at peace with itself, but with very minor tweaks it could easily become a hotbed of intrigue for politically inclined players.

Here are some other ideas for adventures set around Amadan.

*The Hard Way:* One of the proverbial jokes around Amadan is the idea of going between the different parts of the city "the hard way," going over land and sea rather than through the portals. Perhaps adventurers make a Phileas Fogg-style bet that they can do it, or perhaps the enchantment which powers the portals is starting to fade, and fixing it requires that special items or materials be brought to each without going through them.

*Annus Horribilis:* One of the things which makes Amadanese feel secure is the knowledge that, while things might go badly around one part of the city, they couldn't go badly around all three. Could they? It's unlikely, but possible, that Amadan could find itself attacked on three fronts. For example, a charismatic warlord near Hot Amadan could raise a wide range of local tribes against the semi-foreign Amadanese (the visible consequences of the Toll could easily be taken as the result of demonic influence), while an ambitious kingdom on the mainland makes a play to establish control over the archipelago and a particularly hard winter sends the wolves and snow wyrms after humans as well as animals. Amadan would, for the first time, find itself cut off from aid. What can adventurers do to save the city?

*Weird Siblings:* Legend has it that the backlash from creating the portals destroyed the magicians who created it. But what if it simply displaced them in time, to reappear centuries after they vanished? They were clearly quite powerful to have created the portals to begin with, and the remote locations they chose for their strongholds suggest that they don't like company. They're unlikely to react well to finding tens of thousands of people using their portals, and a band of adventuring heroes may be the ones who have to convince them to leave the city alone.

# Uxuloth, City of the Dead

## by Matt Riggsby

In a distant corner of the world, crouching atop a hill and shrouded by darkness, is Uxuloth, the city of the dead. It is a society of undead and lurkers in tombs, of once-human and semi-human monsters who have fled the world of the living to find some kind of peace. Its ruler purports to desire only solitude, but are you going to trust the word of a centuries-old animated skeleton with an army of vampires and zombies at his command?

*Over the next few centuries, the settlement at Uxuloth slowly grew as more liches and vampires trickled in.*

## Geography and Land Use

Uxuloth occupies a steep promontory where a mountain range begins to trail off into foothills, about 20 miles east of an ocean inlet. The land to the north of the mountains is dry but arable plains, while to the south lies a rocky desert. The land itself is rocky, banded with shale and granite, and the soil is thin. There has been a little farming and herding on the few small plateaus and shallower hillsides of the surrounding area, but for the most part the land is unpromising for agriculture. Birds and a few goats live off a scattering of tenacious, scrubby vegetation. Such food as is necessary is imported. The nearest human habitation is at least four days' travel away over land, and the nearest town of any size is more than a week.

The city itself occupies the west-facing slopes of a high hill. The eastern side is a sheer cliff, unsuitable for building, so the city is shaped a bit like a cone sliced in half vertically. The shore of a nearby sea is just barely visible in the distance, though unpredictable waves and jagged rocks make it a terrible place for ships to land, so Uxuloth overlooks the sea but effectively has no port.

One of the most striking features of the region is the Everstorm. Despite the name, it's not actually a storm (although rumor has it that the Bone King can use it as a source of lightning to strike enemies who come under it). Rather, it's a permanent formation of thick, dark clouds about three miles in diameter which prevent the light of day from touching the city. Other weather systems passing through the area may cause rain now and again, but the Everstorm itself drops no water on the city.

## History

The site of Uxuloth was originally occupied by a small garrison set by a great empire, little more than a frontier observation post at its southern extent, keeping an eye out for dangerous nomads from the desert beyond, who never appeared. The empire fell, as empires do, leaving ruins behind. Some centuries later, the crumbling watchtower was reoccupied by a lich, a powerful wizard who had reanimated himself after death. He took the isolated spot as an ideal place to carry on his magical research, taking with him a few non-living servants (some undead, some animated by magic but never truly alive).

A few decades thereafter, the lich reached an agreement with a trio of vampires fleeing vampire hunters half a world away. The vampires would act as more powerful, intelligent agents for the lich than his current servants, in return for the right to shelter at his compound. The arrangement worked well. Over the next few centuries, the settlement at Uxuloth slowly grew as more liches and vampires trickled in, seeking the company of their own kind or fleeing the living who hunted them, and their followings of ghouls and other servants grew. They began to depend on a growing body of zombies to perform physical labor. The city's founder, who continued to hold the reins of power, became known as the Bone King.

Uxuloth reached its height about 300 years ago when a militant monastic sect launched a crusade against the undead. The warrior monks were able to overcome many powerful but independent undead by sheer weight of numbers. Survivors flocked to Uxuloth as a natural center of resistance.

In time, it also became a natural target. With a final great battle under the Everstorm, the dead armies of Uxuloth overcame the monastic legions. The surrounding area, never thickly populated or frequently visited, became completely deserted for fear of the monstrous city. It has not been seriously threatened since, and its population remains near the peak it achieved at that time.

However, the strain of maintaining its position is starting to show. Instead of a fractious lower class, the city's day-to-day economy and industry rest on a large population of zombies. As the city grew, the supply of dead bodies easily matched pace with any new population. But even zombies wear out over time, and it is becoming harder and harder to replace them as they do.

There is a general feeling that decisive action needs to be taken to sustain the city's faltering way of "life." But that direction is not forthcoming. In recent decades, the Bone King has become nearly quiescent, spending days, even weeks at a time in silent contemplation of whatever mysterious issues concern him. His administrators continue to run the city based on old policies, but the lesser aristocrats of the city agitate for a larger role in running things.

## Society

Uxuloth's society is rigidly divided into three classes. Each has more privileges and legal protection than the one underneath. At the top of the ladder are the High Undead, or liches. In addition to the Bone King himself, the High Undead occupy the city's priesthoods and a number of high offices. Any lich who pledges loyalty to the Bone King may become a resident of the city, but at the moment there are about 100 in residence.

Below the High Undead are the Eaters of the Living, or vampires. Where the High Undead are the city's rulers, the Eaters of the Living are the officers and chief agents in the field, directors of industry, and, as much as the city has one, polite society; while the High Undead are a generally odd and solitary bunch, the Eaters of the Living tend to be quite social. They are divided into Houses, where relationships are traced by who made one a vampire and marriage-like unions made with other vampires ("divorce" is fairly frequent, and vampiric society resembles a slow-motion soap opera with blood drinking thrown in) rather than any biological or marital relationships from one's living days. Potential immigrants at this level of society or below must be sponsored by the head of a vampiric house or a lich. There are perhaps 1,500 in the city.

Beneath them are the Eaters of the Dead, ghouls and other eaters of carrion. Some are not, technically, undead, but all have a mystical dependence on the flesh of sentient beings. They constitute the rank-and-file artisans, assistants, sergeants, and overseers. There are about 5,000 of them in the city, although their numbers vary from time to time.

Below these residents are three groups with no real rights. The most numerous are the animate dead, mindless zombies who perform most of the city's physical labor. They are treated as a valuable resource and their use is regulated by the city, but they have no more rights or political power (and no more volition) than the city's streets and walls. The number varies considerably, but is currently around 55,000, a number seen as too low for the long duration.

The second are the Chattel: live captives and slaves brought to Uxuloth to feed the vampires and, if there's enough left of them, to be fed to the ghouls or reanimated for labor. The High Undead have little use for them, save for the occasional need for a mortal to sacrifice in a magical experiment, but the other classes of the city need them very badly, and since the High Undead depend on *them*, they need live mortals as well. Most vampiric houses have a moderately sized stable which experiences high turnover despite the increasingly expensive use of healing potions to keep them healthy. Depending on the preferences of the household, they may be treated as anything from livestock to "guests" (although polite treatment is invariably the result of the head of household's desire to appear magnanimous rather than any actual regard), but it's quite clear to everyone involved how they'll end up. At the moment, there are probably between 3,000 and 4,000 in the city, which is likewise rather too small a number for comfort.

The final group is the Quick, free living people of various races, including human hangers-on to the recently undead, worshipful death-cultists, a handful of extremely brave merchants, and a few travelers who have come to the city in hopes of gaining powerful secrets. They are not, strictly speaking, residents. No living person is allowed to stay in the city between sunrise and sunset (being property, the Chattel don't count), so they live in a small suburb just outside the walls. They have no rights as a group, but individuals may be granted sponsorship by a vampire or lich, making it moderately illegal to kill them (punishments depend on class and details of sponsorship, but tend to involve a stiff fine). There are about 5,000 of the Quick living outside the city more-or-less unmolested.

The city's physical construction mirrors the class structure. The Bone King's palace is at the top of the hill, the residences and primary haunts of the High Undead below that, with mansions of the Eaters of the Living, districts of the Eaters of the Dead, and industrial areas for zombies farther down and living humans living outside the city walls.

*Death be not proud, though some have called thee*
*Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,*
*For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,*
*Die not poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.*

*– John Donne*

## Government and Politics

The Bone King survives and is still the city's absolute ruler. However, he shows increasing reluctance to rule. Or, indeed, to move. He spends most of his time seated in his throne or in his tower, observing the world through a scrying stone, and has been known to remain completely motionless for days at a time. Serving him is a body of censors, a powerful combination of secret police and bureaucracy making sure the Bone King's laws are upheld. Censors are themselves High Undead, although they employ a network of spies of all classes.

The Bone King is advised by the Senate, a group of 17 vampires serving overlapping terms of 17 years each, with one being replaced annually. A prime minister is elected from among the senators each year. As each seat becomes vacant, three candidates are nominated by the Eaters of the Living and one of them is chosen by lot by the priests of the dead gods. If a senator is killed or destroyed, his seat stays vacant until the next election (unless the Bone King intervenes, which he never does). Although the Senate has no legislative power, it must hear proclamations before they officially become law and senators act as both generals in times of war and magistrates, trying criminals apprehended by the censors.

The politics of Uxuloth are complex for a place where so few people can be directly involved in the political process. Senatorial and election politics, for example, are often subtle contests between rival vampiric houses, contests which have become sharper and more important of late. The Senate, censors, and priests of the dead gods have been quietly jockeying for authority for centuries, but with the Bone King growing increasingly moribund, the Senate has been exerting more and more influence over the day-to-day governing of the city. The High Undead worry about the growing vampiric ascendancy, but they are handicapped by their relatively small numbers and the Bone King's inaction.

There's also growing agitation for increased power for the Eaters of the Dead. Although they are rarely as individually powerful (physically, magically, or, sad to say, intellectually) as the Eaters of the Living and the High Undead, they are far more numerous; with the city's increased trade over the decades, they are becoming, as a group, significantly wealthier and more connected to the outside world.

In addition to conflicts over internal issues, the city has seen recurring conflicts of the question of isolationism and undead supremacy, essentially maneuvering around the question of what Uxuloth's relationship with the outside world should be. Despite the clear need to maintain the zombie work force, the residents of Uxuloth have long-standing and justified concerns about contact with the living world. The isolationists favor minimal contact with outsiders, no more than is necessary to fill present needs, while the engagement faction champions more expansive, long-term ties.

The factions are themselves divided. Among the isolationists are the fatalists, who suggest that the city be allowed to die a natural death, just as any living thing must pass away. Since much of the city's sentient population has consciously chosen to circumvent death, this is very much a minority opinion, although some very powerful High Undead are sympathetic to the position even if they're reluctant to commit to it. The engagement faction is divided between imperialists, who believe that Uxuloth must control the living people it deals with in order to prevent further wars against the undead, and the integrationists, who favor building alliances and regular trade as a means of not arousing the hostility of the living (since much of Uxuloth's population is inherently predatory on mortals, it's not clear how integrationist policies are to be implemented).

At the moment, isolationists hold the upper hand. It's a position held by most of the High Undead and a significant number of Eaters of the Living, particularly first-generation vampires who fled danger and oppression in the living world and have no desire to return. However, potential threats to their food supply are pushing more of them toward at least cautious imperialism. They have the support of a great many of the Eaters of the Dead, who see expansion into the outside world as an opportunity for enriching themselves.

The current prime minister is Acadro of the house of Varania, a second-generation descendant of one of the vampires who served on the first Senate. He has just started his fourth consecutive term as a Senator, which suggests divine favor to some, undue influence to others. Acadro's tendency toward expansionism is fairly open, but he's a master of compromise, bringing together most of the expansionist factions while not tipping his hand toward either imperialism or engagement and not giving isolationists undue cause for alarm. He has spoken in favor of establishing an area of direct control beyond Uxuloth's current sphere of influence, but publicly favors alliances and trade over warfare as a way to bring in cattle. As it happens, a majority of the Senate has isolationist leanings, centered around one Melixa, also of the house of Varania. Acadro and Melixa were turned by the same vampire some centuries apart and have been fighting for control over their house for centuries. Melixa is known to associate with Chun Kyai, the chief censor.

### *Doctor Death*

Medical care for mortals in Uxuloth comes through alchemy and mundane physical techniques including Esoteric Medicine, but not through Healing spells. Clerics in Uxuloth don't go in for that kind of thing. But there are nevertheless any number of skilled physicians in the city trying to keep the Chattel alive as long as possible. One of the city's special preparations is called "strength of blood." It's a healing potion which restores lost blood to the subject. In addition to stopping ongoing bleeding immediately, it restores 1d HP lost to blood loss (and *not* to any other kind of injury). Repeated doses have a diminishing effect; each extra dose taken within the next day restores a cumulative two fewer HP. Each dose is $40, 0.5 lbs.

## Religion

The official religion of Uxuloth is appropriate macabre: the worship of dead gods. The Bone King and many of the High Undead have made a practice of finding forgotten religions and gods who are no longer worshiped or believed dead by their one-time worshipers.

Priests are appointed from among the High Undead. On a day-to-day basis, they simply perform rites and maintain temples. However, they serve as a divinatory arm of the government in the infrequent event the Senate or the Bone King decides to see what the future holds. They also serve as a rarely used court of appeal with the power to overturn the finding of the Senatorial magistrates. Their trials are painful ordeals for petitioners, leaving their subject scarred at best and often permanently damaged, so few take advantage of the option, and those who do are usually completely convinced of their own innocence.

In addition, since Uxuloth is ultimately a multi-ethnic city, other gods are privately worshiped. The High Undead tend to leave their old gods behind, but some of the vampiric houses maintain small shrines to the gods of their native lands and the Eaters of the Dead often hold on to a variety of foreign traditions.

## Local Specialties

Uxuloth is one of the few places where magic items are more or less freely available for purchase. However, there are some limitations and drawbacks. For any given item a buyer desires (for example, an amulet with Magic Resistance 2 or a thrusting broadsword with Flaming Weapon), determine the total enchantment cost. To see if it's available, consult the *Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), reading thousands of $ for yards and apply that as a penalty to a Merchant roll. For example, Magic Resistance 2 costs $8,000. Eight falls between seven and 10 on the table, so the penalty to Merchant is -4. If the roll succeeds, the desired item is available.

The other catch is that the item was likely made in Uxuloth. This carries two problems. The most immediate is that items enchanted in Uxuloth also carry Lifebane (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables,*** p. 52), which will not make the bearer of the item particularly popular once they leave the city. The other is that Uxuloth's distinctive style is quite unpopular. Reselling an item from Uxuloth comes with a -5 to Merchant skill to resell it.

## Armed Forces and Law Enforcement

Because of its remote location and fearsome reputation, Uxuloth rarely needs to exert military might. On those few occasions where it becomes necessary, a force of zombies is armed as heavy infantry (there have been sporadic and largely unsuccessful experiments with cavalry on zombie horses). The detachment includes a few Eaters of the Dead to issue tactical orders, usually one for every 20 or 30 zombies, and an Eater of the Living as commanding officer for every 200 or 300 zombies. The officers are appointed as necessary by the Senate (or, for small detachments, a single senator). An army of over 1,000 will have a senator as commander-in-chief and perhaps one or two High Undead for magical support both on the battlefield and to animate new zombies from casualties on the other side. One of them will be a priest as a sort of political officer, with authority to override the commander's decisions, although that authority is rarely invoked.

Law enforcement is the province of the censors. The precise number of censors is unknown; seven perform their duties openly, but it is believed that several more work in secret. Every censor, a High Undead hand-picked by the Bone King, is theoretically an independent agent answering only to the Bone King, but the most senior censor serves as an informal leader when unified action is needed. Other undead at all levels of society, however, work as deputized agents. Public manifestations of the censors are rare, typically limited to guards at the city gates and occasional patrols of armed zombies led by ghoul sergeants. With such a small sentient population, public disorder is rare and usually dealt with privately by members of each class.

## Economy

Even the dead want things. The Eaters of the Living and Dead both need a constant supply of new bodies for sustenance. The city as a whole needs them to replace the animate dead that wear out. The city's many magicians need magical raw materials, and there continues to be a market among many of the aristocratic undead for luxuries (largely books, textiles, and various ornaments; wines and exotic foods aren't in high demand, for obvious reasons). In order to get what the city needs, the Bone King allows limited trade with the outside world. The mercantile agents of Uxuloth conduct this trade slowly, carefully, and through as many intermediaries as possible.

At the forefront of Uxuloth's trade relations are favored members of the Quick, known as the blood merchants. They put a less geographically intimidating face on Uxuloth's steady imports of slaves. To avoid drawing attention to the trades, slaves are usually bought in small lots in relatively distant cities (recently purchased slaves who are familiar with Uxuloth are much more likely to attempt escape or suicide) and marched out closer to their destination. Once the slaves are well away from their point of purchase, the live merchant makes rendezvous with the zombies who will escort the slaves to Uxuloth. As with military detachments, they're accompanied by intelligent undead to direct the journey. Naturally, these caravans move by night, often digging burrows for shelter during the day (the zombies need no rest, but the slaves and caravan officers do). Journeys are long, with routes chosen to minimize human contact, typically through wilderness and wasteland. The necessary precautions are, unfortunately, expensive in terms of time, supplies, and wear-and-tear on slaves. Sea voyages are avoided, both for lack of cover and an aversion on the part of many Eaters of the Living to traveling over water.

Zombie caravans will also carry less ominous cargo. There is a lighter but steady demand for various kinds of livestock (some of the undead may subsist on a mixture of animal and human substance), luxury goods, and magical materials: rare plants and minerals, books, spices, and dyes. Glassware, for practicing alchemy, is another common import.

In exchange, Uxuloth's major exports include magical items and copied manuscripts. Zombies make poor copyists, but lich and vampire scribes need little or no rest and have lifetimes to perfect their craft. These high-value items are typically sold discretely to a wealthy, specialized market. It's also a source of exotic jewelry, either made in Uxuloth or brought there by undead refugees from across the world.

## Points of Interest

Uxuloth is a very unfriendly city for the living visitor. There are few public houses within the walls and none that would encourage normal human patrons, and many of the city's residents would as soon eat the visitor as look at him. Most of the important locations in the city are landmarks rather than tourist attractions:

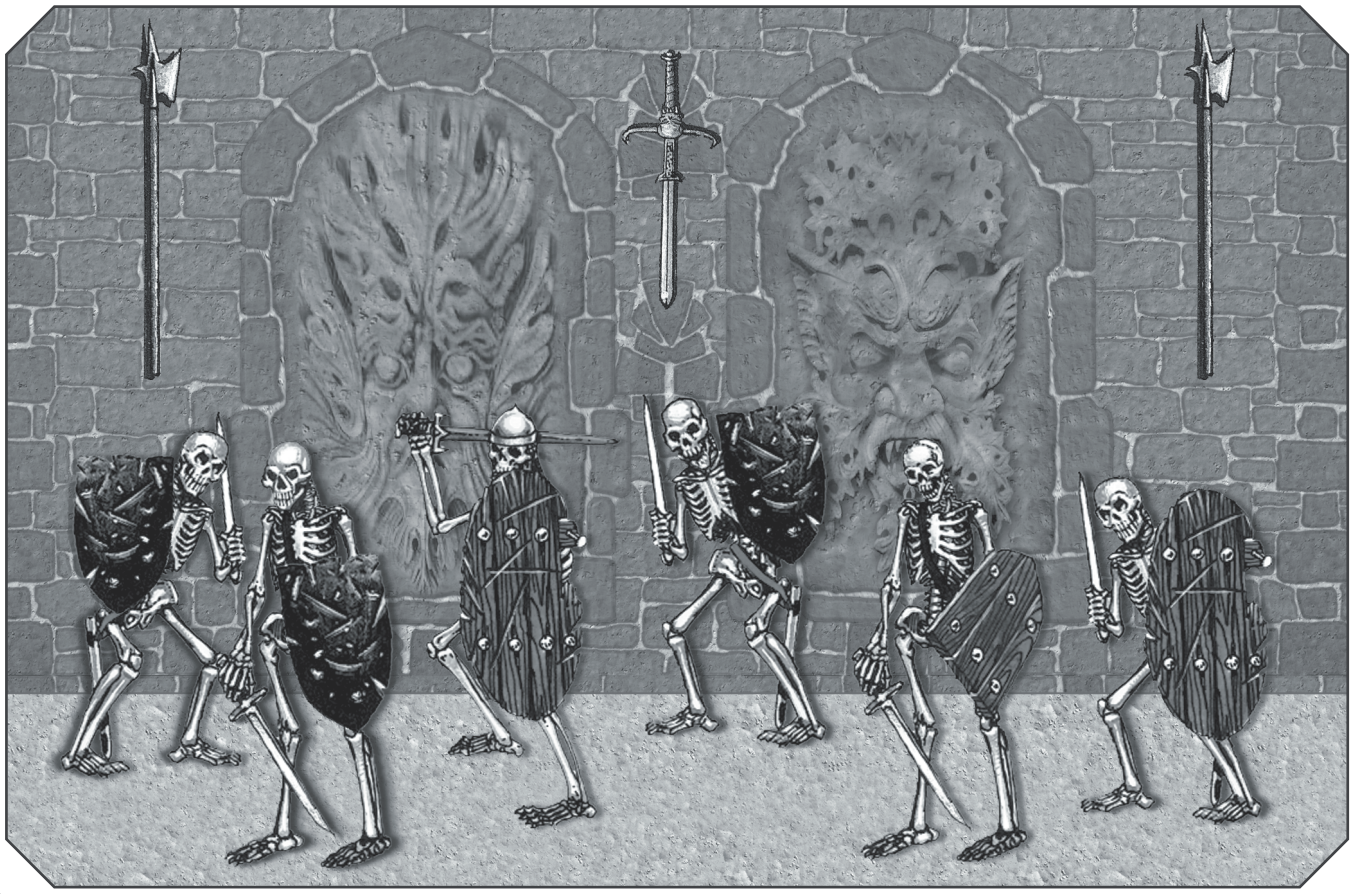
*The Bone King's Palace:* The site of the ancient empire's watchtower is now occupied by the palace of the Bone King. It is a windowless, cross-shaped building, decorated with elaborate carvings both inside and out. At the center of the cross is a tall spire with the king's private observatory and work rooms.

*Ruined Temples:* Immediately below the palace is a ring of temples in a remarkable variety of styles. However, once a temple is built, it is defaced in some way. Sacred statues have their heads broken off, baptismal fonts are drained, prayer wheels are frozen on their axles, and so on, all to indicate the defunct status of the gods they were made in honor of.

*Crimson Square:* This sizable public square (actually a lopsided pentagon), a little downhill from the Bone King's Palace and the ring of ruined temples, is the center of public activity for the Eaters of the Living. The Senatorial Hall, a sizable complex housing chambers for the Senate and a variety of offices, is at the uphill side. Residences maintained by the more powerful vampiric houses take up the other sides. In the center is a tall plinth with three headless statues representing Yamsan, Kulikin, and Dame Mauret, the original vampiric trio who first came to Uxuloth, all of whom are now long deceased. Rumor has it that the statues are actually their petrified bodies, awaiting the breaking of a curse to reanimate them.

*Charnel Warehouses:* The lower levels of the city contain a number of industrial mausoleums, which are the Charnel Warehouses. These serve as holding pens for zombies not currently in use, facilities for performing animations, and warehouses for corpses awaiting animation. Bodies may receive special treatment for specific purposes. They may be stripped of flesh to provide animate skeletons, alchemically treated to make them more durable or resistant to flame, or simply preserved for future animation. Stocks of dead bodies are, of course currently low, so the warehouses are largely empty, consisting of large, echoing rooms filled with the smell of death but little else.

*Quick Alleys:* Living visitors will probably want to stay close to the areas occupied by other living people as much as possible. This suburb, known collectively as the Quick Alleys, consists of a number of buildings and small plazas just outside the city walls. It's a very quiet place, and people tend to keep to themselves. Despite the relatively privileged position of the residents, there's still an air of fear about the place, and they try very hard not to do anything that could be regarded as disturbing the residents of the city proper.



They are generally not harmed, although there have been unfortunate incidents in the past. There are a few shops for food and other necessities, but no inns. However, visitors can occupy any of a number of abandoned buildings, and they may be able to find people willing to take them in as guests.

The undead will receive a much better welcome than the living, of course, and will see the same sights in a different light. The Eaters of the Dead live in small homes in the middle level of the city and there are usually empty ones for new residents to claim. They also have raucous pubs (it may seem sometimes that the ghouls are the only ones in Uxuloth who have a good time), although what they serve is best left to the imagination. Eaters of the Living will be received more-or-less permanently as guests in existing vampiric households so long as they behave themselves. Vampires entertain in their own homes, with a few parties and salons every day, and do not maintain or frequent public houses. The same is largely true for the High Undead, but they rarely meet socially in groups of more than three or four.

### *The Urban Dungeon*

Despite its relatively high population, there's a feeling of emptiness and disconnection in Uxuloth. The High Undead are solitary by inclination, the Eaters of the Living are deeply factionalized, and the Charnel Warehouses are at a low ebb. This means that suitably sneaky adventurers can treat it as a series of smaller dungeons with the occasional band of wandering monster strolling up and down the avenues. Violent disturbances within vampire houses are unremarkable and usually left to the residents to sort out, attempted escapes by Chattel are common and don't excite widespread interest, and there are rarely a lot of people around in the uppermost parts of the city, so as long as they're not spectacularly noisy about it, adventurers used to dungeon delving can go about much of their usual business, taking on one charnel warehouse or vampiric household as the object of a quest and then getting out.

## Uxuloth in the Campaign

Uxuloth is a natural candidate to be the capital of an evil empire. It demands a steady supply of dead bodies and many of its residents require the blood of the living. Even if Uxuloth isn't an expansionist power, few living people are likely to regard it as anything other than a focus of evil. Even living visitors who come with an invitation will feel at least a little uncomfortable there.

However, the city doesn't need to be so malevolent. It could simply be a quiet, remote, even otherworldly place, despite the very creepy setting. In an even more isolationist Uxuloth, the dead could simply be waiting for the end of the world, however many thousands of years it'll be. Stringing up well-behaved visitors by their heels and slowly draining them of their blood would simply be too much trouble.

And there's always the option of having Uxuloth at the center of a campaign, with adventurers as ghoul foremen, vampiric aristocrats, and ruling-class liches. Adventures within the city are likely to involve social and political intrigue, since the vast majority of sentient beings in the city are aristocrats or at least, for lack of a better term, middle class. Monstrous heroes could fight threats from within, carry out risky missions among the living, and might have the mystical resources to face dangers that threaten the whole world.

Here are some other campaign and adventure ideas around Uxuloth which assume that the heroes are living outsiders:

*War:* Although it has no friends, because of its isolation Uxuloth has no active enemies either. But new ones are just an anti-undead crusade away, or the result of a decision within Uxuloth that it's time to impose its own order on the surrounding world. Whatever the reason, the PCs will be facing an army with soldiers who never tire and officers who feed off of the living.

*Trade:* It's dangerous and uncomfortable, but trading with Uxuloth is also potentially very, very lucrative. A brave (or perhaps foolhardy) merchant hires the heroes to escort a shipment of slaves to the city. Can they be sure their employer has permission to come to Uxuloth? And can the PCs trade with its residents without being drawn into their tangled concerns?

*Rescue:* An important nobleman or a friend of the adventurers has been captured during a war, and they must find him and return him home. Following the slave trade, they discover that he is being taken to Uxuloth. How are they going to get in? And once they do, how are they going to get out? A twist on this idea is that once they infiltrate Uxuloth and find him, they discover that he has actually been brought there willingly to rejoin an old lover or relative, now a vampire, who now resides there.

These adventure seeds assume that the PCs are residents of Uxuloth:

*Renegade Vampire Army:* Tired of waiting for the quiescent Bone King to change his policies, an aggressive cabal of vampires organizes a zombie army and launches an attack on a nearby town to force Uxuloth into facing the outside world. Adventurers might try to stop it before the renegades bring a new war down on themselves, or might join it to get in on the ground floor of a new empire.

*Braaaains:* Uxuloth survives on its masses of zombie laborers, so a catastrophic problem in the Charnel Warehouses threatens the city's existence. Not only are the zombies no longer taking orders, they are attacking and devouring any sentient creature they can find. Can the city's residents reverse the disaster and return the zombies to their obedient state? Must they destroy the city's work force? Will they even be able to survive? And was this truly an accident, or did someone make it happen?

*The Lost Heir:* A (human) generation ago, a new vampire appeared in Uxuloth, a deceased princeling of an empire not too far away. The empire is now in the grips of a dynastic war, and the vampire prince is now the closest "surviving" relative of the old rulers. One of the factions has decided to use him as a figurehead to support their cause. They're going to try to take him from Uxuloth (whether he wants to go or not); other factions will try to make sure that never happens. The PCs will most likely have to find and fend off spies, but the more politically ambitious might try to help the schemes and extend Uxuloth's influence to a useful new ally.

# The Wellsprings of Creation

by Matt Riggsby

In most worlds, the gods unleash the powers of creation and then stop, letting their creation run its course. Here, they never quite finished. Consequently, the world is a place of constant new wonders and new horrors. Power is easy to come by, and life can spring up spontaneously wherever the four elements combine. There are always new places to explore, even when they contain bits of the old places they've replaced.

This article presents in brief a fantasy campaign framework for ***GURPS,*** with a particularly strong slant toward ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** campaigns. In doing so, it brings together many fantasy locations and characters previously presented in *Pyramid* and individually published ***GURPS*** locations. Now pursuit of the demon lord Shardak and his mirror may send you to the demon-ruled city of Hellsgate, or long tunnels from Caverntown may take you to the dungeon of Willowdeep.

## World Without History?

No one knows how old the world is (or, at least, has a convincing argument on that point). It's not that the world has *no* history. Indeed, it is littered with countless relics and other traces of prior civilizations. But between frantic cycles of growth and destruction and the occasional application of forces which warp the fabric of reality itself, what it lacks in most places is *progression*. However, it's clear that whatever forces created the world are still hard at work. Part of the world's abundance can be found in the spontaneous generation of new life. In areas of wilderness, away from observation, it is clear that new creatures come into being, arising out of the elements. Whether this is a consequence of ongoing acts of creation by the gods or a more "natural" magically enhanced process, it is nevertheless the case that no region can long remain unpopulated. After a span of a few years, an area depopulated by a catastrophe or simply naturally lightly populated (such as a desert or tundra) will start to see new individuals or even entire tribes. Deserts, steppes, and jungles are, therefore, a constant problem for neighboring civilizations, since they can be counted on to provide a barbarian invasion every few generations.

Many new beings are of clearly defined orders: newly created humans, dwarves, orcs, and so on are indistinguishable from those created by the usual means, though they typically speak novel languages and come with their own unique cultures. Elves are a bit exceptional; the profusion of elven types (high elves, sea elves, flying elves, etc.) appears to be a consequence of no two identical populations of elves ever coming into being. Most new populations can appear just about anywhere, though some are only created in specific contexts. New dwarves, for example, always appear in deep caves. And there is speculation that dragons are only born naturally and never spontaneously generated. The jury is still out on various breeds of faerie, who may leak through from a spirit world or be born from special blossoms as well as being born by conventional means. But there are always, always new monsters.

The world is full of towns, even reasonably large cities, which are quite stable, but larger societies tend to go through a recognized cycle. First, there is the struggle for growth. It may begin with the ambitious ruler of a small kingdom, a strong tribe, a benevolent action by a mystic entity, or something else which allows that society to start establishing its authority over a larger area. The expanding society absorbs its neighbors, drives out monsters in the wilderness, and establishes more secure lines of communication. With the expansion, there comes greater wealth, security, and some measure of social change. Often, there is considerable investment in magic, since mundane means are inadequate to protect the growing society from external threats and ensure internal stability. Though some societies rely on black magic and dark gods, most eschew diabolism in favor of more practical, morally neutral magic to achieve their golden age.

But with its profusion of energies, the world is chaotic. It's difficult to build and maintain a society when a dragon can suddenly appear to lay waste to the countryside, goblin hordes can advance unexpectedly from the wilderness, or archmages can accidentally turn cities to stone. Large societies inevitably collapse in a catastrophe: earthquake, holocaust (rains of fire are a well-documented meteorological phenomenon), plague, large-scale magical disaster, or simply the unexpected appearance of a large barbarian or monstrous horde. On rare occasions, two adjacent large societies may go to war and destroy each other in a barrage of mystical attacks.

Of course, these aren't everyday events. Large realms can exist for generations without world-shattering events. However, there's a marked tendency for larger states and organizations to suffer utter economic, demographic, and social collapse after a century or two. There seems to be a choice between taking up a lot of space and lasting a long time. Longer-lived societies are more conservative. They control magic, distrust innovation, and persecute groups bent on radical change. The elves surround themselves with magic, but use very slow magical processes more than the quick, flashy spells of humans and other short-lived creatures (they *can* use such magic and do so if they must; they just use other procedures in their everyday lives). Dwarves likewise use magic, but typically in a supporting role. They may use divination to find new ores, magic crystals to light their caves, and fire spells to light their furnaces, but their primary interest is in crafting superior tools.

# Races

All ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** races (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level***) are found in this world, though many won't be encountered in large numbers. This section describes general tendencies and social trends, but there will be numerous exceptions in play. Any race, for example, might be found in particularly cosmopolitan areas.

*For good and evil, man is a free creative spirit. This produces the very queer world we live in, a world in continuous change and insecurity.*

*– Joyce Cary*

## Humanity

Humans are, at the moment, the most numerous intelligent creatures. Their appearance can be diverse, with skin colors ranging from near-albino pink among the barbarians of the north to the exceptionally dark brown of the people of Bekembe and Algofoye, and adult heights from five to nearly seven feet are unremarkable (*some* humans with skin and hair colors in the blue and green range exist, but tend to be the subjects of direct magical manipulation). They balance numbers with an ability to reason and organize, allowing them to hold off sometimes more numerous orcs and other monstrous hordes. However, their ranks are proving to be a source for growing numbers of undead, and their unchecked ingenuity often results in political, economic, or magical catastrophe.

## Dwarves

Dwarves share much the same range of appearance as humans, though there's some argument over how widespread beards are. Some but not all dwarven women have them, though non-dwarves argue over whether all can grow them and some choose not to, or if only some do and dwarves have permissive standards on gender identification and performance. For the most part, they keep themselves in highly organized, highly conservative societies, though a visible minority (particularly junior family members who see no chance for improvement in rigid dwarven social systems) leave their home caverns to seek their fortune in the wider world. Like the elves, they don't cast lots of typical spells, but they are perfectly happy to use magic in support of their mundane craft work. For example, they may use enchanted tools and magical aids (enchanted fire-lighters, fire-resistance spells, etc) to create top-quality but unenchanted gear. They are also at the cutting edge of technical development, training many artificers and fascinating those of other races.

## Elves

Immune to age but not misadventure, elves are among the most conservative of races. Elven communities tend to keep in touch with one another, but generally prefer local government. Wood elves are the predominant type, but wide varieties of others can be found: flying elves, aquatic elves, green elves, red elves, and so on. Some suspect that novel types of elves are deliberately engineered, though without agreement on who the engineers may be.

## Goblin-Kin

More than tribal organization for goblin-kin is extremely rare, and larger hordes are usually held together only as long as a charismatic leader survives. A few can be found living peaceably in more settled areas, but the prejudices of their neighbors often make this difficult.

## Other Races

The remaining races are found in minuscule numbers, and usually in wildernesses and wastelands, with a few exceptions. Corpse-eaters, by necessity, live on the fringes of other races' civilizations and are increasingly found around centers of the undead, where they eagerly pursue positions as servants of the region's ruling class. Dark ones are usually solitary and ill-suited to close contact with anyone, but they may form loose associations which communicate letter or magic.

Gnomes and halflings mostly live on the fringes of other races' territory, contributing to those civilizations in some small way and benefiting from their protection. They are typically found around human or dwarven societies (halflings, for example, often provide dwarves with surface-grown produce), but sometimes shelter under elven protection as well. The various kinds of faerie folk are similarly associated with elven territories, though a great many individuals and even some small communities live in uncontrolled wilderness as well. Coleopterans have their own independent settlements, rarely larger than a small town save for a few full-fledged cities in northern Semaria (see p. 56).

## Dragons

Dragons exist in varieties which make even the elves look uniform, from tiny beasts which could sit on a man's shoulder to vast firedrakes which are rumored to sleep underneath mountain ranges. And from animalistic brutes to some of the wisest, canniest creatures in the world. They are generally solitary, living in remote areas and communicating with one another rarely and even then mostly by magic rather than face to face. Beyond demanding tribute and the occasional virgin, they rarely interfere in the activities of "lesser" mortals, though some dragons were involved in the Shansin Mandarinate (p. 57).

## Undead

The undead have their own turmoil to deal with. Uxuloth (see p. 55 and pp. 45-50) isn't likely to become an active ally for the living, but some hope that factions in the city can be persuaded to at least appear less threatening. However, the rising plague of zombies in southern Enota (see p. 55) is making the undead seem to be a more general threat, possibly leading to another crusade against them (and, some grumble, consumes a potential source of raw materials for the city's labor force). And the same goes, to a lesser extent, for Hellsgate (see p. 55 and ***GURPS Locations: Hellsgate***), with its own notable resident undead population.

# Everyday Life and Landscape

The world, then, presents a patchwork of civilization and wilderness. Areas are civilized to the extent that they can defend themselves against the monsters which inhabit the surrounding area. However, there is strong pressure to expand into those areas. Beyond the traditional reasons of a society extending its reach to attain more wealth and power, every wilderness is a virtual treasure trove of the lost relics of countless previous societies. Who knows what lost wonders this tomb or that ruined castle holds, once those pesky basilisks are cleared out?

But despite instability over long distances and the long term, small societies are extremely viable. Effective fertility rituals are widely used, sometimes enhanced by magical plows and mystically enhanced seed grain, ensuring that in most places, most of the time, most people get plenty to eat. For similar reasons, clothing is affordable, housing is plentiful, and healing is reliable.

With their lack of industry, well-settled regions more or less resemble any other pre-industrial landscape, on the surface. Most land is occupied by small villages and farmland. These regions are punctuated by a few towns or cities of appropriate size, which are centers of trade, government, and craft-scale manufacturing. The rural hinterland is also frequently home to small fortifications housing military professionals. These may be anything from feudal noblemen to garrisons of standing armies to a "national" police force, whose job is to protect from external threats (wandering monsters from the nearby wilderness) as much as to maintain law and order. On the edge of civilization, professional foresters and hunters need to be much tougher than their Earthly counterparts.

Even the wilderness can have its own safe spots. A less well-protected area of civilization or a spot between civilized areas may have trade routes along which caravans or even individual travelers may pass. Such routes often have fortified inns at intervals, providing protection from the usual threats of the trail. And, of course, particularly powerful individuals and strongly motivated small groups may establish their own strongholds in the wilderness, far from the interference of unfriendly governments. After all, though a few ogres in the neighborhood may frighten off peasants and other everyday people, a reclusive wizard or fanatical cult can defend themselves against such threats.

## Languages

Despite almost total social fragmentation, there is surprising unanimity in languages. Essentially, there are nigh-universal racial languages. Most humans, for example, speak dialects of the same common tongue, dwarves all speak Dwarvish, orcs all speak Orcish, and so on. Newly created intelligent creatures speak nigh-identical versions of their racial language, varying only in technical terms for things which don't exist in their environment (for example, a new steppe-dweller wouldn't have a word for "ocean"). There is some fragmentation, of course; loan words enter local dialects depending on how close relations are between races, and languages naturally diverge as societies develop. Therefore, most languages have regional dialects, but most dialects can be understood by the speakers of other dialects at a level or two of fluency lower.

## Technology

The world predominantly has the "olden tymes" technology of most of ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy,*** with occasional instances of clockpunk higher technology among dwarves, advanced states like Aquaclaro (see p. 54), and the laboratories of artificers. A large part of the reason is that societies rarely have the time and resources to develop any further before something happens and they fall apart again. They may leave behind some of their knowledge, but neighboring societies are often caught up in the latest collapse and are in no position to build on it.

Gunpowder is technically possible (indeed, the dwarves have invented it several times; see "The Demolisher" and "The Musketeer" in *Pyramid #3/36: Dungeon Fantasy,* pp. 4 and p. 17 respectively, for potential implementations), but it's not terribly popular. Fire spells set off gunpowder easily, it attracts fire elementals, and certain intelligent monsters *hate* it.

## Religion

It is clear that gods exist and intervene in worldly affairs. Lots of gods. Gods of good, evil, and cosmic madness. Gods of love, war, and craft. Gods of animals, weather, fertility, and fire. Gods of men, orcs, and dwarves. Demon princes and other immensely powerful spirits, as well as forces of nature and ancestors, are worshiped as gods by some, though theologians will question whether they qualify as gods on technical grounds.

All of these religions have a few things in common. One is that worship and obedience to codes of behavior in return for supernatural power is a common bargain. The other is that worship is generally local. Most religions have most of their followers within a few hundred miles of one another. Even significant religious movements such as the Aedenic movement rarely expand beyond regional importance, and the few which do, like the Lightbringers, collapse quickly.

The more visible religions are more or less benevolent, supporting fertility rites, charity for the poor, and temples for healing. Most would like to be in politics, but, save for a few theocracies in west-central Enota, have no more than moderate influence in even local affairs.

## Magic

Most of the world is normal mana, with frequent city-sized pockets of high mana. Areas of very high mana and aspected mana tend to be small, often no larger than a building of moderate size, but a handful of aspected mana areas are quite large. Infamous battlefields and graveyards, for example, may be death-aspected, and several ancient forests are plant-aspected. Low-mana areas are rare, and no-mana areas are all but unknown; no-mana areas "heal" over the course of a few decades, slowly returning to the ambient mana level.

Magery is a talent which just about anyone can develop. Some are born with it and others are not, but almost anyone can be trained in it. Anything beyond Magery 3, though, is rare.

# Regions

The world has three continents and a number of smaller islands. The continents are separated by the Narrow Sea between Rabilus and Enota and the Turning Water between those continents and the smallest continent, Semaria.

### *A Note on the Map*

The map (p. 58), though large, is not comprehensive. That is, the major geographical features and a number of cultural ones are indicated, but there is far more in the world than the map can show. The rivers shown on the map are the courses of major rivers; tributaries and smaller river systems may be invented at the GM's pleasure. Likewise, the cities, towns, and castles shown on the map are simply among the most notable. Many regions, such as the west coast of Rabilus and the northern part of Enota, have far more settlements than are shown, allowing the GM to create any number of minor locations as desired.

## Enota

Once past the icy mountains of the Snow Margin range, said to be the home of giants, the north of Enota quickly become hills and woods of greater or lesser size. There are significant regions of walled towns and villages protected by castles (see ***GURPS Locations: The Tower of Octavius*** for a typical example), separated by areas of thick forest. The area is known to sit atop a great many enormous cavern complexes such as the caverns of Willowdeep (see "Eidetic Memory: Super Dungeons," *Pyramid #3/50: Dungeon Fantasy II,* p. 20). These monster-infested cavern complexes make it difficult to keep the wilderness cleared of monsters, though there are a great many elven settlements as well, such as Tanir Aesayya (pp. 34-38).

A large part of the center of Enota is still recovering from the collapse of a large empire. The capital city, Carazani, was destroyed in a mystical disaster, and the immediate vicinity is still a wasteland, though a highly magical one. The empire had once controlled the middle third of the continent, from the major tributaries of the Thesseter in the north to the borders of Tianshilong in the south. The most successful survivor of the Carazani collapse is the booming merchant city of Aquaclaro (see "The Arsenal of Mageocracy," *Pyramid #3/40: Vehicles,* p. 11).

The territory east of the Astlans as far as the Gull of Fallan, though, is struggling to recover. It has reverted to widely scattered strongholds and their associated settlements surrounded by hostile wilderness, save for the western edge of the region, which still supports a few cities. There are a number of new forests and lone peaks, fallout from the destruction of Carazani. Much of it remains unexplored, and the monster population is on the rise, but the region doubtless contains many Carazani relics.

At the far western tip of this region, Amadan by the Sea (pp. 39-44) used to have significant influence in the area, and with the fall of Carazani, may some day regain it. Farther to the west are the Saurian Islands. It's not clear what the natives, a variety of reptile folk, call them, but the islands appeared, complete with populations and even at least one city, about 150 years ago.

The southeast coast of the Narrow Sea is occupied by what is currently the largest political unit in the world, the Tianshilong empire. The region is densely populated and highly advanced, but politically volatile. The dragon-god-emperor died some decades ago, but his close circle of advisors hold that he is too august to replace until a nigh-messianic heir from a long-lost bloodline is found. The central government is paralyzed by internal squabbling, so the governance of individual cities and provinces falls to local governors, whose abilities and competence vary widely. Indeed, some provinces are starting to crumble from the inside, creating pockets of chaos and opportunities for mystical and otherworldly threats (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Encounters 1: The Pagoda of Worlds*** is one such place). The empire is a mageocracy, with government officials required to pass examinations of magical talent and learning in order to advance in the civil service. The high mountains to the south of the empire are known to hold communities of martial artists and mystics whose philosophies differ from those of the imperial government.

Beyond the mountains lie the Devouring Lands, a vast desert punctuated by huge, rocky outcroppings. This area is a source of new orcish threats and worse every few generations, keeping Tianshilong governors on the border wary, particularly since, ominously, none have been forthcoming over the past few decades. There are rumors of a demon prince taking a particular interest in the region (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 1: Mirror of the Fire Demon***).

Farther south are the Qaram Emirates, a collection of culturally similar but politically fragmented principalities, sharing a love of horses (Qarami horses, raised in large numbers on the dry, grassy plains, are said to be the best in the world), date wine, and unbelievably elaborate poetry. The city of Amanapur (see *The Torturer's Apprentice,* pp. 117-125) is one of the more peculiarly governed examples. And far to the west, near the end of the barren peninsula, the city of Uxuloth (pp. 45-50) is given a wide berth.

The southern tip of the continent is occupied by mountain, jungle, and a number of small kingdoms, but most ominously it is also the site of a growing zombie infestation. The undead of the regions are largely slow shamblers (resembling horde zombies from ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons,*** p. 26, but dumber), but their numbers are great enough to be difficult to stamp out. The emirates have yet to unite against the threat, and the island kingdom of Bekembe is distracted by internal matters.

# Rabilus

Rabilus north of the Warrior Lakes – more like inland seas, but the name is traditional – is one of the less active areas of the world at the moment. Dominated by forests and swift, cold rivers and lakes, most intelligent life is concentrated on the coasts, usually in freeholds and villages; the fishing is very good if one can avoid the sea monsters. The inland area is lightly inhabited, save by Cold Amadan (pp. 39-44) and a few remote settlements such as the region around Caerceol (pp. 12-18). The Warrior Lakes are so called because they were once the site of intense sea battles between tribes living around them. The lakes are said to be home to lost riches in gold, the spirits of vengeful sailors, and huge aquatic dragons.

The region just south of the lakes has been the home of a series of kingdoms and empires through the centuries, and the region is full of valuable items, from lost treasures to fine woods and furs, so explorers and adventurers are common there. Unfortunately, there have been rumors lately of a growing number of monsters threatening to head west of the Echo Wall Mountains and south into lands which are, at the moment, more peaceful (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 2: Tomb of the Dragon King***). And if the monsters themselves don't directly cause problems in the regions, it is feared that the nearby Echeth peninsula, long ruled by a powerful but insular line of diabolists and necromancers, might react by extending its reach to the west.

South of the hills, as the dense woods of the north give way to plains and light scattered woods, the broad center of the continent is home to numerous city-states and kingdoms of moderate size. Among the largest is the empire of Thebor (see "Shadowland Runners," *Pyramid #3/41: Fantasy World-Building,* pp. 9-13), significantly reduced from its greatest extent but still using its system of extradimensional couriers to administer the empire.

The center of the continent is covered by the vast Khefric Desert from which various monstrous hordes periodically erupt; at the moment, increasing numbers of centaurs are appearing around the desert's borders. This is a particular concern for the megalith-building empire of Algofoye to the west of the desert. Over centuries, it has built a series of long walls providing a series of defenses against raids in force and full-fledged invasions. The desert is also said to contain a hidden city of demons (see ***GURPS Locations: Hellsgate***) somewhere in the northeast corner.

Mountains across the southeastern corner of the desert shield the regions beyond somewhat, allowing a variety of societies to thrive. For example, the city-state of Than and its neighboring towns hold together a modestly sized civilization by maintaining an extensive though sometimes perilous network of underground canals (see "The Qanat Pirates of Old Than," *Pyramid #3/64: Pirates and Swashbucklers,* pp. 21-28).

The southern end of the continent is just as warm as the Khefric, but much wetter. The kingdoms of Mixaztlan have filled swamps and carved useful land out of jungles to build their pyramids and spice fields. The kingdoms of Mixaztlan, each with their own god-king of the imperishable sun, practice human sacrifice. Visitors find this disconcerting, despite assurances that the slain are criminal offenders, who would be executed as an entirely secular punishment elsewhere. The jungles between Mixaztlan and Algofoye are mostly inhabited by less technologically sophisticated tribes who appear to be guarding lands containing large deposits of precious metals. However, since very little precious metal comes through Hot Amadan (pp. 39-44), it would appear that these rumors are false, or the natives are very, very good at protecting their riches. The Golden Geniza of Ezkali is believed to be lost somewhere in this region (*Pyramid #3/38: The Power of Myth,* pp. 4-12).

Finally, a considerable distance off shore lie the Eastern Islands. They're known for elaborate social conventions, high-grade alchemists, and a great many ninja clans. So many, in fact, that it has an unearned reputation for being the source of *all* ninja.

# Semaria

With the Half-Blind Straits, which are half-blocked by Champre's Steam (a permanent, stationary, but somehow self-contained region of constantly boiling water), and a population of giant insects (mostly carnivorous and hostile, save for a few Coleopterans settlements along the coast) occupying the north of the continent, contact between Semaria and the rest of the world is more difficult than one might hope. Still, there are good reasons to make the effort. The southern slopes of the continent's central mountains are home to a number of dwarf colonies which make themselves a bit easier to deal with than their cousins elsewhere, so there's a healthy trade in high-quality metal items.

More interestingly, though, Semaria is known for the extensive porousness of its underground. The center of the continent is undermined with countless miles of caves, stretching from Caverntown (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Setting: Caverntown***) in the northeast to the dwarven settlements under Kunruk (pp. 22-27) in the southwest. Some mountains near the center of the chain are so undermined that they are said to float in mid-air. Perhaps this is the source of the rock that Aulos (pp. 5-11) is built on.

# Inconstant Geography

Several significant parts of the world move on a regular basis. Even ignoring occasional appearances and disappearances of faerie villages and lost-island civilizations, there are several places which are always in motion. Consequently, they're not on the map, and the GM may place them as necessary. The constantly relocating Goblin Market (pp. 19-21) can appear quite literally anywhere (or, at least, anywhere on solid ground), and visiting it is likely to be a matter of luck and dogged pursuit. The flying city of Aulos (pp. 5-11) can likewise appear anywhere, but it moves at a more sedate pace and is a center for trade as well, so while it might be difficult to reach from time to time (for example, when it passes over oceans), it won't be difficult to find. Finally, there is the great beast on which Saroo (pp. 28-33) is built. Saroo, like Aulos, moves fairly slowly and in a more-or-less predictable path, so it can be found if need be, but may take some time in pursuit.

# Cosmology

The Wellsprings are widely regarded to be located at the physical center of the universe, with two moons, a sun, and a number of stars and planets revolving around it. Celestial bodies are widely understood to be fixed in concentric, invisible frames (epicycles) which carry them in regular paths around the world. The wizard-artificers of Bekembe have been working for years to weave sails which can be driven by starlight and ships capable of making the long trip to visit the stars.

## *Mad Beyond*

The physical universe is observably finite. The series of epicycles is bound by a final sphere in which are set various fixed stars. However, it is believe that there is a realm *beyond* the knowable space and time of the epicyclic universe, and impossible, madness-inducing things which dwell there. Some leak through into the universe from time to time. Their motivations are unknowable, and their presence frequently destructive.

# Metaphysical Cosmology

There are a number of more or less (usually less) well-explored extradimensional areas, collectively called "realms," which can be reached from the "mundane" world. Indeed, the world appears to be a hub at the center of a multidimensional cosmos.

## *Pocket Dimensions*

Small dimensions, ranging in size from a small closet to a small city, are, if not common, then at least a well-known and understood phenomenon. Climatic and mana conditions in pocket dimensions typically fall within the range of variations for the mundane world. Great sages and magicians have been known to create or discover them and harness them by installing portals. Once linked to physical doors, they can be used as refuges or simply extra living room without taking up any weight or space. Unlike other types of realms, their linkages to other realms are very limited. Most have a single link to the material realm or a material object, and none are known to have more than two. Perhaps the most common type of pocket dimension is the fairy shee, of which there are a great deal, often in woodland areas.

## *Elemental Realms*

A number of realms are associated with physical elements or material principles. Among the most notable are the four realms of the basic elements, the home of elementals. The air realm is an infinite space of calm air, clouds, and storms, though visitors may find some clouds solid enough to stand on. The earth realm is an endless series of rocky tunnels. The fire realm is a vast, cracked landscape full of flame, light, and heat. The water realm contains infinitely bottomless depths and no apparent surface; there is no land, but many free-floating coral reefs. However, there are other realms of an elemental character. For example, the green realm is an endless tangle of wood and vines.

## *Divine Realms and Paths of the Dead*

A number of souls are known to "walk the paths of the dead," a dim and cheerless afterworld. Though the inhabitants of this realm appear to bear the living no ill will as such, they *do* regard any of the living who enter their realm as trespassers, so adventurers are at risk. A subtle philosophical question is whether the paths are a true realm in their own right if they're a conduit between the living world and various underworlds among the divine realms and hells.

Divine realms and the various hells are less speculative. There are realms occupied by gods and divine servitors (they are usually shared only by closely related deities, if at all), and there are realms occupied by demons and other deeply unpleasant creatures. There are methods by which mortals can visit them, but its a rare mortal who is permitted to stay long in divine realms, and it is a rare mortal who can survive long in a hell.

# Lost Civilizations

Go anywhere in the world and dig down, and you'll find some remnant of an earlier civilization, if only in the form of a broken bit of pottery or a fragment of worked stone. Underground complexes and ruined strongholds from scores of civilizations are rife, but here are a few of the better-known ones, whose treasures are still being unearthed.

*Auld Moffret:* A largely druidic confederation, Auld Moffret united a range of powerful mystics and a few faerie enclaves in spanning northern the northern parts of both Rabilus and Enota. Their rough stone circles can still be found, though not all retain their magical powers.

*Carazani Empire:* Covering most of the middle of Enota, the Carazani produced high-quality steel arms and armor with surprisingly austere designs. Carazani architecture was very symmetrical; large complexes were almost always composed of mirror image halves.

*Chanter Alliance:* An association of technologically primitive tribesmen in the north of Enota, the Chanters combined strong spirit magic with a surprising number of orichalcum weapons (typically axes and short swords), a number of which are still in use today.

*Kuhud:* One of the few large dwarven empires, Kuhud outposts can be found in every significantly hilly area in Rabilus. Kuhud was known for well-decorated and high-quality metalwork; no Kuhud weapon is less than fine quality. In Kuhud settlements, adjacent chambers are of evenly diminishing size. If more room was needed, the largest chamber would be enlarged first, then smaller chambers immediately adjacent, and so on.

*Lightbringers:* The Lightbringers were a religious movement rather than a political unit, a combination of divinely supported clerics and lay martial orders. They were brought down by internal dissent, but they have left ruined temples, usually built according to local styles, and holy relics, decorated with their symbol of a rayed circle, across the world.

*Realm of M'tube-Keff:* Occupying large parts of the southwestern quarter of Enota and nearby islands, M'tube-Keff was a largely mundane empire whose warriors were often armed with meteoric iron. M'tube-Keff builders constructed large brick ziggurats and dug rooms out of them.

*Shansin Mandarinate:* Tianshilong grew from a successor state to this oligarchic empire. The mandarinate mobilized vast bodies of labor to support ritual magic, leading to the mass creation of elaborately enchanted items. Most of their palatial architecture, constructed from condensed moonbeams and stabilized sea-foam, has not survived.

*Xuchlazek Diabolism:* One of the greater disasters to overtake Semaria was Xuchlazek, a realm ruled by demons, with armies and bureaucracies filled with demon-possessed humans. Their bone-decorated relics can be immensely powerful, but are often cursed.

*!Zaaak'kee:* Though rare now, it appears that the coleopterans, at one time, had a vast underground empire stretching through the world. At least, that's the conclusion some have drawn by noting similarities in the size, shape, and construction of vast numbers of underground complexes and the modern tunnels of coleopterans. Many have been reused in later years by monsters, independent-minded cultists, and others in search of a good hideout, but many undiscovered ones, often filled with gold and silver, remain.

# Campaigns

The Wellsprings of Creation is suitable for typical fantasy adventures. Searching through lost caverns, killing things, and taking their stuff is, if not a recognized profession, then at least a well-known practice by risk-takers in search of wealth and glory. The dark side of treasure hunting, of course, is that unearthed wonders may carry curses or hidden instabilities which doomed the long-lost civilization which created them. Dungeon delvers can be anything from peasant children searching through a nearby but long-forgotten cave for hidden signs of the everyday lives of distant ancestors to heavily armed expeditions methodically clearing massive cave complexes of orcs and relieving them of any wealth they may have had, one room at a time.

Empire building is also a more than viable possibility. Adventurers who can clear an area of monsters and keep it clear can usually find peasants and craftsmen willing to join them. Rulers of small territories will want to expand them, and neighbors of other civilized areas will want to absorb them, whether by conquest or diplomacy. An empire may not last long in absolute terms, but it can outlive its founders.

However, there are a number of possible campaign themes suitable specifically for this world.

*Steam!* Even if technological development presents problems in the long run, there's no reason for PCs not to pursue it for its immediate advantages. The physics of the world permit technological advancement; the question is whether or not craftsmen and their backers can pursue it and make a bundle off of it before the inevitable collapse, which may after all be generations in the future.

*Secrets of the Universe:* A great many questions about the fundamental nature of the world are unanswered. Though they may appear philosophical on the surface, the answers may have deeper practical implications. Just where do elves come from? And how about dragons? Are there really that many gods, or are they aspects of a higher divine reality? What is the source of magic? When answers begin to arise, will the contradict one another?

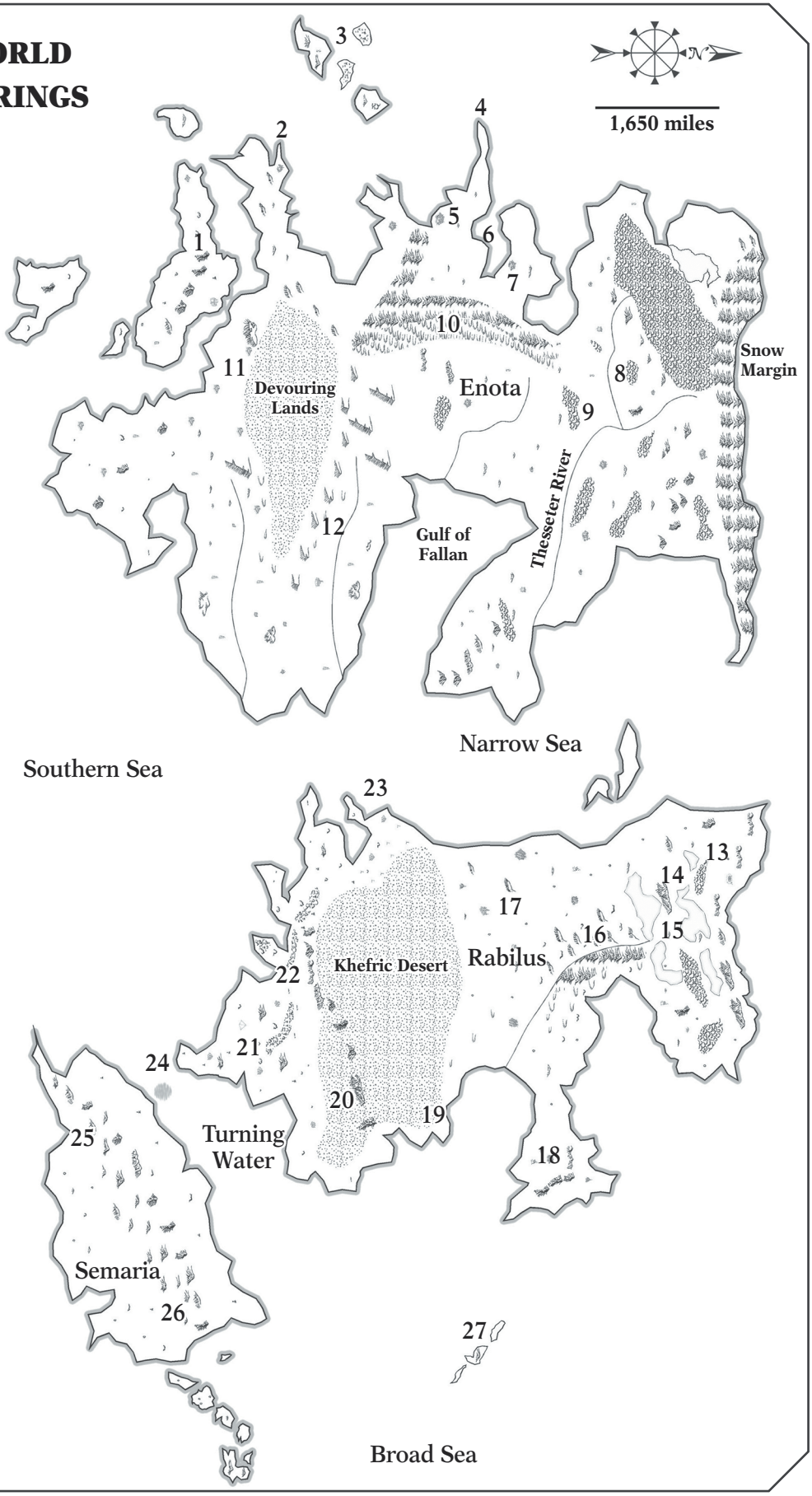
*Make the Magic Go Away:* An abundance of magic, divine power, and nigh-supernatural achievement through enormous skill and talent has long been the world's blessing and its curse. However, that may be coming to an end. The magic isn't going away; quite the opposite, in fact, and that's the problem. The natural order is twisting on itself. The dead are rising from their graves more often, earthquakes are increasing across the world, and ancient forests are expanding overnight. There are those who would say that the world would be better without magic at all.

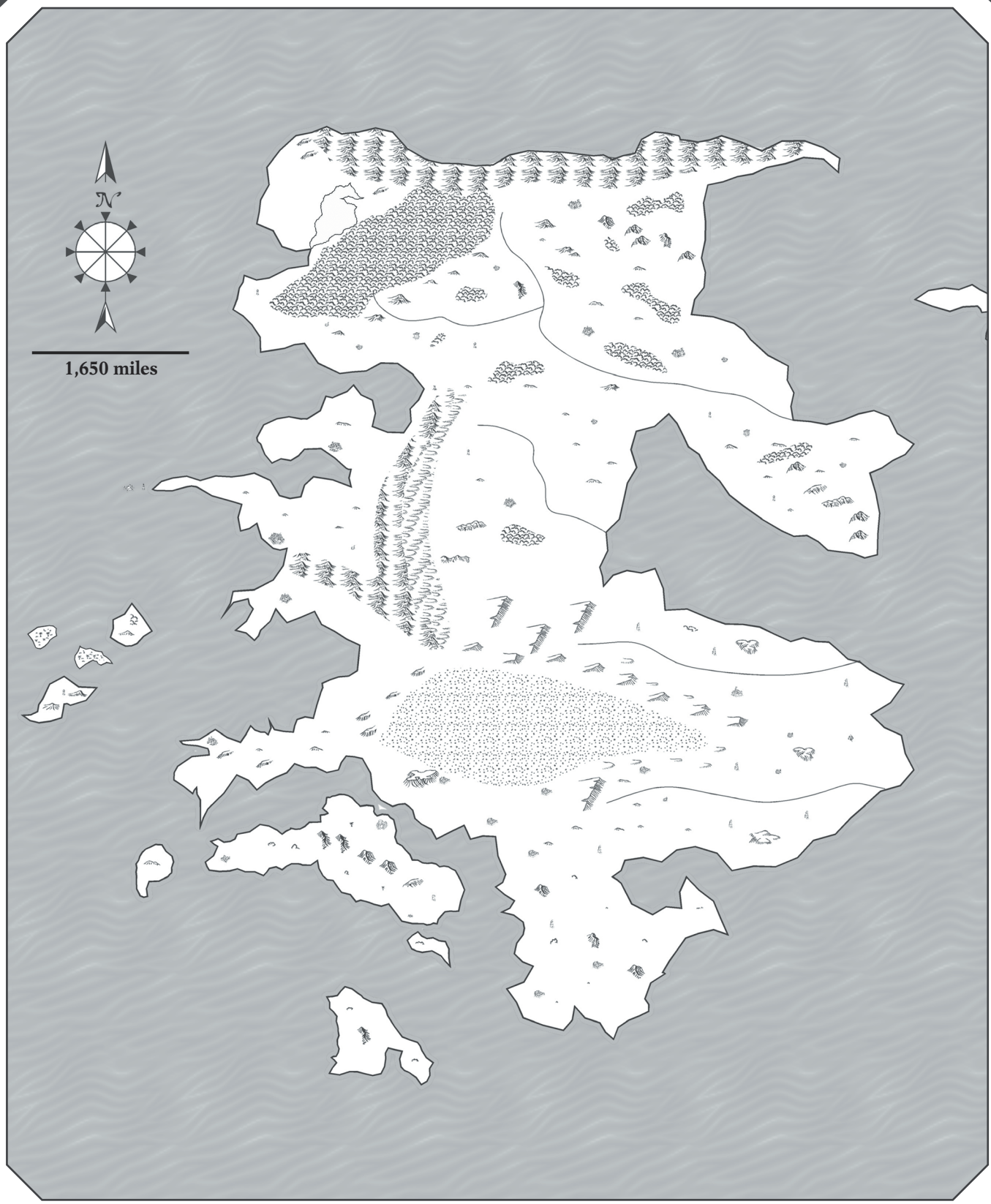
# Map of the World of the Wellsprings of Creation, Overview

*Note:* With the level of magic being what it is, the GM may decide the value for the scale is elastic.

## *Key*

1. Bekembe
2. Uxuloth
3. Saurian Islands
4. Amadan by the Sea
5. Aquaclaro
6. Vissar Gulf
7. Carazani
8. Willowdeep
9. Tanir Aesayya
10. Astlan Mountains
11. Qaram Emirates
12. Tianshilong
13. Cold Amadan
14. Caerceol
15. Warrior Lakes
16. Echo Wall Mountains
17. Thebor
18. Echeth Dominion
19. Hellsgate
20. Than
21. Mixaztlan
22. Hot Amadan
23. Algofoye
24. Champre's Steam
25. Kunruk
26. Caverntown
27. Eastern Islands






## Map of the World of the Wellsprings of Creation, Enota Region

For a labeled version and a note on the scale, see the overview map on p. 58.




## Map of the World of the Wellsprings of Creation, Rabilus and Semaria Regions

For a labeled version and a note on the scale, see the overview map on p. 58.

## Section 2

# Advice and Ideas

At its core, "fantasy" is an *idea:* What if dogs could talk, or what if I could smite my foes by pointing a finger at them? Often these ideas are bite-sized and easy to plug into myriad campaigns, which made them perfect for *Pyramid*.

Here are a collection of features that focus more on things, threats, and thoughts. In the realm of things, we have a deadly sword (p. 69), cursed rings (pp. 70-71), and magical components (pp. 77-80). Adventures often begin with the need to find objects, and they often end with the accumulation of stuff . . . for good *or* ill.

The realm of threats includes orcs (pp. 65-68) and a certain serpent-priestess (pp. 62-64). Perhaps the orcs have a key item, or the priestess has some vital information and has made her temporary home in the city of the dead (pp. 45-50). Again, the modular nature of most threats herein mean countless permutations for your own ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** campaign. Are the tree-folk (pp. 86-87) friendly? What is the old wizard riding on (pp. 81-83) and how can the party get one those creatures?

Finally, this section concerns itself with *thoughts,* those mad and magical ideas that make dungeon fantasy so *fantastic*. It includes a look at magical chaos (pp. 72-76), insight into clerical characters (pp. 88-95), and the possibilities presented by wandering caravans (pp. 84-85).

When it comes to dungeon fantasy, a seemingly minor encounter can result in a memorable experience for the heroes and players alike. Fill your fantastic realms with strange and powerful ideas, and let the magical sparks fly.



# Alaba the Serpent-Priestess

## by Phil Masters

The woman named Alaba was born the daughter of a minor merchant family in a fair-sized provincial town. A selfish, mean-spirited child, she mastered the trick of slipping away onto the streets of the town whenever her parents tried to deal with her bad behavior, making it impossible for them to keep her under any sort of control.

While out of the house at such a time, she caught the eye of another adult, a nondescript, shabby wanderer, who saw potential in the girl. Unfortunately, this wanderer was a secret devotee of the dark power of the god known as the Serpent Lord. Alaba liked the idea of having more power than anyone who tried to control her. She studied the teachings of the cult with enthusiasm, soon becoming an acolyte.

Her parents – thinking that her occasional disappearances and long hours spent alone were still merely signs of childish rebelliousness – were, if anything, relieved as she seemed to become less obviously wild. In fact, she was simply becoming more adept in the ways of secrecy. Shortly before she reached full adulthood, though, her father died of an entirely natural disease, and her mother resolved to marry the girl off before returning to her own family in a remote part of the countryside. Alaba sulked and pouted, but had no real choice but to marry the middle-aged trader who her mother found for her.

Unfortunately for that trader, Alaba soon became a priestess of the Serpent Lord, with a small but devoted secret congregation. While not especially capable, some of these followers were more than willing to serve her in any way they could, and Alaba gained access to assorted resources through them and her husband's money. So it was that, while he was away on a trading trip, her husband fell ill and died of a sudden, rather unpleasant sickness.

Perhaps a few people suspected poison, and it was no secret that Alaba had no real love for her husband. But she was miles away, no one known to be connected with her was on the scene when her husband took ill, there was no evidence of witchcraft, and she showed some proper token signs of grief. Hence, anyone who might have ferreted out the truth shrugged, and Alaba settled down to the life of a merchant-widow, employing a fairly competent steward (actually one of the cult) to handle business matters. Over time, her shrewder neighbors noticed that her lack of commercial acumen was balanced by the small group of friends she acquired throughout the town, but this was merely seen as a sign of cleverness on her part. Some people wonder why she spends so much time alone at home or out of town on what she describes as "trading trips," but mostly she passes as a private sort of person with some trading projects that are no one else's business.

*A hero might try to use the power of love to persuade her to abandon the dark interests and savage inclinations.*

Recently, the dark power she worships granted Alaba the ability to reanimate the dead, and she has taken to this with enthusiasm, both to promote the cult and to further her personal ends. The latter may be her downfall, as a compulsive urge for revenge occasionally leads her to make mistakes. Still, her followers have managed to acquire her enough usable bodies to reanimate without attracting any serious attention, and she now commands a zombie horde as well as a few snakes of various kinds which come with her priestly position, and also a bunch of dedicated cultists who are really impressed by her displays of rage and dark power. Other Serpent Lord cults in other towns are beginning to respect her accomplishments, too; one rewarded her (or sought to curry favor with her) by gifting her with an enchanted blade for use in sacrifices and in battle.

Alaba isn't stupid enough to take on the whole world with just a few zombies, giant snakes, and crazed cultists, though. Instead, she's been infiltrating both the merchant classes of the region and a few dungeons and ruins in the district, recommending cultists for important jobs and doing deals with intelligent monsters who respect the cult of the Serpent Lord; she now has several secret bases under development.

She has long been working to establish connections with the merchants and leading figures of her home town, but few if any of them would be interested in taking up the worship of death and evil; at most, they're just ordinarily selfish, and willing to flirt with the messengers of this secretive power in the community in exchange for favors and petty advantages. But Alaba is far from stupid; before she'd let anyone *near* finding out her identity, she'd make sure that they were compromised enough that giving her away would mean signing their own death warrant. Still, if anyone annoyed her, she might send a cultist or undead assassin to deal with them, which could draw the presence and strength of her cult to the attention of the mass of the population and of the rulers. For now, though, she simply has a number of useful contacts.

Looking ahead, Alaba dreams of advancing into the higher mysteries of the Serpent Lord, which would give her more refined powers. (In ***GURPS*** terms, advanced initiation might give her new advantages with the Pact limitation, as well as extra spells.) The snag is, the price of such power is that she'd have to slay someone she loves in order to reanimate them as undead, and Alaba isn't sure that anyone in the world qualifies for this purpose. She finds this irritating.

## *Alaba in Play*

Alaba is a relatively minor but dangerous evil priestess in the classic pulpish mode. She is fully capable of crying out "Slay these interlopers, my undead minions!" with a completely straight face, and indeed *should* do so eventually, while pointing at a group of heroes with a look of primal rage disfiguring her face. She's motivated almost entirely by power, partly for security and partly so she can exercise her cruel bullying impulses, but mostly for its own sake. She's been sacrificing comfort for power for so long that she's lost the taste for minor pleasures, which fits the cult's thinking just fine. She has no romantic feelings at all, and thinks that the whole business is a scam which idiots pull on each other; if anyone should try to romance *her,* she'll tend to assume that they are either a spy or after her money. She'll probably play along for a short time, but only until she can get the fool safely at her mercy, if not on a sacrificial altar. And she doesn't have any mercy.

(Well, it's just possible that, say, a high-minded hero might get to know her without learning the full depth of her depravities, and might then try to use the power of love to persuade her to abandon the dark interests and savage inclinations which become obvious to everyone close to her – and that she might realize what he's doing. This could be very unfortunate for the high-minded lover; she'd never actually love him, but she might convince herself that faking it for a while was enough to enable her to sacrifice him for advanced initiation.)

Mostly, though, Alaba is an opponent whose minions do the fighting for her; despite her incredible will to live, she's far less dangerous one-on-one than most delvers. If she hasn't got several zombies between her and the nearest hero, she's in bad trouble. She knows this, and always makes sure that she has plenty of defenses and ideally a secret passage or two through which to escape. Nonetheless, her intelligence and ruthlessness make her an effective "level boss" type for a large dungeon complex, or the main boss monster for a small one. The twist is, she doesn't *just* operate in the dungeon; she's also a figure in town. If a bunch of heroes are working against the cult, but haven't identified Alaba yet, she can find out what supplies they're buying from her merchant contacts and pick up gossip about their activities, which will help her prepare for attacks. She can also use cultists, not only to attack the delvers directly, which is risky, but to slip poison in their supplies and sabotage their gear and preparations.

Alaba is certainly a serious opponent for a low-to-middle level campaign, and PCs who fail to take her seriously enough should have a good chance of ending up as prey to the undead or a venomous snake – and, quite possibly, of joining her lurching minions. Exactly how formidable she is will depend as much as anything on the size and competence of the cult she's managed to acquire, and on the power of her serpent swarm and undead "bodyguard"; remember, though, that if any of the latter are destroyed, but Alaba survives, she can always make more. Indeed, so long as she remains out of sight herself, she will tend to regard her undead as disposable weapons, to be hurled in waves at interfering heroes while she slips away from the scene. She sees her living cultist minions and serpent servitors much the same way, of course, but the cultists especially are harder to replace. For their part, they know that she thinks this way, but they're the sort of people who think that evil is cool, and Alaba seems *very* cool to them, making them fanatical. They might be intimidated with an effort, but they can't be subverted. Plots can also revolve around Alaba's attempts to acquire bodies of superior quality to raise as further servants when she's expended a few too many undead on some scheme.

### *Alaba in Other Settings*

Alaba is detailed here for a dungeon fantasy setting. With a little adjustment, she could appear in all sorts of games, including, say, '30s-style pulp supernatural horror ***GURPS Cliffhangers*** campaigns; in that case, she might lose her Secret, replacing it with a few levels of Low TL, to become the high priestess of some obscure village where the inhabitants engage in dark and twisted rites spoken of only in whispers by their neighbors.

# Alaba

**236 points**

Alaba is a woman of around 35, not especially muscular and usually presenting smartly enough to pass as the wife of a successful small merchant – but she may also appear in cult robes or light armor, as appropriate. Her looks are generally unremarkable, but she does give the impression of a forceful personality when she isn't trying to avoid notice.

**ST** 8 [-20]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 12 [20].
Damage 1d-3/1d-2; BL 13 lbs.; HP 10 [4]; Will 15 [5]; Per 14 [0]; FP 12 [0].
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 9.
5'6"; 120 lbs.

## *Social Background*

*CF:* Homeland local [0].

*Languages:* Homeland native (Native) [0]; Demontongue (Native) [6].

## *Advantages*

Charisma 1 [5]; Contact Group (Mercantile Associates; Skill 12; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [10]; Energy Reserve 12* (Holy) [36]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; Independent Income (Mercantile Business Interests) [5]; Luck [15]; Night Vision 3 [3]; Power Investiture 3 (Favor of the Serpent Lord) [30]; Reputation +2 (A promising and effective cult leader; Among well-informed Serpent Lord cultists in the region; All the time) [3]; Status 1 (Merchant Family) [5] ; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

* See ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level,*** p. 39.

## *Disadvantages*

Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Bloodlust (9) [-15]; Bully (15) [-5]; Callous [-5]; Duty (The Serpent Lord cult; 6 or less) [-2]; Odious Personal Habit (Minor Temper Flare-Ups) [-5]; Secret (Leader of a hidden undeath cult) [-30].

*Quirks:* Completely cynical about romance; Vengeful; Vicious and self-centered sense of humor. [-3]

## *Skills*

Acting (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Area Knowledge (Home Town) (E) IQ+1 [2]-15; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Current Affairs (Home Area Regional) (E) IQ [1]-14; Diplomacy (H) IQ+1 [8]-15; Esoteric Medicine (Dark) (H) Per-2 [1]-12; Garrote (E) DX [1]-12; Herb Lore (VH) IQ-1 [4]-13; Housekeeping (E) IQ [1]-14; Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Leadership (A) IQ [1]-14*; Occultism (A) IQ [2]-14; Poisons (H) IQ-1 [2]-13; Public Speaking (A) IQ [1]-14*; Religious Ritual (Cult of the Serpent Lord) (H) IQ [4]-14; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-14; Theology (Cult of the Serpent Lord) (H) IQ-1 [2]-13; Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-13.

* Includes +1 for Charisma.

## *Spells**

Body of Shadow (VH) IQ [1]-14; Control Zombie (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Fog (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Mass Zombie (VH) IQ [1]-14; Pain (H) IQ+2 [2]-16; Reptile Control (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Spasm (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Steal Energy (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Steal Vitality (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Turn Spirit (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Zombie (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Zombie Summoning (H) IQ+1 [1]-15.

* All spells include +3 for Power Investiture.

## *Equipment*

Clothes; light armor (full suit, DR 1); fine large knife enchanted with Accuracy +1; heavy silver-and-jet ring with an intricate serpent-and-skull design, worth $500, as her power item (6 FP). Alaba's full load of armor, weapons, and assorted possessions puts her at Light encumbrance (Move 4). She wears her power item ring under a gauntlet when in armor, and on a chain round her neck when in "civilian" clothes.

## Alaba in the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG*

Alaba was created using the full ***GURPS Basic Set*** rules plus some additional material from ***GURPS Magic*** and ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy.*** However, it's easy enough to fit her into a game using the ***Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*** rules. The following features don't appear in that game, but are easy enough to factor in.

- Her Contact Group simply means that she has somewhat useful contacts throughout the local merchant class, who'll tell her things and trade favors with her; Independent Income means that she receives some reliable cash income from her business without having to work for it; her Reputation means that fellow cultists who know of her react to her at +2; and her Status means that she's a member of a fairly well-off, "respectable" social class.
- Conversely, among her disadvantages, her Duty simply means that the cult can occasionally tell her what to do and expect her to obey (if she knows what's good for her), while her Secret is just that – if society at large found out what she gets up to, she'd become a hunted, hated criminal.
- Among her skills, Area Knowledge means that she knows the back streets and social interactions of her home town in detail; don't worry about the specialties on Current Affairs, Savoir-Faire, and Theology; her version of Esoteric Medicine allows fast and frequently painful *ad hoc* treatments, usually to keep cultists on their feet and fighting; Housekeeping just means that she can keep a household clean and comfortable, and cook simple meals; and her Religious Ritual enables her to taunt supernaturally *good* entities and gives her insights into items that have been imbued with the power of evil.
- She also has a nonstandard spell list, but then, she's an evil NPC cult leader, not a player-character delver-cleric; these are normal spells for priests of the Serpent Lord. If you don't have access to ***GURPS Magic,*** treat the spells which aren't described in ***Dungeon Fantasy*** as giving Alaba a repertoire of weird magical effects which she can pull "offstage" given a few seconds or minutes. Body of Shadow allows her to make emergency escapes in the form of a shadow, at the cost of leaving all her equipment behind; the various Zombie spells allow her to animate dead bodies and skeletons to serve her, to take control of other people's zombies and skeletons, and to summon the nearest available zombie to aid her; and Steal Energy and Steal Vitality enable her to drain FP and HP from willing volunteer cultists and bound and gagged prisoners to restore her own, giving her one point back for every three removed.

# Tkarsh's Band

## by Matt Riggsby

The deserts of western Yrth (and suitable parts of *your* ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** campaign world) teem with orcs. The typical orc roves the sands as part of a small band, raiding neighbors and jockeying with his "friends" for power and position, with no greater ambition than to beat the orc next to him and raid what he can from targets of opportunity for the joy and glory of it.

Tkarsh is not a typical orc. He has far greater dreams than that, even greater than torching the occasional dwarf town. Tkarsh wants *real* power, domination of vast realms of orcs and other races, all subject to his whims. He's a long, long way from achieving that, but he's already gathered a small, effective band of lieutenants whose talents he can bend to his will. With a little time and luck, Tkarsh could become truly dangerous.

*It's orcs like Tkarsh who turn squabbling tribes who might be happy to bash each other's brains in into vast hordes who prefer to bash in human, elven, and dwarven brains.*

## Tkarsh

**336 points**

Tkarsh is the sort of orc intelligent non-orcs worry about. It's not that he's such a great warrior, although he's more than good enough relative to garden-variety guards and soldiers. It's that he's the kind of smart, ambitious orc who knows how to motivate his fellow orcs who arises every now and again to get all the rest of them moving in the same direction. It's orcs like Tkarsh who turn squabbling tribes who might be happy to bash each other's brains in into vast hordes who prefer to bash in human, elven, and dwarven brains. He hasn't done anything like that yet, but he's still young.

Tkarsh is supremely selfish, even for an orc, but he balances that with a rare foresightedness. Although he certainly doesn't mind destruction and won't hesitate to kill if it serves his purposes, there are other things he enjoys more. You can kill someone once, but you can rule him for *years*.

**ST** 16 [60]; **DX** 15 [100]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 15 [50].
Damage 1d+2/3d-1; BL 51 lbs.; HP 18 [4]; Will 13 [5]; Per 13 [5]; FP 15 [0].
Basic Speed 7.00 [-10]; Basic Move 7 [0]; Block 12; Dodge 11; Parry 12 (Broadsword).

### *Advantages*

Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Born War-Leader 4 [20]; Combat Reflexes [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Infravision [10]; Luck [15]; Rapid Healing [5]; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+3) [10]; Striking ST 1 [5].

### *Disadvantages*

Appearance (Ugly) [-8]; Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Bully (12) [-10]; Greed (12) [-15]; Social Stigma (Savage) [-10]; Vow (Never refuse a challenge to combat) [-10].

### *Skills*

Armoury (Melee Weapons) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Boxing (A) DX [2]-15; Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-17; Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-14; Connoisseur (Weapons) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Fast-Draw (Sword) (E) DX+1 [1]-16*; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-14; Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-14; Knife (E) DX [1]-15; Leadership (A) IQ+4 [2]-16†; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-17; Spear (A) DX+2 [8]-17; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-14; Strategy (Land) (H) IQ+3 [2]-15†; Tactics (H) IQ+3 [2]-15†; Thrown Weapon (Spear) (E) DX+2 [4]-17; Wrestling (A) DX [2]-15.

* Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.
† Includes: +4 from Born War-Leader.

### *Equipment*

- *Backpack* (p. B288) **[Torso]** Holds 40 lbs. $60, 3 lbs.
- *Blanket* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $20, 4 lbs.
- *Canteen* (p. B288) **[Torso]** $10, 3 lbs.
- *Mail Leggings* (p. B283) **[Legs]** DR 4/2*. $110, 15 lbs.
- *Mail Shirt* (p. B283) **[Torso]** DR 4/2*. $150, 16 lbs.
- *Mail Sleeves* (p. B283) **[Arms]** DR 4/2*. $70, 9 lbs.
- *Personal Basics* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $5, 1 lb.
- *Shoes* (p. B284) **[Feet]** DR 1*. $40, 2 lbs.
- *Small Shield* (p. B287) **[Torso]** DB 1. $40, 8 lbs.
- *Spear* (p. B273) **[Torso]** 1d+4 impaling (1-hand thrust); 1d+5 impaling, Acc 2, Range 17/25 (thrown); $40, 4 lbs.
- *Thrusting Broadsword* (p. B271) **[Torso]** 3d cutting, 1d+4 impaling. $600, 3 lbs.

## Tkarsh's Lieutenants

The exact number of Tkarsh's followers is up to the GM; most of them are generic orc warriors, built on the orc template in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level,*** p. 11. However, Tkarsh has three lieutenants who are foremost among his followers.

## *Ruk*

**297 points**

Tkarsh isn't stupid. Ruk is. He's slow, even for an orc, and easily led. There is speculation that there are some ogres somewhere in his ancestry. He's also very large, very strong, and hard to hurt. He is, in short, a weapon looking for a hand unscrupulous enough to wield him, and he has found that hand in Tkarsh.

**ST** 22 [108*]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 8 [-40]; **HT** 14 [40].
Damage 2d/4d; BL 97 lbs.; HP 29 [13*]; Will 9 [5]; Per 11 [15]; FP 14 [0].
Basic Speed 6.25 [-10]; Basic Move 7* [0]; Block 12; Dodge 10; Parry 12 (Axe/Mace).
SM +1.

### Advantages

Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin) [3]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Infravision [10]; Outdoorsman 4 [40]; Rapid Healing [5]; Recovery [10]; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+3) [10].

### Disadvantages

Appearance (Ugly) [-8]; Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Bully (12) [-10]; Gigantism [0]; Gullibility (12) [-10]; Social Stigma (Savage) [-10].

### Skills

Animal Handling (Horses) (A) IQ [2]-8; Axe/Mace (A) DX+3 [12]-16; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Camouflage (E) IQ+4 [1]-12†; Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Disguise (Animals) (A) IQ [2]-8; Fishing (E) Per+4 [1]-15†; Forced Entry (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Hiking (A) HT [2]-14; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-9; Lifting (A) HT-1 [1]-13; Mimicry (Animal Sounds) (H) IQ+2 [1]-10†; Naturalist (H) IQ+2 [1]-10†; Navigation (Land) (A) IQ+4 [2]-12†; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-10; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-13; Shield (E) DX+3 [8]-16; Stealth (A) DX [2]-13; Survival (Desert) (A) Per+3 [1]-14†; Swimming (E) HT [1]-14; Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace) (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Tracking (A) Per+3 [1]-14†; Weather Sense (A) IQ [2]-8; Wrestling (A) DX [2]-13.

* Modified for size.
† Includes +4 for Outdoorsman.

### Equipment

- *Axe* (p. B271) **[Torso]** 4d+2 cutting. $50, 4 lbs.
- *Backpack* (p. B288) **[Torso]** Holds 40 lbs. $60, 3 lbs.
- *Blanket* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $20, 4 lbs.
- *Canteen* (p. B288) **[Torso]** $10, 3 lbs.
- *Hatchet* × *2* (p. B271) **[Torso]** 4d cutting, reach 1 *or* 4d cutting, Acc 1, range 33/55. $80, 4 lbs.
- *Heavy Leather Leggings* (p. B283) **[Legs]** DR 2. $120, 8 lbs.
- *Heavy Leather Sleeves* (p. B283) **[Arms]** DR 2. $100, 4 lbs.
- *Leather Armor* (p. B283) **[Torso]** DR 2*. $200, 20 lbs.
- *Medium Shield* (p. B287) **[Torso]** DB 2. $60, 15 lbs.
- *Personal Basics* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $5, 1 lb.
- *Shoes* (p. B284) **[Feet]** DR 1*. $80, 4 lbs.

*But I do know I'm going to kill you. And then I'm going to have some more grog.*

*– Garl the Drunk, in* ***Shadow of War***

## *Gerash al-Nabil*

**289 points**

Where Tkarsh is dangerous because he has a god complex, Gerash is dangerous because he's just plain nasty. Raised by more-or-less civilized orcs living on the fringe of a human village, Gerash was dissatisfied with the small community of relatively peaceful orcs with whom he lived. Leaving the village under a cloud (the story changes from time to time, but he boasts of murdering one or both of his parents, a village headman, or a village headman's daughter), he headed back into the desert to find a more interesting life.

He found that life once he hooked up with Tkarsh. If there is unpleasant work to be done – an assassination, torture, the head of a loved one left in a bed – Gerash is ready and willing to do it. Like Tkarsh, Gerash finds rampant destruction a waste. He'd rather take his time with it.

Gerash believes that he's Tkarsh's natural successor, although Tkarsh himself is probably incapable of thinking about who might succeed him.

**ST** 14 [40]; **DX** 14 [80]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 13 [30].
Damage 1d/2d; BL 39 lbs.; HP 16 [4]; Will 11 [5]; Per 14 [20]; FP 13 [0].
Basic Speed 7.25 [10]; Basic Move 7 [0]; Block 12; Dodge 11; Parry 12 (Broadsword).

### Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Heroic Archer [20]; Infravision [10]; Outdoorsman 2 [20]; Rapid Healing [5]; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+3) [10].

### Disadvantages

Appearance (Ugly) [-8]; Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Bully (12) [-10]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Social Stigma (Savage) [-10].

### Skills

Bow (A) DX+4 [16]-18; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-15; Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-16; Camouflage (E) IQ+3 [2]-13*; Climbing (A) DX [2]-14; Fast-Draw (Arrow) (E) DX+1 [1]-15†; Fast-Draw (Knife) (E) DX+1 [1]-15†; Fast-Draw (Sword) (E) DX+1 [1]-15†; Garrote (E) DX [1]-14; Gesture (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Hiking (A) HT [2]-13; Jumping (E) DX [1]-14; Knife (E) DX [1]-14; Navigation (Land) (A) IQ+4 [1]-14*‡; Observation (A) Per [2]-14; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-12; Search (A) Per-1 [1]-13; Shadowing (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-16; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-15; Survival (Desert) (A) Per+1 [1]-15*; Tracking (A) Per+2 [2]-16*; Traps (A) IQ+1 [4]-11.

* Includes +2 for Outdoorsman.
† Includes: +1 for Combat Reflexes.
‡ Includes +3 for Absolute Direction.

### Equipment

- *Arrows × 20* (p. B276) **[Quiver]** $40, 2 lbs.
- *Backpack* (p. B288) **[Torso]** Holds 40 lbs. $60, 3 lbs.
- *Blanket* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $20, 4 lbs.
- *Canteen* (p. B288) **[Torso]** $10, 3 lbs.
- *Heavy Leather Leggings* (p. B283) **[Legs]** DR 2. $60, 4 lbs.
- *Heavy Leather Sleeves* (p. B283) **[Arms]** DR 2. $50, 2 lbs.
- *Hip Quiver* (p. B289) **[Torso]** Holds up to 20 arrows. $15, 1 lb.
- *Leather Armor* (p. B283) **[Torso]** DR 2*. $100, 10 lbs.
- *Longbow* (p. B275) **[Torso]** 1d+2 impaling, Acc 3, Range 210/280. $200, 3 lbs.
- *Personal Basics* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $5, 1 lb.
- *Shoes* (p. B284) **[Feet]** DR 1*. $40, 2 lbs.
- *Small Shield* (p. B287) **[Torso]** DB 1. $40, 8 lbs.
- *Thrusting Broadsword* (p. B271) **[Torso]** 2d+1 cutting, 1d+2 impaling. $600, 3 lbs.

## *Ashak*

**299 points**

Ashak says he's in it for the money, pure and simple. However, he is also in it for the self-aggrandizement. Though exceptionally intelligent for his race, he lacks most of the strength and ruthlessness admired by his society, and he's insecure and sensitive about it. As Tkarsh's most important intelligence asset, he's in a valued position close to a formidable warrior and war leader.

Ashak believes that he is Tkarsh's natural successor, and he is just as wrong as Gerash. Indeed, both have probably survived as long as they have because neither could take his place. If something happens to Tkarsh, Ashak and Gerash will probably end up at one another's throats.

**ST** 11 [10]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 16 [120]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 16 [0]; Per 15 [-5]; FP 14 [9].
Basic Speed 6.00 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Block 9; Dodge 9; Parry 9 (Spear).

### Advantages

Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Energy Reserve 5 (Magical); Infravision [10]; Magery 4 [45]; Rapid Healing [5]; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+3) [10].

### Disadvantages

Appearance (Ugly) [-8]; Bully (12) [-10]; Greed (12) [-15]; Jealousy [-10]; Low Pain Threshold [-10]; Social Stigma (Savage) [-10].

### Skills

Alchemy (VH) IQ [8]-16; Body Sense (H) DX-1 [2]-11; Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-15; Fast-Draw (Potion) (E) DX [1]-12; Fast-Talk (A) IQ-1 [1]-15; First Aid (E) IQ [1]-16; Gesture (E) IQ [1]-16; Hazardous Materials (Magical) (A) IQ-1 [1]-15; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-10; Innate Attack (Projectile) (E) DX+3 [8]-15; Meditation (Will) Will-1 [2]-15; Occultism (A) IQ [2]-16; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-15; Shield (E) DX [1]-12; Sling (H) DX [4]-12; Spear (A) DX [2]-12; Stealth (A) DX [1]-12; Survival (Desert) (A) Per [2]-15.



### Spells

Acid Ball (H) [1]-18; Apportation (H) [1]-18; Blackout (H) [1]-18; Blur (H) [1]-18; Colors (H) [1]-18; Complex Illusion (H) [1]-18; Continual Light (H) [1]-18; Create Acid (H) [1]-18; Create Earth (H) [1]-18; Create Water (H) [1]-18; Darkness (H) [1]-18; Daze (H) [1]-18; Earth to Stone (H) [1]-18; Fascinate (H) [1]-18; Flash (H) [1]-18; Foolishness (H) [1]-18; Haste (H) [1]-18; Hide (H) [1]-18; Hinder (H) [1]-18; Hush (H) [1]-18; Illusion Disguise (H) [1]-18; Illusion Shell (H) [1]-18; Independence (H) [1]-18; Invisibility (H) [1]-18; Light (H) [1]-18; Mage-Stealth (H) [1]-18; Mass Daze (H) [1]-18; Mirror (H) [1]-18; Perfect Illusion (H) [1]-18; Phantom (VH) [1]-17; Purify Water (H) [1]-18; Seek Earth (H) [1]-18; Seek Water (H) [1]-18; Shape Earth (H) [1]-18; Silence (H) [1]-18; Simple Illusion (H) [1]-18; Sound (H) [1]-18; Stone Missile (H) [1]-18; Voices (H) [1]-18; Wall of Silence (H) [1]-18.

### Equipment

- *Backpack* (p. B288) **[Torso]** Holds 40 lbs. $60, 3 lbs.
- *Blanket* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $20, 4 lbs.
- *Canteen* (p. B288) **[Torso]** $10, 3 lbs.
- *Heavy Leather Leggings* (p. B283) **[Legs]** DR 2. $60, 4 lbs.
- *Heavy Leather Sleeves* (p. B283) **[Arms]** DR 2. $50, 2 lbs.
- *Leather Armor* (p. B283) **[Torso]** DR 2*. $100, 10 lbs.
- *Personal Basics* (p. B288) **[Backpack]** $5, 1 lb.
- *Shoes* (p. B284) **[Feet]** DR 1*. $40, 2 lbs.
- *Small Shield* (p. B287) **[Torso]** DB 1. $40, 8 lbs.
- *Spear* (p. B273) **[Torso]** 1d+1 impaling (1-hand thrust); 1d+2 impaling, Acc 2, Range 11/16 (thrown); $40, 4 lbs.

## Goals and Tactics

Unusual in a species which favors direct attacks, Tkarsh is a master of distraction, deception, and surprise. He takes his time to plan and lay out an assault. His general pattern is to launch a small attack, wait until his opponent is focused on defeating that, and then launch a second, decisive attack from a hidden position on the now weakly protected rear or in a strung-out middle. This can apply to anything from small-group tactics (for example, having Gerash snipe at an enemy, then send Ruk in to take out stragglers when the enemy is trying to chase Gerash down) to grand strategy. Given enough forces and a sufficiently formidable enemy, he might attempt two or even three "feints in force" to get his enemy off guard, and he might even go with the time-honored tactic of a full-frontal assault against a long-time enemy. He is a practitioner of guerrilla warfare; he picks off isolated enemy troops to minimize exposing his own troops, is dimly aware of the importance of logistics, and may attack an enemy's supply lines to weaken them.

He rarely sacrifices followers needlessly, but he is unsentimental about losses in battle. He expects his initial feints to be decimated, and he will let thousands die if it gets him a victory. If anyone in his army looks to be a potential challenger, Tkarsh will offer him a place of honor in the initial charge; most ambitious orcs aren't bright enough to figure out what will happen next, and those who do can hardly refuse for fear of being branded a coward. His only concern is with winning the current battle and retaining enough of a force to win the next one. Since winning generals attract more followers, he rarely feels the need to preserve most of an army.

Though far from honorable, Tkarsh is pragmatic enough to strike short-lived alliances if he feels he absolutely has to. However, he will only do so if he feels he can control the relationship. He has also been known to take hostages to compel others to be useful to him. Most of his allies and hostages eventually have an unexpected and unpleasant meeting with Gerash.

Tkarsh's egotism may be his only weak point, and he's bright enough that it's a well-defended weakness. A direct approach would be to gain a position of trust (a difficult feat) and convince him that several of his lieutenants were plotting to take his place. This would lead to Tkarsh wiping out his inner circle, temporarily disrupting his ability to lead an effective force. A less dangerous but less effective tactic would be to stay a step removed and sow dissension among his followers.

His companions' tactics are far less sophisticated. If confronted on his own, Ruk has little initiative and will simply fight until disabled or killed. Gerash and Ashak will fight from a distance if possible, up close if they have to (using the dirtiest tactics possible), and either flee or submit if the fight is going against them. Neither has much grasp of tactics, so if leading troops, Gerash will call for frontal assaults, while Ashak will try to emulate Tkarsh's strategies (he is much less skillful). If taken captive, Ruk will be silent, though he can probably be goaded into telling what he knows. Gerash will lie easily and profusely, looking for any chance to escape. Ashak will be defiant, but appeals to his vanity may tease information out of him.

*The Age of Men is over. The Time of the Orc has come.*

*– Gothmog,*
*in **The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King***

## Tkarsh in the Campaign

Tkarsh and his followers could be used as anything from a small band of raiders to the leader of an army and his entourage. Whatever his context, Tkarsh can hardly be anything other than an enemy, either present or future. If you're valuable, he will want to rule you, at best. If you look like you might become a threat, he will want you dead. Tkarsh is a potential Napoleon or Mao, or at least a Saddam Hussein: an egotistical dictator who can brook no challenge or dissent. Even as the leader of a very small band, his desire to survive makes him a difficult opponent.

However, he need not be presented solely as the leader of an attacking army. If adventurers have an errand which takes them into or near the Orclands (recovering ancient artifacts, for instance), they may pass through Tkarsh's sphere of influence. Tkarsh will recognize useful outsiders when he sees them, and will attempt to use them if he thinks he can profit from the effort. For example, he may offer to guide the heroes on their way if they will assassinate a rival orcish leader, or provide support for an attack on a human town.

Once the adventurers perform their part of the bargain, Tkarsh doesn't worry about whether he will need to keep up his end. He is likely to try to kill them, either by himself or by betraying them to friends and allies of whomever he enlisted their aid against. If he can help the adventurers achieve their goals, he might actually do so – letting them take whatever risks are involved along the way – *then* kill them and keep whatever object or benefit the characters hoped to gain. If the heroes appear too powerful to overcome directly, Tkarsh may tell them useful lies to achieve his own goals. ("The lost Dingus of MacGuffin? Oh, my neighbor has it, but he won't give it up without a fight. Nope, no way . . .")

Without his forceful personality to hold them together, Tkarsh's followers are interesting but not nearly as difficult to deal with. They are little more than typical raiders with colorful motivations. Ashak in particular will be unusual: a touchy orcish pedant. Depending on his situation, Tkarsh's point total may increase. As written, he's got a motley crew of three talented but unreliable followers. As the leader of a small group of skilled warriors, he gains a group of Allies. As a notable war chieftain, he gains two or three levels of Status, acquire a Reputation, and increase his Allies. Ruk, Gerash, and Ashak would gain four or five levels of Military Rank, or possibly some form of Social Regard. He and his lieutenants might also gain gear of increasing quality (fine if Tkarsh runs a small band of warriors, very fine if it's a horde); likewise, the value of any power item Ashak has ramps up with available loot.

# The Cursed Sword of Hsima

## by Steven W. Disbrow

*"Ah, you must be the renowned Aldarac of Hinthaw! My friend, I cannot tell you how proud I am to meet you! I've been told that your bravery and masterful swordsmanship were the deciding factors in driving back the hordes of Malsi! Your homeland is forever in your debt brave sir!"*

*"My liege! It is but my duty to serve as best I can. Yours is truly the glory that all should be in awe of! . . . May . . . May the remaining days of your life be filled with the croaking of the frogs of happiness!"*

*"Er, yes . . . Well! Thank you. Brave, um . . . warrior. Yes. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've other warriors to greet. But remember, the gratitude of our kingdom is yours. Merely ask it of me, and you shall have it!"*

*"Thank you, my lord!"*



The Cursed Sword of Hsima appears to be an ordinary shortsword. It is in fact *somewhat* magical. However this enchantment only manifests itself if the person holding it has Magery 0 or better. If the person holding the sword doesn't have at least Magery 0, the sword will seem to be a substandard weapon. (that is, it will seem poorly balanced, a bit too heavy or too light, whatever it takes to make that person put it down or pass it on to someone who *does* have magical aptitude).

If the owner of the sword does have some magical aptitude, the Cursed Sword of Hsima will seem to be a great prize indeed. In combat, the sword gives its wielder +5 to their Shortsword skill, +3 to any parry made with the sword, and +1d to the standard damage done by a shortsword! Of course, there *is* a catch.

*"My lord, if I might say so, you look **horrible** this morning. Didst thou have trouble sleeping?"*

*"Aye, I haven't slept in almost a week! Those damnable frogs! They begin that infernal croaking at dusk and continue right through to the dawn! Your bed-chamber is just down the hall from mine, have you not heard them?"*

*"Nay m'lord, I've not heard any frogs."*

*"It's almost as if . . . hold a moment . . . Do you remember that peasant warrior who came to our court a week ago?"*

*"Aye. The one who single-handedly defeated five-score Malsi warriors. Why?"*

The catch is that, up to twice a day, when the holder of the sword meets a new individual of any prominence (anyone with status *above* that of a merchant), the holder must win a Quick Contest of Will against the sword (the sword has IQ 13 and Will 13 for this purpose) or they will enter a short magical trance. During this trance, the sword will attempt to place a minor curse on the new acquaintance. (Again, use IQ 13 for the sword's spellcasting attempt.) This curse usually takes the form of an odd greeting or blessing. The curse is typically something minor, but it's always *very* specific, so that, if they stop to think about it, the cursed individual can easily identify the source of their newfound troubles.

*"Yes, that's the one! When I greeted him, he replied by saying the strangest thing. At first I thought it was just some odd peasant blessing . . . something about . . . '**Frogs**!' He said that the croaking frogs of happiness would follow me all the days of my life! That peasant blackguard! He's a wizard! That's how he defeated the Malsi, and now he seeks to drive me mad!"*

This, of course, will cause the sword's owner to make a lot of enemies in a *very* short period of time. (So it's a good thing that it has all of those combat bonuses!)

Placing the Cursed Sword of Hsima into a campaign *can* quickly cause it to degenerate into a silly, "Benny Hill" chase scene (which *can* be a great diversion for a short time), but only if you let it. The sword could just as easily be played as an extremely subtle and evil entity, created specifically to slowly turn a kingdom's people against its greatest hero. In that case, the sword would bide its time, earning its owner's trust in combat and only cursing one or two people every few weeks or months of game time.

*"I swear, I don't know what you're talking about! I'm no wizard, and I don't remember saying anything about 'frogs' to his majesty!"*

*"Yes, well, we'll see if your memory comes back before the executioner's blade removes your head. Take him away! . . . Sergeant! Did you find it?"*

*"Yes, sir, it was hanging on the wall above his fireplace. Frankly, he must be a wizard, because I don't see how he managed to kill **anyone** with this. It's far too light to deliver a blow with any force."*

*"Well, that may be, but his majesty wants to make a gift of it for the crown prince. The king is sending him to the peace talks next month, and he wants him to be wearing 'The Sword That Defeated The Malsi' when he greets the other ambassadors . . ."*

# The Cursed Rings of José Von Lee

by Elizabeth McCoy,
with Christopher R. Rice

José Von Lee (replace the name with one more suitable to the campaign – or not) was an antisocial old blighter of an enchanter. He was the sort of person voted Most Likely To Become A Lich, despite having no evidence of necromantic activity. And when he died, his traditional tower lay untouched for some years before the town decided they needed the money more than they feared what he might have left behind.

So they sent in low-life adventurers to fetch out Von Lee's possessions, boxed them up, and auctioned them off . . .

*José Von Lee was the sort of person voted Most Likely To Become A Lich.*

## José Von Lee's Cursed Rings

No one in Von Lee's town tried these on, since they *know* what the old crank was like. He was the sort to laugh and point when squirrels were drowning in wells, or cats fell in lakes. (Heck, he was the sort to *push* small furry animals into bodies of water.)

Surprisingly, none of his assortment of enchanted rings were actually cursed in the sense of being unable to remove them. Perhaps José Von Lee *liked* some of the odder ones, as entertainment. Perhaps he just didn't feel like spending the time on a curse unless someone was going to buy it. Of course, subsequent owners might make some additions.

All the rings are identical plain gold bands (unless the GM decides otherwise) which will fit perfectly on any finger, from tiny sylph to giant dragon. They were auctioned off together in the wooden ring-case Von Lee kept them in, but there's no telling if they've gone their separate ways.

If the GM wishes to allow a character to start with one of the rings, purchasing it as Signature Gear (p. B85) is appropriate. If making one a power item (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers,*** p. 28), they all default to FP 11. They are all *Magical* in origin, as per ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 6: 40 Artifacts,*** p. 4.

### *The Ring of Handsome Bloke*

This ring turns the wearer into a very attractive young man (no matter what the prior sex or age was), of average strength, who is just a tad dim. Perhaps Von Lee used it in his aging years to shift his furniture around, and didn't feel like being clever. Perhaps that's just a side effect. Perhaps some foolish traveler banged on his tower door some dark night, and was never heard from again . . .

A character may wear the ring indefinitely, with its stats *replacing* his own, but must still make aging rolls normally; eventually, though in the prime of health, he will drop dead from old age. He is also not immune to diseases which do not permanently affect stats; an old crone with the flu can wear the ring to be a young bloke with the flu. And, as a final note, clothing does not change; if you're not naturally about six feet tall and broad-shouldered, don't put on this ring without preparation.

#### Properties

The ring's power *replaces* the character's personal stats and Appearance with ST 10, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 12, and Handsome Appearance. The wearer becomes, physically, a male of whatever species the GM decides José Von Lee was (defaulting to human), and the details of his appearance (eye color, facial hair, tattoos, etc.) are part of world-building.

### *The Ring of Too Short To Touch The Ground*

This ring shrinks the owner by 2" – upward. On the plus side, the air above the ground apparently has perfect traction in all conditions (ice, snow, mud), and the user does not leave footprints or trigger weight-related traps.

(Even if lying down, the person still doesn't actually touch any surface they're "on top of.") On the minus side, the wearer must roll up their pants, since that's where the shrinkage occurs. On the potentially annoying side, the ring's power lasts only 30 minutes, and the ring must be taken off for five minutes before the effect will resume. If it's left on, it will re-activate itself after 30 minutes.

**Properties**

This ring grants Terrain Adaptation (p. B93) with the Active modifier (***GURPS Powers,*** p. 83), allowing the wearer to completely ignore all terrain penalties. It includes Walk on Air (p. B97), but with the limitation "Accessibility, Only two inches off the ground" (-40%). While worn, the wearer also gains the quirk of "Upward Shortness," as described above.

## *The Ring of Disease Resistance*

Sadly, it's not. It just *feels* as if one no longer has the flu, pneumonia, terminal cancer, or whatever else is afflicting the wearer. This eliminates any penalties to rolls due to *feeling* terrible, though physical symptoms will remain. This effect persists for an hour after taking off the ring! However, since the wearer will probably not be sensible enough to spend time in bed, resting, or otherwise treating the symptoms . . . Appropriate penalties should be applied to Health-based rolls to recover; a generic penalty of -2 can be used if the GM has no guidance for a given disease. If the wearer does not take off the ring, it will stop working after a week, and require a "cool-down" of two days before it will work on that person again.

**Properties**

While worn, this ring gives Immunity to Debilitating Disease Effects [5].

## *The Ring of Peeping Tom*

This would be a garden-variety ring of invisibility if it didn't also include the ability to see through wood and fabric. On the minus side, the user sees through wood and fabric as if they were not there – which can cause the wearer to bump into trees or walls, and perhaps view far too much of other humans who are *not* considered attractive in their eyes. Chainmail bikinis were surprisingly common around José Von Lee's tower.

**Properties**

Mechanics-wise, this ring gives Invisibility (p. B63) and Penetrating Vision 1 (p. B74) with "Specific, Wood *and* Fabric" (-25%).

## *The Ring of Virility*

There are other, more explicit, terms for this ring, possibly including "The Ring of Indefinite Magazine Reading." Essentially, so long as the user is wearing the ring, all abilities pertaining to arousal and functionality (for any sex) will work indefinitely. On the useful side, it provides +3 to mundane rolls relating to Fatigue Point loss of any sort. On the minus side, lecherous characters may never want to take it off (it reduces their self-control rolls by -3), despite the inconvenient physical side effects. Characters *without* Lecherousness gain the disadvantage while the ring is worn, with a self-control roll of 15 or less.

**Properties**

This ring gives a character Resistant to FP Loss (+3) [10] and either Lecherousness (15) [-7] *or* -3 to Lecherousness self-control rolls [-7]. It does not stop FP loss from casting spells, or attacks that drain FP, but someone channeling the ring's salacious energies into more useful ones (e.g., digging a well, hiking, harvesting grain) will resist FP loss as above.

## *The Ring of Dainty Lass*

Whether Von Lee wore this for his own amusement, or hired others to do so . . . is something the townsfolk would rather not know, thanks. The enchantment is much like that of the Ring of Handsome Bloke, transforming the wearer into a lovely young slip of a girl, approximately 5' tall (with 3' long hair), with good agility and slightly above-average intelligence. Happily, Von Lee's tastes did not run to bosoms the size of watermelons, and back pain is not an issue.

**Properties**

The Dainty Lass' stats are: ST 7, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12, and Beautiful Appearance. The same notes as the Ring of Handsome Bloke's apply.

## Alternate Form Notes

At first glance, the Rings of Handsome Bloke and Dainty Lass would seem to use the rules for Alternate Form (p. B83). However, Alternate Forms apply racial attribute *modifiers*, while the rings *replace* a character's own stats with those contained in their enchantment. A half-ogre who puts on the Ring of Dainty Lass does not suffer -3 to ST; she is now *ST 7.*

If the GM wishes to build this replacement as an advantage, rather than simply treating the rings as Signature Gear or items of power (such as those in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 6: 40 Artifacts***), the point cost *will* vary depending on the wearer. E.g., with the Ring of Dainty Lass, a ST 15 half-ogre will have -8 to ST (to get to ST 7), while a ST 6 gnome has +1 ST! A Very Handsome elf loses a level of Appearance, while that half-ogre might gain a few, and so on.

Or the GM can treat the rings' abilities as standard Alternate Forms, thusly:

*Ring of Handsome Bloke:* The wearer gains +1 DX [20], -1 IQ [-20], +2 HT [20], and adds Handsome Appearance [12] (or increases native appearance by an equal amount).

*Ring of Dainty Lass:* This Alternate Form gives the wearer -3 ST [-30], +2 DX [40], +1 IQ [20], +2 HT [20], and adds Beautiful Appearance [12] (or increases native appearance by an equal amount).

# Chaos and Ritual

by Elizabeth McCoy,
with Christopher R. Rice

There are many different kinds of magic systems in fiction. Of them, a goodly number break down into ritualized magic – requiring diagrams etched into the floor, pentagram jewelry, herbs, potions, and other such paraphernalia – and innate magic, which merely requires willpower, focus, and inborn magical talent.

Here, therefore, is a grand unified magical system that *combines* these options. (Though written for ***GURPS***, any system with a similar "memorized list of spells" could probably be used, modifying as needed.) It also adds the useful cinematic concept of "going beyond your limitations – then collapsing in a heap afterward." (For another treatment of this, see Christopher R. Rice's "The Fifth Attribute," in *Pyramid #3/120: Alternate* ***GURPS*** *V.*)

## Kinds of Magic

In the "Chaos and Ritual" system, there are three kinds of magic:

- *Rote Magic,* which allows the performance of rituals without necessarily learning or memorizing any specific spell. (*Ritual* magic has a different meaning in ***GURPS,*** involving the summoning of spirits. It can be incorporated into rote magic if it fits the GM's image of how magic should work.)
- *Learned Magic,* which functions like regular ***GURPS*** magic; see Chapter 5 of the ***Basic Set.***
- *Chaos Magic,* sometimes also known as *innate magic,* which draws on great power resources with little fine control, and a lot of intuition. This relies heavily on the Wild Talent advantage (pp. B99-100).

All three types have a minimum requirement of Magery 0, and all the limitations from p. B67 are applicable, as is Magic Susceptibility (p. B143). Further, beginning characters may purchase "options" on further levels of Magery! Whatever level they stop at is considered to be that character's maximum Magery (barring extraordinary events). If the spells in the world are frequently potent and terrifying, there is no hard limit on what this "ceiling" may be, and an "option" should be 1 point per level of potential Magery. This will *probably* self-select with a maximum of about 20, for 100-point starting characters; make potential Magery cost 2 points/level in a 125-150 starting point campaign, and if the cap is between 3-10, 3-5 points per potential level is better. To turn potential Magery into an actual level of Magery, the wizard must finish paying for each level. (This is slightly cheaper than default Potential Advantages (p. B33), but accessing the potential levels is based on whether the points are *immediately* available.)

## Truth in Spellcasting

Some worlds have "honorable" villains who will follow the letter of their promises – if not the spirit – and can therefore be dealt with. These may be djinn, demons, fae, or merely tricky mages. One way to explain this is to link Magery to a Taboo Trait (p. B261) against lying!

The mage (or creature) need not have Truthfulness – they're able to remain silent, or weasel logic like Celtic knotwork – but the underlying foundation of their magic is that when they're casting a spell, they're telling the universe, "This is what *is.*" If they tell *lies,* the universe will stop believing them . . . and their spells will fail.

For every lie told, the spellcaster's skill with supernatural powers is penalized by 1. They must either make the lie into truth, somehow, or behave as if they had *real* Truthfulness for a period of time to earn back the universe's faith – this will take at least months, and possibly years.

If a GM finds this too harsh for player characters, they may allow the miscreant to erase one point of penalty per game-session. They may also want the *initial* penalty to be somewhere between -2 to -5, or higher, depending on the magnitude of the lie.

At the GM's option, potential Magery may add to Sense rolls to detect magical items or prerequisites to learn a spell, but it never adds to magical skills or affects the time required to learn magical skills.

All mages may purchase a "mana pool" to power their spells – this may be represented by extra Fatigue Points (p. B16), with the limitation "For magic only" (-20%, based on the Focused limitation, p. B100), or the GM may prefer the rules for Energy Reserve (Magical) from ***GURPS Powers***, p. 119. Chaos mages are particularly likely to need large mana pools, as their Wild Talent may latch onto fatigue-heavy spells.

*Example:* Marie-Susan starts play as an orphaned half-elf, living on the streets and learning pickpocketing – but she has hidden depths. She purchases Magery 0 and a whopping 20 points of potential Magery, for a total of 25 points. She then buys a mana pool (10 extra Fatigue Points, limited to magic only), for 24 points, and two levels of Wild Talent (Chaos Mage; Emergencies Only), for 30 points. (She also has a Secret Advantage, p. B33, as the lost heir to an elvish throne. The GM thinks this will come up in the campaign. The GM may be gravely mistaken.)

When MS joins up with an adventuring party that acquires a magical MacGuffin, she uses the excuse of "mystical radiation" to spend nine of her earned points and upgrade to Magery 1 – with 19 levels of potential Magery to go.

### *New Skill: Rites*

**DX or IQ/Very Hard**

*Defaults:* DX-7, IQ-7, or an appropriate skill-7.

*Rites* is a skill that may be used with DX *or* IQ, as appropriate. It is, essentially, the art of following magical instructions. Used with DX, it involves drawing perfect pentagrams, copying arcane scripts, and making correct gestures. High Manual Dexterity (p. B59) may add to this, and it might default to Artist (p. B179) in some cases. Used with IQ, it allows temporary memorization of spell words, correct pronunciation, and other short-term mental requirements. High Manual Dexterity does *not* help with the IQ aspects, though Language Talent (p. B65) and Eidetic Memory (p. B51) might, and Performance skill (p. B212) could be used for the default. Some rituals might require musical instruments, and be bardic songs – or require conducting a full orchestra!

Unlike Thaumatology, Rites may be studied by *anyone* who has a good excuse to practice the necessary skills. In a ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** game, this includes interested historians, archaeologists who transcribe fragments of ancient knowledge, deranged worshippers of false deities, misguided interior decorators, etc. In other settings, add would-be occultists, overly obsessed gamers, or "deluded" new-age witches.

*The first time I called myself a "Witch" was the most magical moment of my life.*
*– Margot Adler,* ***Drawing Down the Moon***

## *Rote Magic*

To use rote magic, a wizard need only have the right books and two skills: Thaumatology (p. B225) and Rites (see box).

*Thaumatology* allows the rote-mage to tell a true magical tome from a fake, research new rituals or modifications to existing ones, and fill in the gaps in poorly written spells. It is not strictly necessary for a beginning student – if there are grimoires that are *meant* to teach a novice.

*Rites* allows the casting of a spell from a book; this often requires two *checks* for the Rites skill – one for the physical components, and one for the vocal ones. Roll *once* for the skill, and then apply it to *both* the IQ and DX-based values. Use the lowest margin of success, if applicable.

*Example:* During an ill-advised expedition to a wizard's tower, Marie-Susan finds herself in the library of the Master Mage. Since she's discovered her talent for spellcasting, she gleefully makes off with the first book she can grab. With IQ 13, DX 11, and 1 point in Rites, she'll be checking any rolls against 10 and 8, respectively. Hopefully she won't choose to practice dangerous spells that require perfect pentagrams . . .

Spell prerequisites are not needed to perform most rote-based spells – the instructions were written by someone who *knew* them – but Magery prerequisites are still in effect. If a spell requires Magery 2, and you have only Magery 0 . . . Oh, well. A kind GM may allow the attempt, but at a penalty to Rites skill equal to the amount of Magery lacked.

A rote-cast spell takes *at least* 10 times as long to prepare and cast as a learned version (see below), or longer, at the GM's option.

Spells may be learned from books, of course. Some rituals are long and complex and must never be attempted outside warded circles, but others can start out being performed by rote with elaborate trappings and – if points are spent on the spell skill itself – become mental constructs, with all the ritual contained in the mage's mind and only a few words required to activate it.

(For more options involving magical tomes, consult Chapter 4 of ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages.***)

## *Learned Magic*

When a spell has been learned, either after sufficient rote repetition (above) or Wild Talent inspiration (see *Chaos Magic,* pp. 74-76), it is treated like any other ***GURPS*** spell; see ***GURPS Magic*** or Chapter 5 of the ***Basic Set.*** This includes the need for prerequisites!

*Example:* The spunky and precocious Marie-Susan, now equipped with the Master Mage's book of transportation spells, has been using it with glee – and some close calls. Her fellow adventurers should not be encouraging her, but it's so useful! Further, "Create Door" (***GURPS Magic,*** p. 84) was previously house-ruled to require only Magery 2 as a prerequisite. Marie-Susan's player spends 10 earned character points: 9 to activate Magery 2 (18 levels of potential Magery to go), and one to learn Create Door as a regular spell. The GM regrets that house rule now.

## *Chaos Magic*

A chaos mage has the Wild Talent advantage (pp. B99-100), with the Focused, Magical limitation and Retention enhancement. Many also have Emergencies Only. Any successful use of this ability may justify upgrading a level of potential Magery to actual Magery, if the points are available!

If it pleases the GM, chaos mages may receive a small bonus (+1 to +3) to the Wild Talent roll if someone is using magic *on* them at the time – especially if a useful Wild Talent manifestation would be the same kind of magic, or a very specific counter.

By default, two basic "chaos skills" are most likely to pop up when the Wild Talent is first activated: Chaos Shielding and Chaos Jet. They have no prerequisites save the Wild Talent (Chaos Mage) package, but tend to cost a lot of FP.

### Chaos Jet

Essentially, pick a Missile spell attack, such as Fireball (p. B247) or Lightning (p. B244), and apply the +0% Jet enhancement (p. B106) to it. It costs the maximum amount to cast, and the same to maintain, but does not need to "build up" in the caster's hand.

GMs with ***GURPS Magic*** can instead select an appropriate jet spell. A Chaos Jet is *not* limited to 3d of damage or three yards, but each additional yard of range *or* each additional die of damage costs an extra Fatigue Point. (So a 4-yard, 4d Chaos Jet would cost 3+1+1 points of fatigue, or 5 FP per second.)

Also up to the GM is whether or not the Chaos Jet is actual *chaos* (with different properties than fire or lightning; see *Raw Chaos*, below), or if the Wild Talent has merely latched onto a random jet/Missile spell, with potentially unusual special effects or nuances. (See the *Chaotic Side Effects Table*, p. 75, for ideas!)

*Example:* Back when she was just a beginning character with too many points, Marie-Susan purchased two levels of the chaos mage Wild Talent, with Emergencies Only, for 30 points. The first time her adventuring party is attacked by bandits, one decides she's an easy target – but MS manages to activate a 2-yard Chaos Jet and hits! Assuming she's a more potent mage with worse spells up her sleeves, the bandits flee, and Marie-Susan does a little dance of glee.

### Chaos Shielding

The default Chaos Shielding is a variation of Armor (p. B253). It has no maximum DR, and manifests as an "aura" of protection around the mage, but it is full cost to maintain and only protects against magical attacks: fireballs, lightning bolts, Chaos Jets, etc. When the enemy wizard tosses a fireball, and the chaos mage puts up his arms to instinctively defend himself and the innocent bystander behind him, the fireball will splatter with great pyrotechnics a few inches away from the chaos mage's face. (Unless some of the damage gets through the DR, in which case the chaos mage is going to look sunburned.)

For *twice* the cost, Chaos Shielding becomes extremely visible and will defend against physical attacks as well, by *damaging* anything that attempts to get through the shielding! If this is a fist, it's also painful. See *Raw Chaos* (below) for types of damage that Chaos Shielding might use.

## Raw Chaos

For the most part, a Chaos Jet (above) can be treated as a regular jet spell or adapted Missile spell, using Innate Attack (Beam) skill (p. B201) to hit, and Chaos Shielding is just a variant form of Armor or Utter Wall. GMs who want to be more atmospheric may use the following suggestions and flavor text.

*Raw Chaos* is the underpinnings of the universe, and also its greatest threat, providing both energy and the ever-present entropic disintegration that laps at the edges of reality. It pervades the spaces between dimensions, and gazing too long upon its unfathomable colors can drive a mortal mad. Harnessed, it is mana. Unharnessed, it is lethal. A chaos mage is someone with the supreme confidence (possibly born of ignorance!) to take this mind-twisting stuff, force a tiny amount of order into it, and fling it around casually. Stereotypical chaos mages have Overconfidence.

When used as an attack, chaos does damage by increasing entropy, dissolving bits of the physical world into itself, or dumping energy into what it strikes – or any combination of the above. As a general rule, a chaos attack will do one or more of crushing, burning, and corrosion damage. A very focused Chaos Jet might do impaling damage (the GM should make that cost extra fatigue!).

To make chaos magic more unpredictable, the GM can require a roll of 1d each time a Chaos Jet is used, to determine what *kind* of damage it does: 1-2, burning; 3-4, corrosion; 5-6, crushing (with knockback!). With a critical success on the Chaos Jet roll (or Wild Talent roll to activate it), *combine* two of the above types of damage!

If the GM doesn't find extra rolls fun, then the mage picks a default manifestation for their uses of chaos. This may be different for different mages, but is intrinsically linked to their worldviews and desires in some way.

Shielding with chaos is a demonstration of the "best defense is a good offence" theory; the mage pulls a thin layer of chaos into a protective barrier, disrupting local mana-fields and the spells flying through them. For a higher fatigue cost, this sheet of chaos defends against physical objects as well, trying to disintegrate what passes through! Even if a weapon penetrates the controlled rift, it may be blunted and damaged afterward.

As above, the GM may wish to roll randomly to determine what kind of damage Chaos Shielding does to physical objects, or may wish to make it innate to the mage. Chaos Shielding spells that do knockback may take down the shield for a second if they successfully "blast away" an attacker!

# Chaotic Side Effects Table

At the GM's option, whenever a chaos mage uses a Wild Talent spell, there may be *side effects*. If so, this is technically a *Nuisance Effect* limitation (-5%; see pp. B112-113) on Wild Talent. Other options include requiring a roll only under certain circumstances, such as the Wild Talent roll failing by 1, *succeeding* with an exact roll, or when the chaos mage goes into fatigue debt (see p. 76). It is particularly appropriate when the mage is using Chaos Jet or Chaos Shielding.

Befitting the disorderly nature of chaos magic, the following table (adapted from p. B479) is provided. Roll 3d, or choose something appropriate to the situation and spell being attempted. If multiple spells are cast before the initial side effects have worn off, the GM may choose to extend that side effect's duration, increment its severity in some manner, or add new overlapping side effects.

**3** – The user acquires a temporary mental or physical effect for the duration of the spell and 1d minutes afterward. These can be "quirk-level" forms of regular disadvantages (such as "hot-tempered" instead of Bad Temper, or a "Delusion" of perceiving sparkles around any metallic object), or visible side effects such as glittering skin, glowing eyes, or having one's hair stand on end and wave dramatically in an unfelt wind.

**4** – The spell causes pain to the caster! It still succeeds, but for the duration of the spell and 1d minutes afterward, the mage is at -2 to DX, IQ, and self-control rolls. High Pain Threshold and Low Pain Threshold do not modify this side effect!

> *One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.*
>
> *– Friedrich Nietzsche*

**5** – The spell causes the caster to suffer itching, sneezing, or some other distracting effect. It succeeds and can be maintained, but the caster is at -1 to DX, IQ, and self-control rolls due to annoyance and distraction.

**6** – Something or someone within 10 yards is briefly transformed into *something else* for 2d seconds, but is restored with no permanent harm done. (Any damage will break the effect.) The "something else" may be anything the GM chooses, within reason. Load-bearing walls should not turn into soap bubbles, for instance, but might become trees, boulders, or solid gold. Fellow adventurers might change species (elf, goblin, owl, statue, poison ivy . . .), but don't get crushed by their gear.

**7** – The universe *whines* for the duration of the spell and 2d minutes afterwards! Anyone within 20 yards develops a headache (-2 to DX, IQ, and self-control rolls) until the noise stops. The caster suffers twice as much: -4 to the above rolls. Earplugs don't help, but Deafness does.

**8** – The local mana fields are warped by the chaotic effects, at a distance of 10 yards from the caster! For the duration of the spell and 2d seconds after, all spellcasters must roll on this table if they cast a spell in the area of turbulent mana – and they also extend the duration of this effect.

**9** – Transparent clouds of noxious gas form out of nowhere around the caster and the spell's target, spreading to approximately 4 yards out. Anyone who breathes the fumes must make a HT+3 roll; on a failure, they are nauseated (see *Irritating Conditions*, p. B428) for five minutes.

**10** – The local mana fields set up a vibration that follows the caster around for the next 1d minutes, giving others a Magery+3 (minimum +3) bonus to notice an odd humming sound.

**11** – Impressive but harmless visual effects accompany this spell, giving Magery+5 (minimum +5) to Vision rolls to see where the caster is.

**12** – Harmless but opaque clouds form around the caster, spreading to 4 yards out. Treat as an additional Fog spell (p. B253), for no fatigue cost.

**13** – The mana fields are disrupted in a way that is attractive to local animals, who all want to come see what's happening. The area *and* the mage are both fascinating for the duration of the spell and 1d×10 minutes afterward. The animals aren't hostile unless attacked, accidentally stepped on, etc.

**14** – The spell drains *all* the caster's available FP and throws them into fatigue debt! As soon as they stop maintaining the spell, they fall unconscious. The mage is aware this will happen, and can attempt to maintain the spell long enough to get to safety, but they'll have to make an HT roll (see *Epic Fatigue,* p. 76).

**15** – Dimensional rifts form, permitting ghosts, evil spirits, good spirits, or other creatures to pop out near the caster. Treat as a temporary Weirdness Magnet disadvantage.

**16** – For the duration of the spell and 1d minutes afterwards, everyone within 10 yards is afflicted with pain, as per **4**. This also affects the caster.

**17** – When the mage stops maintaining the spell, a dimensional rift forms beneath them! They must make a DX roll to avoid falling through. The rift *usually* just moves them to somewhere nearby (albeit high enough up to potentially sprain an ankle if they land wrong), but anything that doesn't disrupt the game is possible. NPC chaos mages may be flung through time and space, landing on the adventurers when next the GM thinks the players are bored.

**18** – Two side effects happen! Roll twice more on this table. If you get this result again, *three* side effects accompany the spell, and so on.

When defending against spells that do not have a properly cinematic physical manifestation, the GM *may* let chaos mages adapt Chaos Shielding (half its DR applied to the mage's roll to resist), or allow a roll against the chaos mage's Wild Talent, with success adding Magery and potential Magery to the resistance roll.

If using ***GURPS Magic,*** the GM may allow the use of Utter Wall (***GURPS Magic,*** p. 170) to shield an *area*, with similar special effects.

### *Chaos Mage Lens*

**+60 points**

This is a *very basic* lens that may be applied to any profession to add a little chaos to the mix, or used as a starting point to build a focused chaos mage.

***Attributes:*** +1 IQ [20].
***Advantages:*** Mana Pool (+5 FP; Magic only -20%) [12]; Wild Talent (Chaos Mage) 1 [21].
***Disadvantages:*** Overconfidence (12) [-5].
***Skills:*** Chaos Jet (H) IQ [4]; Chaos Shielding (H) IQ [4]; Innate Attack (Beams) (E) DX+2 [4].

## Epic Fatigue: Going Into Debt

Normally, a mage who wants to cast or maintain a spell beyond their normal limits must burn Hit Points to power it. This may not be suitably cinematic, especially in circumstances where the characters are being required to exceed their limits again and again. Mana pools help, but even they can be used up in titanic battles of power and magic.

*Going Into Debt* is an optional rule to pair with the Chaos and Ritual system. It allows a caster to spend FP now, and pay for it later.

Going into fatigue debt has mechanics much like dying; see *General Damage,* p. B327. First, the mage runs through all their Fatigue Points. Then, instead of spending Hit Points or falling unconscious, the mage must make a HT roll. If this roll fails, they must make a Will roll to maintain concentration, *and* take 1 HP of injury. (This damage does not affect casting new spells.) Either way, the caster has now gone into fatigue debt – they have access to a full multiple of their prior Fatigue Points and mana pool, but the *instant* they stop maintaining their last spell, they will take 1d HP of injury and fall unconscious until this fatigue debt is recovered!

Just as additional multiples of HP can be gone through before death, further multiples of FP can be gone through. Each multiple requires a HT roll and may inflict 1 HP of injury, and each "threshold" passed adds 1d HP of injury to the eventual toll the mage will pay.

*Example:* Marie-Susan is heroically protecting a great hall while the remaining conscious members of the party use a magical item to contact her arch-rival (and now romantic interest), the Master Mage. The GM has ***GURPS Magic*** and has allowed MS's Wild Talent to latch onto Utter Wall. Covering an area of 5 yards across, she's dumping 20 FP into the effect per minute. With only HT 10 and 10 extra Fatigue Points, she's gone into fatigue debt by the first minute. She fails her HT roll, takes 1 HP of injury, makes her Will roll, and continues for another minute. After a total of five minutes (and three failed HT rolls) later, the Master Mage has been contacted and uses Create Gate to rescue them all. Marie-Susan, already down by 3 HP, takes 4d HP of injury, goes to -5 HP, and faints dramatically as the gate closes behind them. Fortunately, between Healing and Lend Energy (she needs to recover 100 FP before she can wake up!), she awakens with little harm done.

Now she just has to deal with the debt she owes the Master Mage . . . Maybe the GM can *finally* maneuver them into uncovering her secret elvish throne!



# Magic Ingredients Revisited

by Matt Riggsby

***GURPS Magic,*** p. 8, notes briefly that magicians traditionally keep spell ingredients, batches of odds and ends for use in casting spells. For the sake of convenience, it further assumes that, under usual circumstances, magicians have access to whatever they need. If magicians get out of hand, GMs can hit them with a sudden shortage of virgin's blood, Nixon buttons, or what-have-you in order to restore game balance. However, it seems inelegant to arbitrarily announce that there is a sudden shortage of something a formerly powerful character didn't know he needed in the first place. GMs intending to make spell ingredients an important element in their campaigns, or those who simply want to add some color to the basic magic system, can use these rules to flesh out the brief mention of magic ingredients and fill magicians' pouches with strange and rare substances.

> *"'If Elves could fly over mountains, they might fetch the Sun to save us," answered Gandalf. "But I must have something to work on!"*
>
> *– J.R.R. Tolkien,*
> ***The Fellowship of the Ring***

## Which Ingredients?

Rather than assigning specific components to each spell (for the most part), this system allows spellcasters a certain amount of flexibility.

Each college has a list of magic ingredients, from which the caster can choose as he casts his spell. In general, the number of ingredients a spell needs depends on its prerequisites. To find the number of ingredients necessary to cast a given spell, take the number of prerequisite spells it needs, divide by two, and round up. A spell without prerequisite spells needs no ingredients, a spell with one or two prerequisites needs one ingredient, and so on. The spell tables in ***GURPS Magic,*** pp. 223-237, are extremely useful here. There are a few exceptions for specific spells. For example, Seek spells all use forked sticks to the exclusion of all other ingredients. Experienced magicians also need fewer ingredients. Reduce the number of ingredients a spell needs by one for every three full points of skill over 12. A magician would need one less ingredient if he knows a spell at 15, two less at 18, and so on.

## Using Ingredients

Using ingredients in spellcasting is simply a matter of flourishing an object or scattering a pinch of dust as appropriate to the ingredient.

Using an ingredient does not by itself add to casting time, but it may take a moment for an unprepared spellcaster to dig the necessary ingredients out of his pouch. Treat this as a Ready maneuver which may be performed while the caster is concentrating on the spell; the GM may allow a Fast-Draw (Spell Ingredient) skill or simply treat it as identical for all practical purposes to Fast-Draw (Potion). If the ingredients are worn as jewelry or clothing, they are considered ready for use in spellcasting. Items may serve as multiple ingredients. For example, if a wizard needs iron, jade, and a ring to cast a spell, an iron ring set with jade may count as three ingredients. Unless specifically stated, spell ingredients do not need special preparation or enchantment. If a spell needs a stone as an ingredient, the caster may pick up any rock which comes to hand and use it immediately. He could even lay a hand on a nearby boulder or cliff-side.

Materials fall into two types: durable and expendable. Expendable materials include plants (usually ground into powder for convenience), dusts, and liquids. They are scattered or poured out in "pinches," 20 pinches to an ounce, and are lost once they are used even if the spell fails.

For convenience, a caster may prepare "spell masalas," mixes of ingredients. The total number of pinches of ingredients required is used in a casting. For example, a necromancer might prepare a mix of dried blood and graveyard dust. If he needs two ingredients to cast a spell, he can use a two-pinch handful of the mixture rather than have to dig through his bag to get one pinch of blood and another of dust.

Durable materials include stones, metals, cloths, and any other more-or-less solid object. Durable materials are not necessarily destroyed in casting. They are lost only if the caster rolls a critical failure on his skill roll. However, if the caster rolls a critical failure, all objects used as ingredients for the spell are destroyed in their entirety (the ring and stone shatter, the boots fall apart and the leather turns to dust, etc.), even if the objects have components which were not used in the spell. For example, if the jade-set iron ring had a ruby and a diamond set in it as well, the ring and all three gems would be destroyed. It's possible for a power item to be used as magic ingredients, but given the possibility of destruction, it's a very bad idea. Very large objects react to critical failures somewhat differently. If the object in question has greater weight, mass, or volume than the wizard himself or simply has combined HP and natural DR in excess of the caster's, it is not destroyed on a critical failure. Instead, there is a magical backlash which does 2d damage to the caster; armor offers no protection. Some spells may take certain environmental conditions in place of ingredients (for example, being in a high place counts towards the total ingredients for Air spells). Those conditions are likewise not affected by a critical failure on the spell roll.



## Spellcasting Without Materials

The GM should decide what the effects of spellcasting without materials are in the campaign world. The greater effect, the more important they will be in the game world. Here are some suggested levels of effect:

- *Trivial:* The caster is at -1 to skill if he does not have all ingredients.
- *Annoyance:* The caster is at -1 to skill for every ingredient he is short.
- *Severe Impediment:* Spellcasters who cannot use the full number of ingredients are at half skill.
- *Crippling:* Spells may not be cast without proper ingredients.

## Ingredients List

Most colleges from ***GURPS Magic*** are listed below with materials that may be used to cast their spells. Special requirements for individual spells are listed within the college the spell belongs to. This is, of course, only a sample list, and the GM may alter and expand the lists as desired to fit the tone of the campaign. This list provides a fairly generic mix of precious stones and metals, herbs, spices, and specialized objects, but a GM may want to emphasize the use of spices, gems, or parts of magical animals (dragon's scales, unicorn horns). High-tech wizards may employ rare isotopes, the aforementioned Nixon buttons, and office supplies in their spells.

Most colleges require no more than 10 to 12 possible ingredients to provide for even the most complicated spells. This makes a good limit for the number of available ingredients as well. Too many ingredients and they become so plentiful that they're not a meaningful twist to spellcasting.

### *Air*

A fan, a feather, silk, colored streamers, a hollow tube, any blade, a silver wand, diamond, aquamarine, quartz, a horn or flute, a wind stronger than 4 mph. Being on a mountain top or in a fully exposed position atop a very tall building (at least 100 feet) counts as one ingredient, or two for particularly high and open locations or being in flight (or simply falling).

### *Animal*

Jasper, violets, obsidian, amber, a silver ring, a flute, a rattle, a whip, a bone or horn wand. Animal spells may also use a part of an animal of the appropriate type (for example, a wolf's paw or blood for a spell to be cast on a wolf), which counts as two ingredients. The heart of an appropriate animal counts as three ingredients. Rider and Possession spells may use a polished sphere of any red stone in place of all other ingredients. Shapeshifting spells may use a full hide of an appropriate animal or enough ointment made from the animal's blood and fat to cover the subject from head to toe in place of all other ingredients.

### *Body Control*

Onyx, orchid, pepper, dried gum, blood from an intelligent creature, jade, ivory, malachite, a rattle, a wand made from an organic material. "Harmful" Body Control spells such as Strike Dumb, Pain, and so on may use soot, poisons, an inscribed bone from a sentient being, or a skull, which count as two ingredients. "Helpful" Body Control spells may use diamond or a metal wrist-band or necklace, which count as two ingredients. Roundabout may simply use a silver needle or an arrow in place of all other ingredients. For spells cast on others, anything once part of the subject's body, such as hair, blood, or sweat, counts as two ingredients.

## *Communication and Empathy*

Poppy, the eye or ear of any animal, a sculpture of a head, quartz, diamond, amber, a lens, a bell, or a hollow tube. A transparent glass sphere at least three inches in diameter counts as two ingredients. All Communication and Empathy spells (except Possession and any spell taking Possession as a prerequisite) may be performed with only a polished, flawless quartz or other transparent mineral sphere at least three inches in diameter. For other spells, such a sphere counts as three ingredients. At the GM's option, psychoactive substances may be used as ingredients.

*Fill magicians' pouches with strange and rare substances!*

## *Earth*

Every metal, stone, and ore counts as a separate ingredient. Being underground counts as an ingredient, and being in a natural cave (rather than an excavation or basement) counts as two.

## *Enchantment*

Each tool incorporating a gem, precious metal, or other rare substance counts as a separate ingredient; miniature replicas are equally effective. Enchantment uses the same type and number of ingredients as the underlying spell plus one tool as for other ingredients in the college.

## *Fire*

Pepper, amber, topaz, gold, iron, bronze, copper, an open flame. Ruby and any part of a salamander count as two ingredients. Any part of a dragon counts as four ingredients. Casting in very close proximity to a large fire, such as a building or forest fire, or a volcano, counts as two ingredients, although it may be difficult or dangerous to cast from such locations.

## *Food*

Fire, a wooden box, a wand or staff. Each spice counts as a separate ingredient. A large pot or kettle counts as two; a stove, oven, or fireplace counts as three.

## *Healing*

Oil (any oil suitable for cooking or eating, not petroleum), incense, pure water, gold, amber, sage, mandrake, poppy, white cloth, holy symbols.

## *Illusion and Creation*

Smoke, wine, soot, a silk flag, opal, clay or sand, a colored wand or staff. Each different dye or brightly colored disk counts as a separate ingredient, up to four ingredients.

## *Knowledge*

Amethyst, patchouli, mistletoe, myrrh, tea leaves, a pen, the eye, ear, or tongue of an intelligent creature, a garment embroidered with mystical symbols. Knowledge spells may use a crystal sphere as for Communication and Empathy spells (see above). Slips of paper, papyrus, or any similar writing surface with mystic symbols may be used, but are consumed during use like dusts.

## *Light and Darkness*

For light-producing or vision-enhancing spells: a lens, a hollow tube, silver, a mirror or polished metal object, diamond, quartz, a mask or veil. For dark-producing or vision-obscuring spells: soot, sable, mud or dust, steam or smoke, a dark-colored cloth, a mask; each dark gemstone (for example, jet or obsidian) counts as an ingredient.

## *Making and Breaking*

Any sharp-edged tool, a needle, a hammer, iron, gold, diamond, anything disc-shaped. For repair spells: lodestone, gum or sap, a needle, thread or ribbon, fat. For breaking-related spells: a crowbar, vinegar, jade.

## *Meta-Spells*

Frankincense, jasmine, mandrake, myrrh, ginger, saffron, quartz, diamond, meteoric iron, hematite, opal, a wand, a garment embroidered with mystical symbols.

## *Mind Control*

Cinnamon, gold, mandrake, the heart of an intelligent creature, opal, bloodstone, a polished metal disk, a leather thong, a picture, doll, or other object which has been made to look like the subject (no artistic skill necessary; it's the attempt that matters). Anything once part of the subject's body, such as hair, blood, or sweat, counts as two ingredients.

### *Seek Spells*

All Seek spells, regardless of college, may use a two-pronged object (forked stick, silver fork, chicken wishbone, etc.) or a wooden or metal needle hanging from a string instead of any other ingredients.

## *Movement*

A feather, ginger, hemlock, malachite, hematite, aquamarine, coral, any bone of a horse, a knife, a wooden wand, a fan.

## *Necromantic*

Blood, dirt from a graveyard or tomb, jet, nightshade, an ebony wand or staff. Casting a spell in a tomb or graveyard counts as two ingredients. Bones of a sentient creature count as two ingredients.

Virgin's blood and incense may each be used as two ingredients in summoning and banishing spells.

## *Plant*

A sickle, thistle, cardamom, fresh blood, fresh fruit, jade, agate, topaz, silver, bronze, a wooden wand or staff.

### *Protection and Warning*

A bell, a polished stone object, an eye, pepper, a metal or metal-encased wand, sandalwood, any bronze object. Iron Arm may use a bronze gauntlet or bracelet as an ingredient.

### *Sound*

Sapphire, turquoise, lapis lazuli, a horn, a bell, a hollow tube, an ear. Silencing spells, such as Hush and Mage-Stealth, may use raw silk fiber as an ingredient.

### *Water*

Any part of an aquatic or amphibious animal, aquamarine, turquoise, water, silver, a ring, a cup or bowl, a green, blue, or white cloth. Casting while in a boat (on the water, not on dry land!) or swimming counts as an ingredient, while full immersion during the entire casting counts as two.

### *Weather*

Weather spells can use ingredients for Air and Water spells.

### *Exceptional Materials*

Depending on the specifics of the campaign, very unusual but potent materials can be found to use as spell ingredients: Feathers from the wings of an angel. Gemstones mined by damned souls in hell. Naturally occurring essential metal. The implausible materials tables in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables*** and ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 1: Glittering Prizes*** contain a variety of such items, and the GM can doubtless come up with many more. Such items can be used as powerful spell ingredients. The exact use of any given material must be up to the GM, but whatever college or colleges of spells it applies to, it should count as, at the barest minimum, three ingredients, and in most cases more than that. It should be difficult, but not impossible, to find materials which count as *all* ingredients for any spell in a given college and perhaps grant skill bonuses as well.

## Spell Ingredients in Play

The ingredient lists should provide magicians with a range of possibilities for peculiar things to fill their pouches. Each college has more possible ingredients than all but the most complex spells require, and many materials can be used across colleges, so it doesn't take much to enable a magician to cast a large number of spells. The precise materials chosen and whether a spellcaster carries durable or expendable materials, therefore, are strategic choices. Expendable materials are generally much cheaper and more compact on a casting-by-casting basis, but they allow a limited number of castings, whereas durable materials weigh and cost more but last longer.

Likewise, versatile objects allow a magician to cast lots of spells without worrying about grabbing new materials out of a bag or pocket, but leave him vulnerable in case they should break. Many ingredients, being rare and valuable substances, may also be subject to theft. The prudent spellcaster will carry a range of materials, perhaps relying on multi-purpose durable ones but keeping at least a small supply of expendables and special-purpose ingredients on hand if the durables break. Prudent spellcasters will also be fairly dripping with rings, amulets, and the like, giving themselves layers of redundancy in their materials

The range of materials available to spellcasters also ensures that they won't be crippled if the supply of any one ingredient dries up. However, limiting ingredients will still put pressure on powerful spellcasters. Most spells can be cast with the use of one or two common ingredients, so hedge-wizards and village wise women will generally be able to cast their spells without trouble. However, more complex spells require more ingredients, forcing casters to use more rare and expensive materials. A general decline in the supply of spices or precious stones will make those ingredients harder to get, which will complicate life considerably for more powerful magicians.

Those materials will also be considerably harder to replace for wizards far away from centers of trade and civilization. Burning out a diamond-set gold ring is one thing to a magician in his study a few streets away from a jeweler, but quite another if he is fighting off goblins in a rugged mountain range surrounded by miles of desert.

## Spell Ingredients and Incantations

Incantation magic allows incanters to use material components to provide a bonus to incantations (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic,*** p. 18). And, as the rules indicate, "components may be attuned to a specific Path or effect, or even a particular ritual, so that they can only be used for such magic." Instead of using generic material components of a given quality (and therefore cost), the spell ingredients above can be used for various incantation Paths. This can be used as a rough guide to how incantation Paths might map to spell colleges for the purposes of determining appropriate spell ingredients.

| ***Path*** | ***College*** |
|---|---|
| Arcanum | Meta-Spells |
| Augury | Knowledge |
| Demonology | Necromantic |
| Elementalism | The elemental college(s) most suitable to the desired effect, or Plant for wood |
| Mesmerism | Mind Control |
| Necromancy | Necromantic |
| Protection | Protection and Warning |
| Transfiguration | Illusion and Creation |

Naturally, the GM may allow exceptions and broader interpretations. For example, Meta-Spells may be more suitable for many applications of Demonology, and Making and Breaking ingredients may be suitable for some interpretations of Transfiguration incantations.

# Riding the Tiger

by Matt Riggsby

From the warg cavalry at the Battle of the Five Armies to the tigers of Pan Tang to the giant Paluan lizards in *The Fallible Fiend,* unusual riding animals frequently appear in fantasy literature. Moreover, though they're extremely unlikely, the idea of cavalry mounted on dinosaurs, giant eagles, or some other impressive animal has an undeniable "kewl" factor. This article presents a number of utterly unrealistic but, with any luck, interesting riding animals for fantasy campaigns.

A riding animal has to fit a few requirements. First, it has to be strong enough to carry a rider. Assuming an average combined weight of rider and gear of about 200 pounds, which is near enough for humans and other human-sized riders, the minimum ST for a mount is about 18, which puts the mount near Medium encumbrance; most mounts (including these) won't go for more than a few steps at Heavy encumbrance or greater. A ST of 22 moves that "standard" load closer to Light encumbrance, which is good for speed, or provides a lot more margin for heavy armor, which is good for heavy shock cavalry. ST values above that raise the possibility of multiple riders. For example, a mount with a ST of 24, though not terribly fast, might carry a lightly armored "driver" and an equally lightly equipped archer (or fireball-hurling magician, or some other "gunner" type) in the manner of Bronze-Age chariots, but with much better terrain handling. Typical ***GURPS*** elephants (ST 45) are strong enough to haul three lightly armored people and still have nearly 700 pounds of carrying capacity . . . enough for a small, lightly armored wooden fighting tower.

Second, the animal must be amenable to training and keeping company with humans. There's no specific trait which covers that, so this must ultimately be the GM's call. For the most part, though, any animal with the Domestic Animal meta-trait can be trained so far as its IQ will allow.

## Getting and Keeping Exotic Animals

Unusual riding animals can be the ultimate special order (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers,*** p. 25). They're uncommon, they prefer specific environments, and they can require specialized handling. They are best purchased in the regions and from the cultures to which they are native: coursing wolves from goblin-kin tribes, giant eagles from residents of high mountains and flying castles, and so on.

Unless otherwise noted, all animals use riding gear with the same costs and weights as on ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures,*** p. 19, but it's specialized by animal. A saddle for a horse won't fit a war tiger, and a war tiger saddle won't fit a giant eagle.

Care and feeding costs for most of these animals are $150 per week between adventures (***Wilderness Adventures,*** p. 19). Multiply by SM for animals larger than SM +1, and double costs for animals with Restricted Diet.

## Riding Animals

Here are several animals which may be used not just as monsters but as riding animals used by human-sized (or nearly so) characters.

### *Coursing Wolves*

The coursing wolf, a more tractable relative of the dire wolf (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons,*** p. 22) is on the borderline of being a ridable animal. Goblins and other smaller races can use them as cavalry, but they're only practical mounts for humans if the human is fairly small (or lightly equipped). Their social nature can make tending them a chore as they work out the pack hierarchy, and they're restless and distracted when alone. However, they're bred for group hunting and used to working together, making them remarkably amenable to training for group tactics. The "code of honor" is the coursing wolf's inherent loyalty to its "pack," a group of fellow wolves and associated humans. A coursing wolf will fight to the death to protect its fellow pack members and defer to pack members above it in the hierarchy. Among trained wolves, riders are regarded as "alpha dogs," and a well-trained coursing wolf is *very* loyal.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 17 | **HP:** 17 | **Speed:** 6.00 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 11 | **Move:** 9 |
| **IQ:** 4 | **Per:** 12 | |
| **HT:** 12 | **FP:** 12 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 1 |

**Bite (13):** 1d+1 cutting. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Chummy; Code of Honor (Wolf); Discriminatory Smell; Domestic Animal; Night Vision 2; Quadruped; Temperature Tolerance 1 (23°F to 90°F).
***Skills:*** Brawling-13; Mount-12; Tactics-9; Tracking-12.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.

***Notes:*** A typical coursing wolf, if available, costs $6,500. Riding gear for horses and horse-like animals can be used on a coursing wolf in a pinch, but it's a bit large and clumsy, giving -1 to Riding skill.

## *Giant Eagles*

Flying mounts are rare and expensive, but among those, giant eagles are among the most common. They're relatively fast, are individually dangerous, and can render most terrain moot, but their capacity for training is limited, they need a lot of room for maneuver, and their immense wingspan makes them easier targets.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 21 | **HP:** 21 | **Speed:** 6.25 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 9 | **Move:** 6/24 (Air) |
| **IQ:** 3 | **Per:** 12 | |
| **HT:** 13 | **FP:** 13 | **SM:** +1/+2 in flight |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 1 |

**Beak (13):** 2d-1 large piercing. Reach C, 1.
**Bite (13):** 2d-1 cutting. Reach C, 1.
**Claw (11):** 2d-1 cutting *or* impaling. Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Acute Vision 5; Domestic Animal; Enhanced Move 1 (Air); Flight (Cannot Hover; Winged); No Fine Manipulators.
***Skills:*** Brawling-13; Mount-12.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** A typical giant eagle costs $11,000. Riding gear available for giant eagles includes safety belts ($50, 3 lbs.), allowing the rider to stay securely in place. It takes 20 seconds to fasten or unfasten them all, but the rider will not fall out of the saddle even if unconscious or dead.

## *War Tigers*

Though not much good as long-distance transportation (they need a great deal of rest, so they're only good for short stretches), war tigers are among the most dangerous unusual mounts: agile, stealthy, and armed with particularly sharp teeth and claws. Their habit of playing with their prey before killing them only adds to their fearsome reputation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 23 | **HP:** 23 | **Speed:** 6.25 |
| **DX:** 14 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 10 |
| **IQ:** 4 | **Per:** 12 | |
| **HT:** 11 | **FP:** 11 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 10 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 1 |

**Bite (14):** 2d cutting. Reach C, 1.
**Claws (14):** 2d cutting. Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Combat Reflexes; Domestic Animal; Night Vision 5; Quadruped; Restricted Diet (Fresh meat); Sadism (12); Sleepy (Asleep 2/3 of the time); Temperature Tolerance 1 (35°F to 101°F).
***Skills:*** Brawling-14; Mount-14; Stealth-14.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** A typical war tiger costs $10,000.

## *Great Bears*

Few mounts are more formidable than the huge, tough great bear. In northern forests, they are used as transportation for both people and goods, and in a pinch they can be used for cavalry. Unlike other cavalry, though, they can grapple their opponents. Great bears are, however, sometimes hard to control, so they've yet to be regularly used in large numbers. The Riding (Bear) skill includes training on how to stay in the saddle when the bear rears up on its hind legs, and bear saddles are specially designed to allow such a maneuver.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 27 | **HP:** 27 | **Speed:** 5.75 |
| **DX:** 10 | **Will:** 11 | **Move:** 7 |
| **IQ:** 4 | **Per:** 10 | |
| **HT:** 13 | **FP:** 13 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 8 | **Parry:** 9 | **DR:** 2 |

**Bite (12):** 3d+1 cutting. Reach C, 1.
**Claws (12):** 3d+1 cutting. Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Bad Sight (Nearsighted); Bad Temper (9); Domestic Animal; No Fine Manipulators; Semi-Upright; Sleepy (Asleep 1/2 of the time); Temperature Tolerance 2 (-1°F to 80°F).
***Skills:*** Brawling-12; Mount-12; Wrestling-12.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** A typical great bear costs $11,500. Most of the year, they follow an unremarkable sleep schedule, but they hibernate for a month or two during the coldest winter months. Those who tend the bears have a variety of concoctions to keep them awake during these times which range from very effective to utterly useless.



## *Grand Caiman*

Though strong and tough, the grand caiman has a number of drawbacks as a regular mount. It is hard to motivate, easily angered, very sensitive to temperature, and almost impossible to train. On the other hand, it has a number of attributes making it remarkably useful in its native tropical swamps.

One, obviously, is its considerable carrying capacity. It is large enough to carry two or three lightly equipped men into battle, though the riders usually dismount rather than use the caiman as a fighting platform. It is also equally at home in the water and on land. Although it can swim far under water, it is trained to stay on the surface when it has riders.

**ST:** 29 **HP:** 29 **Speed:** 5.00
**DX:** 10 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 7
**IQ:** 2 **Per:** 10
**HT:** 10 **FP:** 10 **SM:** +2

**Dodge:** 8 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 4

**Bite (11):** 3d-1 cutting. Reach C, 1.
**Tail Strike (9):** 3d+3 crushing. Reach C-2.

***Traits:*** Amphibious; Bad Temper (9); Cold Blooded (Stiffen up below 65°F); Domestic Animal; Laziness; Quadruped.
***Skills:*** Brawling-11; Mount-12; Swimming-12.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** A grand caiman costs $12,500.

## Domestic Triceratops

Any number of domesticated dinosaurs can be used as draft animals, but the triceratops, with its naturally four-footed gait and lack of protruding dorsal spines and other features, is among the best riding animals. And as an herbivore, it's no harder to feed than any other six ton domestic animal. It can be ill-tempered, and many riding animals are significantly faster, but it's very hard to stop a triceratops when it starts moving.

**ST:** 45 **HP:** 45 **Speed:** 5.75
**DX:** 12 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 9
**IQ:** 2 **Per:** 10
**HT:** 11 **FP:** 11 **SM:** +4

**Dodge:** 8 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 3/6 (head only)

**Bite (12):** 5d-1 large piercing. Reach C, 1.
**Horns (12):** 5d+3 impaling. Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Bad Temper (9); Domestic Animal; Quadruped.
***Skills:*** Brawling-12; Mount-12.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** A domestic triceratops costs $20,000. Given its size, cost and weight of riding gear is doubled.

*For a version of riding gryphons, see p. 7*

## Hill Turtle

The hill turtle gets its name not from living in the hills, but from *being* a hill. At 15 to 18 yards across and able to carry over 30 tons without complaining, domesticated hill turtles aren't mounts so much as mobile homes. In their native near-desert plains, they are usually fitted with small housing compounds. Their shells are thick and solid enough that their keepers can drive in spikes and drill holes for stakes to hold tents and even lightweight buildings. In times of war, the compounds become small wooden fortresses. Hill turtles are nearly impossible to miss, but very hard to hurt.

**ST:** 350 **HP:** 350 **Speed:** 5.25
**DX:** 10 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 8
**IQ:** 2 **Per:** 10
**HT:** 13 **FP:** 13 **SM:** +6

**Dodge:** 8 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 4/12 (torso)

**Bite (11):** 36d-1 crushing. Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Cold-Blooded (Stiffen up below 50°F); Domestic Animal; Quadruped.
***Skills:*** Brawling-11.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** If available, a common hill turtle costs about $80,000. A less common hill turtle, which costs at least 25% more, can retract its head and limbs into its shell. All locations have DR 12 when it does this, but it cannot move.

## Riding Animal Table

This table provides a quick summary of stats useful for treating these animals as mounts. *Encumbrance Levels* lists maximum weights for No, Light, and Medium encumbrance. *Move* indicates Move at each of those encumbrance levels; this puts a limit on how fast the animal's speed can change per turn. *Adjusted Move* shows how fast the animal goes, adjusted for Enhanced Move and other movement-related advantages. *Cost* is the base price of the animal in Town. The selling price of animals is subject to the same rules as selling any other loot.

| *Mount* | *ST* | *BL* | *Encumbrance Levels* | *Move* | *Adjusted Move* | *SM* | *Cost* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coursing Wolf | 17 | 58 | 58/116/174 | 6/4/3 | 9/7/5 | 0 | $6,500 | |
| Giant Eagle | 21 | 88 | 88/176/264 | 6/4/3 | 24/19/14 | +1 | $11,000 | [1] |
| War Tiger | 23 | 106 | 106/212/318 | 6/4/3 | 10/8/6 | +1 | $10,000 | |
| Great Bear | 27 | 146 | 146/292/438 | 5/4/3 | 7/5/4 | +1 | $11,500 | |
| Grand Caiman | 29 | 168 | 168/336/504 | 5/4/3 | 7/5/4 | +2 | $12,500 | [2] |
| Domestic Triceratops | 45 | 405 | 405/810/1,215 | 5/4/3 | 9/7/5 | +4 | $20,000 | |
| Hill Turtle | 350 | 24,500 | 24,500/49,000/73,500 | 5/4/3 | 8/6/4 | +6 | $80,000 | |

Notes

[1] This is aerial Move. On the ground, the giant eagle's adjusted Move is the same as its regular Move.
[2] This is Move both on the ground and in water.

# Wandering Caravan Table

## by Matt Riggsby

Through history, when traveling cross-country, there was safety in numbers. A large caravan could, by its very size, discourage bandit attacks and better repel those who tried. Banding together also allowed travelers to save money by sharing costs, buying supplies in bulk for discounts and hiring a single guide to direct a great many people to the same destination. While travelers may cross large distances alone in a pinch, the smart move is to wait until they can join a group of people going in the same direction.

Plot and setting may lead naturally to a caravan's composition, but the GM may just want to put something together without thinking too hard about it in advance. The material below can be used to randomly assemble a caravan, determining how many of what types of traveler are present. Start by determining primary personnel, the people around whom the caravan is organized, like merchants or traveling aristocrats. Those primary personnel then imply a number of secondary personnel, like guides and animal handlers.

## Primary Personnel

The GM should first decide if the caravan is small, medium, large, or very large; the general size of the caravan has an effect on what kinds of people are present. Treat any roll below zero on the following table as zero.

| *Type* | *Small* | *Medium* | *Large* | *Very Large* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pilgrims | 1d | 3d-3 | (3d-3)×2 | (3d-3)×4 |
| Minor Merchants | 1d | 2d-4 | 3d-3 | 4d-4 |
| Wealthy Merchants | 1d-5 | 1d-2 | 2d-4 | 3d-5 |
| Lesser Nobles | 1d-5 | 1d-4 | 1d-3 | 1d-2 |
| Greater Nobles | - | 2d-10 | 2d-9 | 2d-8 |
| Professionals | 2d-8 | 2d-5 | 2d-3 | 3d-3 |

*Pilgrims:* One of the biggest reasons for travel through history has been pilgrimage to sacred sites or notable holy people. Pilgrims may just be religiously themed tourists, but they often travel under vows and restrictions. For example, they may be prohibited from bearing arms or eating certain foods. Pilgrims can usually be represented by cultists (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen,*** p. 18). For larger groups, one in six pilgrims should be an initiate (***Dungeon Fantasy 15,*** p. 12). For very large groups, one in 12 pilgrims should be a cleric.

*Merchants:* The other big reason to travel was to make money. Minor merchants (use the peddler template, p. 85) will transport goods with a value equivalent to two to six months' middle-class income. Wealthy merchants will carry goods equivalent to six to 18 months' middle-class income or more. Use the agent template from ***Dungeon Fantasy 15,*** p. 4, for most wealthier merchants, but one in 12 is close enough to the innkeeper (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 10: Taverns***, p. 8) as makes no difference, save for replacing Professional Skill (Bartender) with Merchant skill

*Nobles:* Nobles were wealthy enough to travel and may have numerous reasons to do so. Examples include tourism, legal business (visiting a greater nobleman's court), marriage, and diplomacy. More prominent nobles will have more servants with them. Such nobles as are not simply the moral equivalent of ambulatory bags of cash to be robbed by less scrupulous adventurers or guarded by more honest ones tend to be knights, though the aristocracy of more frou-frou realms are swashbucklers, and there's the occasional wizard-duke or other noble with unusual skills.

*Professionals:* Some professionals frequently moved long distances. Masons and carpenters are prime examples, but any craftsmen in luxury trades (jewelers, swordsmiths) might move closer to major markets. This category includes scholars, lawyers in the Medieval Islamic world and bureaucrats in China. (Before the printing press and inter-library loans, scholars might have to travel to read new books.) Professionals are reasonably similar to sages (***Dungeon Fantasy 15,*** p. 15), with one in 12 being a full-blown artificer (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages,*** p. 4) or even a wizard.

## Secondary Personnel

*Guards:* Generally speaking, all members of a caravan are expected to help defend it in case of attack. Full-time guards are, therefore, not as common as one might think. Add 1d-2 guards (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen,*** p. 21) for every 20 primary personnel, minimum one, plus one additional guard for each lesser noble and two for each greater noble. If there's a large number of guards, one in five is an archer, brute, skirmisher, or squire (***Dungeon Fantasy 15,*** pp. 8, 9, 16, and 17, respectively), and one in 12 might be a full adventuring fighting type, such as a knight or martial artist. This also implies that if adventurers are hired as caravan guards, they'll be looking after anywhere from five to 20 times as many primary personnel as their own numbers, as well as a good number of servants.

*Servants/family members:* Principal members of a caravan will bring some help with them in the form of servants or family members (spouses and children, siblings, cousins, etc.). Unlike the table, treat any roll of less than one as one: 1d-3 per minor merchant and traveling professional, 1d-2 per lesser noble, 2d-4 per wealthy merchant and greater noble. Most are, indeed, servants (***Dungeon Fantasy 15,*** p. 23), but there's the occasional laborer or torch-bearer (***Dungeon Fantasy 15,*** pp. 22 and 25) in the mix.

*Camp followers:* Large parties of travelers, particularly armies, are often accompanied by hangers-on who cook, do laundry, and provide more personal services. Camp followers are often locals. They will travel with the caravan briefly and return home. Consequently, a caravan passing through a wasteland may temporarily have few or no followers. In more hospitable areas, there are about as many camp followers are there are servants, and for all practical purposes they can be built on the same templates. Exceptionally large caravans may even attract entertainers; one in 20 camp followers may be a bard.

*Beasts and bearers:* In a setting where riding animals and beasts of burden are the norm (say, the Medieval Near East), roll 1d-2 per minor merchant, traveling professional, and lesser noble, 2d-4 per wealthy merchant and greater noble, minimum one in all cases. This number assumes beasts of moderate size, such as horses, camels, and donkeys. Increase the number of animals by 50% to 100% if less capable beasts are used, such as llamas and load-dragging dogs. Decrease it by 50% if very large animals, such as elephants or riding dinosaurs, are used. If human bearers must be used instead, as in sub-Saharan Africa, figure as for servants and multiply the total by four. Vehicles are rarely an issue for caravans. Any region with roads good enough for carts is also usually safe and navigable enough to not require caravan traffic.

*Other personnel and skills:* There will be at least one skilled packer, usually a laborer with Animal Handling skill, per three or four animals. If traveling through wilderness or distant lands, there will be at least one guide (possibly an archer, scout, barbarian, or even druid) and at least one translator (possibly a sage or scholar, but anyone with decent command of multiple languages, like agents or even peddlers, would qualify).

# Other Concerns

Caravans might be either privately organized by a group of travelers (merchants, pilgrim leaders, etc.) or publicly organized by a civic government. In either case, participants must usually pay into a fund for provisions, tolls, hiring guides and translators, and other common expenses; the amount paid depends on a number of factors, but larger groups of travelers must pay more. Smaller caravans travel shorter distances and are more likely to be privately organized.

Privately organized caravans might be governed collectively by the organizers (voting with a weight equal to their financial contribution), or the organizers may select a single leader. Publicly organized caravans will have a leader appointed. In either case, the authority of the leadership is theoretically absolute, much like a ship captain. However, the leader will usually try to mediate disputes within the caravan rather than issue orders and mete out punishments.

Caravans usually follow a seasonal schedule, starting immediately after the rainy or windy season has ended. Many are one-way, but there may be a scheduled return or a wave of return caravans organized near the end of the season. Small caravans, though less safe, are more flexible and may be more quickly organized and travel at other times.

Though relatively safe, caravans are also slow. Over reasonably friendly terrain, a speed of 11 miles a day is a breakneck pace for a very large caravan, and nine to 10 miles a day is closer to typical. Smaller caravans can be faster, but even the smallest merchant or pilgrim expedition is unlikely to go faster than 15 miles a day. Caravans lack the discipline which allows armies and dedicated explorers to travel more quickly.

# Peddler

**62 points**

The peddler is a small-time merchant. Peddlers may run small booths in a regular spot in the marketplace every day, or they may travel from village to village, selling their wares. A peddler can act as a intermediary for groups of adventurers particularly lacking in social abilities, and generally has a good grasp of what's going on in regions he frequents.

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** 20 points chosen from among IQ +1 [20], Will +1 to +4 [5/level], Per +1 to +4 [5/level], Acute Senses (any) [2/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Appearance (Attractive) [4], Charisma 1-4 [5/level], Claim to Hospitality [Varies], Contacts [Varies], Cultural Adaptability [10], Fearlessness [2/level], Honest Face [1], Intuition [15], Language Talent [10], Languages (any) [2-6/language], Luck [15], No Hangover [1], Smooth Operator 1 [15], Social Chameleon [5], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

***Disadvantages:*** -20 points chosen from among Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Compulsive Gambling [-5*], Compulsive Lying [-15*], Compulsive Spending [-5*], Cowardice [-10*, Gluttony [-5*], Greed [-15*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Overweight [-1] *or* Fat [-3], or Stubbornness [-5].

***Primary Skills:*** Merchant (A) IQ+1 [4]-12. ● *Six* of Area Knowledge (any), Current Affairs (any), Gesture, or Savoir-Faire (High Society), all (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Connoisseur (any), Fast-Talk, Public Speaking, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ [2]-11; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-12; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-12.

***Secondary Skills:*** *Eight* of First Aid (E) IQ [1]-11; Acting, Gambling, Heraldry, or Smuggling, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Body Language, Lip Reading, Survival (any), or Urban Survival, all (A) Per-1 [1]-10; Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-9; 1 point to raise one of those skills by a level; or 1 point for an additional primary skill at one level lower. ● *One* of Shortsword, Smallsword, or Staff, all (A) DX+1 [4]-11. ● *Either* spend 4 points to improve one previous skill to 12, *or* select *two* of Brawling, Crossbow, Fast-Draw (any), Knife, Shield (Buckler), or Thrown Weapon (Knife), all (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Bow, Cloak, or Throwing, all (A) DX [2]-10; or 2 points to raise one of those skills by a level.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

# Sylvania Unbound

## by William J. Keith

Tree-folk are a sentient, sessile race with bodies resembling a wide variety of tree species suited to the various climates of the world. Most of them live quietly, contemplating the natural world and pursuing their people's oral (well, telepathic) culture of prose and poetry. A little native telepathy, telekinesis, and magical senses allow them to interact with the world around them and communicate with each other and (more rarely) passersby. A few, whose racial template is given here, develop these gifts to a much higher peak, becoming capable of projecting their consciousness into distant lands. These eager explorers interact with the mobile folk, learning their ways. The tree-spirits often sell their skills as spies or sages for the opportunity to watch the other civilizations of their world run about building, fighting, and living at glorious speed.

As a ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** character, this racial template would interest a player who wants the challenge of playing a basically bodiless adventurer. The projected consciousness is vulnerable to magical damage but not much else; on the flip side, it has difficulty interacting with material objects – like loot or healing potions! The GM should be firm about not letting the character carry more than two handfuls of stuff at a time. Bodiless entities who mostly use magic to interact with the world and have difficulty engaging in melee are naturally suited in one of the magical roles, especially wizard or druid. Being hard to spot makes them good at reconnaissance, allowing them part of the scout's role, and if they relish the challenge of using their TK to lift small items unseen and escape unnoticed, they can make a good thief. They can play the "disembodied voice" to the hilt and take on the learned advisory role of a scholar. A tree-folk scholar will probably keep their library of books back near their body!

As enemies, tree-folk with Wealth or mental domination powers can fill the role of manipulators. For a more direct challenge, they suit parties that have the capability to fight intangible foes. They are affected by magic, particularly spells that keep out insubstantial creatures, like Astral Block.

## Tree-Folk

**50 points**

*Choice Professions:* Druid, Scholar, Wizard.
*Marginal Professions:* Cleric, Thief.

A tree-folk's projected consciousness is usually invisible. To those who can see astral forms, the projection resembles one or another normal species of tree, floating along. Should a tree-folk's friends or enemies ever find them physically, they are a full-sized, sessile tree. SM +3 is typical for an adult tree-folk. Fortunately, size is pretty subjective for an astral viewpoint; the projection can fit perfectly well in a cramped dungeon or even through a keyhole.

***Attribute Modifiers:*** ST-10 [-100]; DX-10 [-200].
***Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:*** HP+20 (Size, -30%) [28]; Basic Move 0 [0]; SM +3.
***Advantages:*** 360° Vision (Magical, -10%) [23]; Clairsentience (Increased Range 19, +190%; Magical, -10%; Projection, +140%; Second Nature, +70%) [245]; DR 2 (Semi-Ablative, -20%) [8]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Extended Lifespan 4 [8]; Immunity to Environmental Syndromes [10]; Injury Tolerance (Homogeneous; No Eyes; No Head; No Neck) [57]; Languages: any one other [6]; Plant Empathy [5]; Sanitized Metabolism [1]; Single-Minded [5]; Subsonic Hearing (Also normal human range; Magical, -10%) [5]; Telecommunication (Telesend) (Broadcast, +50%; Magical, -10%) [42]; Telekinesis 10 (Magical, -10%) [45]; Temperature Tolerance 4 (15°F to 110°F) [4].
***Disadvantages:*** Cannot Speak (Mute) [-25]; Dependency (Fertile soil and suitable climate; Very Common; Daily) [-15]; Fragile (Combustible) [-5]; Languages: Arborean (Native/None) [-3]; No Legs (Sessile) [-50]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Numb [-20]; Phobia (Fire) (12) [-5]; Vulnerability (Fire ×2) [-30]
***Features:*** Affected by Plant spells (except Animate Plant); Awake for 2/3 of the year and hibernates in winter; Subject to diseases and poisons (albeit mostly different from those of humans).
***Taboo Traits:*** Fixed ST and DX.
***Innate Skills:*** Innate Attack (TK) (E) DX+10 [36]-10.*

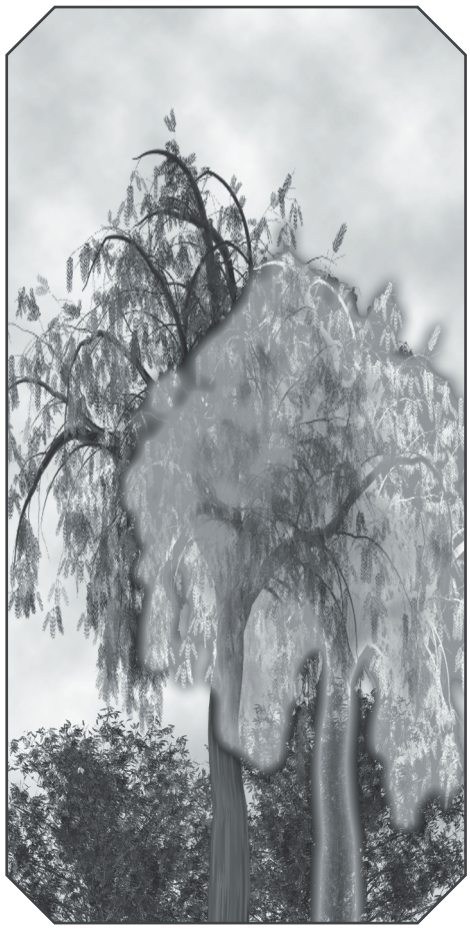
* Treat as Brawling for damage and other purposes. Also useful for defaulting spell Innate Attack skills for wizards. Skill is at -3 to attack material foes through projection.

### Customization Notes

A GM may wish to ignore the feature that replaces daily sleep with a winter-long sleep; in this case, tree-folk sleep daily as do most humanoids, and will have to re-establish their projection's position in the morning with IQ rolls. Hopefully the party hasn't left or been ambushed! An evergreen might buy Doesn't Sleep.

The Clairsentience in the template is enhanced to the point that, under most circumstances, moving the tree-folk's viewpoint to a place within sight shouldn't need cumbersome rolls. A roll at IQ-5 is required when shifting to a point out of the projected form's current sight. This is especially important after periods when the tree-folk has been rendered unconscious. Note that Clairsentience comes with the -3 skill penalty of Insubstantiality for affecting the physical world, and Numb inflicts another -3 to fine motor skills (not combat rolls) unless they are taking extra time and care. Tree-folk wizards are likely to want extra levels of Magery to compensate for this, if the GM allows, or at least should dump a pile of points into a few go-to spells. However, the bonus from Telekinesis can reasonably be assumed to offset the Clairsentience penalty for fine physical tasks like lockpicking.

Yes, DX starts at 0, and any physical skills have to be bought up from there. Tree-folk don't naturally move at all! The GM should be generous about letting tree-folk skip some template skills (like Climbing) or physical advantages to dump lots of points in core DX-based skills. Tree-folk live a long time, and explorers practice important skills single-mindedly. Of course, too many changes runs against the plug-and-play spirit of ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy;*** wizards are likely to require the least modification.



*Rune-Mage:* The Ogham runic alphabet is traditionally associated with trees. In lieu of 8 points in Alchemy and 30 in individual spells, the GM who likes the symbol-magic system (***GURPS Magic,*** pp. 205-209, and ***GURPS Thaumatology,*** pp. 168-177) might consider letting tree-folk wizards put 8 points in Symbol Drawing and 30 points in particular runes. The true rune-tokens they use are carved into their very bodies, and appear prominently should anyone be able to see the astral form of the tree-folk's projection! A tree-folk rune mage should get the usual bonus for a token made of the correct material when they employ a rune associated with the tree they resemble.

*NPC Tree:* A non-adventuring tree didn't develop the Clairsentience ability, so it's limited to sensing and affecting its immediate surroundings, save for the long-range Telecommunication by which it communes with other beings. It is likely to be Dead Broke.

*Ally:* In civilized areas where tree-folk are known to the other races, it's common for them to employ a sturdy young hireling to carry stuff and wear a placard with the tree-folk's name, indicating that their employer is manifesting in the vicinity.

## Telekineticist

The simplest martial option for a tree-folk delver is to forgo all the complications of a ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** profession meant for humanoids and have them develop great expertise with their native telekinesis. Another 200 points can be spent thus:

***Attributes:*** IQ+2 [40].

***Advantages:*** Extra Arms 2 (Extra-Flexible, +50%; Only for telekinetic manipulations, -20%) [26]; Extra Attack 2 (Only with telekinetic attacks, -20%) [40]; Telekinesis (Magical, -10%) +10 [45].

***Disadvantages:*** -40 points chosen from among Clueless [-10], Curious [-5*], Gullibility [-10*], Honesty [-10*] *or* Kleptomania [-15*], Sense of Duty (Plant life) [-10], Supersensitive [-15], Trickster [-15*], Wealth (Struggling *or* Poor) [-10 or -15], or Xenophilia [-10*].

***Primary Skills:*** Replace Innate Attack (TK) with Tree Kei (H) DX+19 [80]-19†, for a net cost of 44 points.

***Secondary Skills:*** 45 points in Karate-based techniques and/or the IQ-based skills of a desired template.

***Notes:*** A tree-folk telekineticist can carry four discrete handfuls of objects easily, bring four pressure points to bear on an effort, or can make up to three telekinetic attacks per turn with any unoccupied "hands" at effective skill 16 (against material foes) and effective ST 20, doing basic Karate-type thrust crushing damage of 2d+2. Since the Clairsentience has the Second Nature enhancement, concentration to perform these maneuvers shouldn't be a problem unless the tree-folk is further distracted. If the GM lets Tree Kei be an IQ-based skill, more points can be freed up for other uses, but it's probably wise to resist the temptation to change lots of base attributes from DX to IQ simply because physical skills are being used with TK.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Treat Tree Kei as Karate for most purposes. The skill level becomes 16 for the purpose of attacking or using other offensive techniques on material creatures, but is figured at 19 for actions like Feints.

# Those Who Pray

by B. Nicholas Pasinella

Medieval people envisioned their society as divided into "those who work, those who fight, and those who pray." Clerics in the Middle Ages played a greater role than simple prayer; they were scholars, teachers, lawyers, physicians, statesmen, architects, scientists, and musicians.

This chapter presents a set of guidelines for creating medieval European clerics in ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition*. These characters could play important roles in a historical setting such as ***GURPS Middle Ages I*** or ***GURPS Vikings***, a medieval-influenced fantasy setting (such as Yrth), or one of the many echoes or alternate Earths of ***GURPS Infinite Worlds.***

In ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy,*** historical realism is not important for slaying monsters and taking their stuff, and social traits have limited use. However, a delver's position in an organization like a major religion has many benefits for adventuring. ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds*** details the benefits of organizations relevant for characters. The traits described below can be added to the ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** templates to expand the possibilities for adventures in town and to gain the benefits of a guild.

*Bjorn: What is wrong with your head?*

*Athelstan: When we become monks, they cut our hair. It marks us out.*

*Gyda: If you're a priest, which God do you like best?*

*Athelstan: There is only one God.*

*– **Vikings** #1.3*

# Designing a Clerical Character

The medieval landscape was populated by a bewildering variety of religious figures – anchoresses, brother-sergeants, canons regular, canons secular, nuns' priests, and cardinal-deacons, just to name a few. Many of these minute differences have no impact on gaming statistics. However, some characteristics can highlight the various roles clerics filled. By mixing and matching the options presented below, players can reproduce almost any clerical character from history or fiction. Clerics are the obvious beneficiaries of these rules, but holy warriors, martial artists, artificers, scholars, and maybe even druids can easily take advantage of these guidelines.

## Clerk or Lay

The fundamental aspect separating clerics from laymen is Clerical Investment; it is required for any clerical character and is a prerequisite for Religious Rank (see *Order and Office,* p. 90). It set the clergy apart from the world and allowed them to live by different laws.

A member of the clergy was said to be ordained in holy orders. There were seven orders, divided into four minor and three major orders. The minor orders from lowest to highest were janitor (doorkeeper), lector (reader), exorcist, and acolyte. The three major orders were subdeacon, deacon, and priest. Additionally, two other orders are sometimes included, bringing the total to nine. Tonsured clerks – who were members of the clergy but had not taken any other orders (e.g., a university student or a simple scribe) – were occasionally described as a minor order below janitor. Bishop was also at times said to be a major order above priest.

Women were barred from taking holy orders (nuns were essentially equivalent to tonsured clerks). Churchmen in minor orders were free to marry, while those in major orders were usually required to take a vow of celibacy (see *Vow,* pp. 91-92). The vessels used in rituals could be handled only by someone in major orders. Only a priest could administer a sacrament such as matrimony, Eucharist (mass), or penance. The powers to consecrate a new church, to ordain clerics, and to confirm lay members of the Church were reserved for a bishop.

In the Middle Ages, being a priest was not a prerequisite for a successful career in the Church, and many people – including women, for whom ordination was not an option – rose to prominent positions without being ordained (see *Order and Office,* p. 90).

***GURPS,*** by default, uses a fairly abstract representation of ordination; usually reserving Clerical Investment for ordained priests and/or limiting monks and nuns to low levels of Religious Rank (see the ***GURPS Fantasy*** designer's notes in *Pyramid* magazine, Volume 2, and ***GURPS Banestorm*** for examples). This poses two problems in a historical campaign: First, since Clerical Investment is a prerequisite for Religious Rank, it makes it difficult create high-ranking clerics who are not ordained, such as an abbess or an archdeacon (see *Order and Office,* p. 90). Second, it prevents monks and nuns from receiving the +1 reaction bonus from coreligionists granted by Clerical Investment. On the other hand, Clerical Investment includes the ability to officiate at religious ceremonies – a capacity that unordained clerics did not possess. The GM looking for a more detailed treatment of ordination may wish to utilize the following new special limitation for Clerical Investment to represent clerics who are not priests.

## *Clerical Investment*

**see p. B43**

In ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy,*** the following limitation can be applied to any of the templates that include Clerical Investment, specifically the cleric and the mixed professions from ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level*** and ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages.*** The GM will need to determine if Clerical Investment is a prerequisite for Power Investiture and if the limited version fulfills the prerequisite (see *Power Investiture,* p. 91).

Priests, bishops, abbots, priors, and deans should take the full 5-point version of Clerical Investment. All other clerics should take the limited version.

This optional rule is used in the new lenses (below) and templates that follow. Players who wish to use the simpler method should increase the cost of the packages by 2 CP.

### New Special Limitation

*Not Ordained:* You are a member of the clergy and receive the *social* benefits as such; however, you cannot preside over ceremonies. You may purchase additional levels of Religious Rank, but you may be barred from certain ranks in your church. In a campaign with functioning mystical abilities (see *Prayer* and *Scared Places* on p. 149 of ***GURPS Fantasy***), the GM should decide if you gain the same abilities and bonuses as someone with the unlimited form of Clerical Investment. -40%.

# Secular or Regular

These collections of advantages and disadvantages are common to members of the Church. The lenses can be added directly to any of the templates from ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy***. Cleric, holy warrior, martial artist, and scholar are the best fits, as well as any of the mixed professions containing one of those.

## *Clerical Lenses*

The medieval clergy was divided into two bodies. Clerics who saw to the needs of followers or to the administration of the Church were called secular clergy. Clerics who followed a monastic lifestyle, such as the Rule of St. Benedict, were called regular clergy (after *regulus*, the Latin word for rule). They lived apart from the ordinary world and dedicated themselves to prayer, work, and study. The monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience were characteristic of regular clergy.

*Secular Cleric* (+15 points): You are a cleric whose responsibilities include seeing to the spiritual needs of your followers or administering the day-to-day operation of your church. Clerical Investment (Not Ordained, -40%) [3]; Legal Immunity [5]; Patron (The Church; 6 or less; Minimal Intervention, -50%) [8]; and Distinctive Feature (Tonsure) [-1].

*Regular Cleric* (+10 points): You are a cleric who lives apart from the world, devoted to prayer and study. Claim to Hospitality (members of your order) [10]; Clerical Investment (Not Ordained, -40%) [3]; Distinctive Feature (Tonsure) [-1]; Legal Immunity [5]; Patron (The Church; 6 or less; Minimal Intervention, -50%) [8]; Social Regard 1 (Respected) [5]; Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism) [-10]; Duty (The Church; Nonhazardous; 12 or less) [-5]; and Vow (Chastity) [-5].

Ordained priests pay 2 points to replace Clerical Investment with the unlimited version, which can be recorded as Clerical Investment (Ordained) [5].

## Medieval Education

Formal education in the Middle Ages was controlled by the Church. Educated people were trained following the classical course of study called the seven liberal arts. The arts were divided into two courses: the *trivium* ("the three roads") and the *quadrivium* ("the four roads"). Most schools put more emphasis on the *trivium*. Studying the arts grants the following ***GURPS*** traits:

| ***Subject*** | ***Trait*** |
|---|---|
| *Trivium* | |
| Grammar | Latin (Accented) (minimum) |
| Rhetoric | Public Speaking |
| Dialectic (Logic) | Philosophy (Neoplatonism or Aristotelianism) |
| *Quadrivium* | |
| Arithmetic | Mathematics (Applied) |
| Geometry | Mathematics (Pure) |
| Music | Mathematics (Pure) or Musical Composition |
| Astronomy | Astronomy |

In addition, most schools required the study of Theology.

The *trivium* were taught thorough extensive reading and translation of classical texts. Therefore, it was common for students to also learn History, Literature, and/or Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy). Universities taught Law or Esoteric Medicine. For more information about medieval European universities, see ***GURPS Low-Tech Companion 1: Philosophers and Kings.***

## The Church as Guild

***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** generally ignores social traits, however there are times when belonging to an organization is invaluable for a delver. ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds*** covers these benefits in detail. Simply treat the Church as a guild.

When using the rules in this chapter, assume Clerical Investment represents membership in an appropriate guild and any of the types of Rank discussed grant the bonuses to the assistance roll (AR) as described in *Membership Benefits* (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17,*** p. 7). Additionally, the GM might choose to ignore Legal Immunity and Patrons and simply use an AR to cover those situations.

These are the most appropriate guilds for clerical characters.

*Congregation:* This is the obvious choice for clerics. Any of the religious characters covered here (monks, priests, warrior monks, etc.) would be at home in a congregation.

*Military Company:* Church-sponsored fighting orders (like the Templars) are organized as a military company and are the best fit for holy warriors.

*Noble Court:* If a cleric is mired in the politics of the realm, replace their Administrative Rank with membership in a noble court.

*Spiritual Society:* Many historical monastic orders started out as spiritual societies; the Franciscans are the classic archetype. This is a great fit for monk or nun PCs.

*Students of the Master:* Some monks' *kung fu* is strong. Replace "Benedictine Monastery" with "Shaolin Temple," and you're good to go.

*University:* Another great fit for medieval-inspired clerics. Even if not currently a member, clerics probably spent some time studying there. Perhaps their old master needs their help . . .

## Order and Office

While holy orders (see *Clerical Investment,* p. 89) represented initiation into the Church, office was an administrative function that the cleric performed within the organization – essentially their "day job."

Office is modeled with the Religious Rank advantage. Religious Rank costs the typical 5 points per level, but the GM who wishing to use the more detailed rules from ***GURPS Social Engineering*** can use the *Variant Costs of Rank* to replace the Patron advantage (p. 91) in the lenses (p. 89). The offices of dean, obedientiary, and prior were traditionally held by ordained priests. Being a priest was a prerequisite for Ranks above 5, and for abbot.

Secular and regular clergy use a different system of ranks up to Rank 5. Above Rank 5, the offices have authority over both types of clerics.

### *Religious Rank Table*

Alternative names for various Ranks are listed in the appendix to ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds.***

| *Rank* | *Secular* | *Regular* |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | Clerk | Novice |
| 1 | Minor Orders | Junior Monk/Nun/ Canon/Canoness |
| 2 | Subdeacon/Deacon | Senior Monk/Nun/ Canon/Canoness |
| 3 | Priest/Secular Canon | Obedientiary (Cellarer, Librarian, etc.) |
| 4 | Dean | Prior/Prioress |
| 5 | Archdeacon | Abbot/Abbess |
| 6 | Bishop | |
| 7 | Archbishop | |
| 8 | Pope | |



# Other Advantages and Disadvantages

A few other traits deserve special attention for clerics.

### *Administrative Rank*

**see p. B30**

Since the Church had a monopoly on education, it was very common for government officials to be clergy. Those who hold positions in the royal bureaucracy should take Administrative Rank.

The GM should allow PCs to transfer points between Administrative and Religious Rank, or to hold both types of Rank simultaneously. It was not uncommon for a high-ranking royal official, but mere clerk (Religious Rank 0), to be appointed to a bishopric by the king (much to the annoyance of higher-ranking churchmen), or for a bishop to serve as the royal chancellor.

### *Independent Income*

**see p. B26**

A churchman who controls a *benefice* (an ecclesiastical fief, granting the holder the rights to all tithes in a parish) but employs someone else (that is, a vicar) to provide the religious services, has an Independent Income.

## *Legal Enforcement Powers*

**see p. B65**

Bishops and abbots who hold a court of canon law should take the 10-point version of this advantage with the limitation: Canon law only, -25%.

Some abbots and abbesses were also feudal lords who administered justice for their tenants. They should take the 10-point version of Legal Enforcement Powers.

## *Legal Immunity*

**see p. B65**

All clerics have a 5-point version of this advantage, called "benefit of clergy," as part of the appropriate lens (p. 89). They could not be charged in a court of law, but were turned over to the Church for punishment. Canon law forbade the death penalty for many crimes that ordinarily required it.

Papal envoys and legates should add the "Diplomatic Pouch" option or take the Diplomatic Immunity variant.

*Clerics in the Middle Ages were scholars, teachers, lawyers, physicians, statesmen, architects, scientists, and musicians.*

## *Military Rank*

**see p. B30**

Those in religious orders of knighthood, such as the Knights Templar or the Hospitallers, should take Military Rank and the regular cleric lens.

Military Rank varied greatly in the Middle Ages. Below is a generic structure, roughly based on the Knights Templar, which could be used as a model.

### Fighting Order Ranks

| *Rank* | *Title* | *Rank* | *Title* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | Serving Brother | 4 | Knight-Commander |
| 1 | Brother-Sergeant | 5 | Master of the Order |
| 2 | Knight | 6 | Seneschal/Marshal |
| 3 | Knight-Banneret | 7 | Grand Master |

## *Patrons*

**see p. B72**

Any member of the clergy can claim the Church as a Patron, as reflected in the clerical lenses (p. 89). This represents a cleric's ability to appeal to the organization for help. However, that is a remote possibility, and unlikely to achieve the exact results the character had hoped. GMs should not allow characters to buy off the Minimal Intervention limitation, or to improve the frequency of appearance.

If using ***GURPS Social Engineering*** and ***GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank,*** this advantage can be replaced with a modified cost for Religious Rank: 3 points/level (1 for titles, 1 for chain of command, 2 for large resources, 0 for dominance, 2 for legitimacy, and Capricious Assistance, -50%). This replaces the frequency of appearance roll for Patron with an assistance roll (see ***Pulling Rank,*** p. 5).

Clerics are more likely to receive aid from an individual Patron who is a powerful member of the Church (the local bishop, or an old friend in Rome, for example).

## *Power Investiture*

**see p. B77**

Power Investiture is required for casting clerical spells. The GM should consider the relationship between the authorities and spellcasters. The establishment might take a dim view of "miracle workers," and historically many such people were outside the formal structure of the Church and sometimes in conflict with it. Alternatively, the GM may wish to restrict Power Investiture to ordained priests.

## *Status*

**see p. B28**

Most clerics acquire their Status through Rank and Wealth; regular clerics are prevented from purchasing Status directly due to Disciplines of Faith.

## *Talent*

**see p. B89**

In addition to some of the Talents described in the ***Basic Set,*** Devotion (found in ***GURPS Fantasy,*** p. 132, and ***GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents,*** pp. 9-10) would be useful for some clerics.

## *Tenure*

**see p. B93**

Many positions were granted for life (e.g., a bishop, the pope). The GM may wish to require this advantage for those positions. Also, university professors were members of the Church (see *Medieval Education,* p. 89).

## *Vow*

**see p. B160**

*Celibacy and Chastity:* In modern usage, chastity and celibacy are synonymous. In the Middle Ages, however, these terms had different meanings, and the issue of clerical marriage was controversial, evolving over the centuries.

Chastity was complete renunciation of sexual activity, and was required of regular clergy. Symbolically, it represented renunciation of worldly concerns – the "mortification of the flesh" – and complete devotion to spiritual pursuits. Chastity is a Minor Vow in ***GURPS***.

Celibacy was the state of being unmarried, and was eventually required of those in major orders. Symbolically, it represented a "marriage to the Church" – the idea that clerical responsibilities outweighed traditional family obligations. Legally, the children of a priest were considered illegitimate and therefore could not inherit. This was intended to keep church property under the control of officials. Note that a priest who had children was guilty of sinning, but not technically of breaking his vow (thus making it difficult to dismiss him from office). This bizarre – and much abused – quirk of medieval canon law arose out of a centuries-long debate between reformers who wanted all clerics to live as monks, and traditionalists who wanted the priesthood to remain like any other skilled profession: passed on from father to son. Celibacy is a quirk-level Vow in ***GURPS***.

*Silence:* Most monastic orders required silence within certain areas of the monastery, such as the cloister or scriptorium, and at meal times. This should not count as a Vow, and can be assumed to be included in Disciplines of Faith. Some orders had more stringent requirements; follow the guidelines on p. B161.

*Poverty:* Monastic rules usually forbade monks from owning personal property, but allowed the monastery to hold wealth in common. This type of vow is included in the Disciplines of Faith disadvantage. In the early 13th century, new orders of mendicant friars, such as the Franciscans, came into existence. These new orders prohibited members from holding wealth even in common. This is a Great Vow in ***GURPS*** – note that characters cannot claim points from both Vow (Poverty) and Wealth (Dead Broke), see p. B161.

# Clerical Templates

The following three templates can be used to create common types of clerical characters. If these templates are being used to replace the standard templates from ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy***, make sure to invest additional points in appropriate levels of Power Investiture (and Cleric spells), Holiness (and Holy abilities), or Chi abilities (and their prerequisites). The templates are built on less than 75 points and are therefore suitable for a campaign at the 50- to 75-point power level (p. B487), or as a starting point for 125-point henchmen (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen***). In a higher powered campaign, these traits are the minimum required for a heroic character built on the template. Surplus points should be spent to improve the traits outlined below.

## Monk

**60 points**

This template can be used for a member of a monastic community such as the Benedictines, Clunics, Cistercians, etc. The optional lenses can be added for a female member of one for those orders, or to create a member of a mendicant order such as the Franciscans or Dominicans. The lenses may be combined to represent a female mendicant, for example one of the "Poor Clares."

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** Regular Cleric lens (p. 89) [10] *and* Language: Latin (Accented) [4]. ● 10 points chosen from among Autotrance [1], Charisma [5/level], Common Sense [10], Devotion [5/level], Gifted Artist [5/level], Green Thumb [5/level], Healer [10/level], Honest Face [1], Intuition [15], Less Sleep [2/level], Pitiable [5], Religious Rank [5/level], Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15], Single-Minded [5], or Voice [10].

***Disadvantages:*** -30 points chosen from among Charitable [-15*], Clueless [-10], Compulsive Behavior [-5* to -15*], Fanaticism [-15], Gullibility [-10*], Hidebound [-5], Honesty [-10*], Incurious [-5*], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Oblivious [-5], Pacifism [-10 to -15], Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty [varies], Shyness [-5 to -15], Skinny [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], additional Disciplines of Faith [-5 to -15], or additional Vow [-5 to -15].

***Primary Skills:*** Religious Ritual (H) IQ [4]-12 *and* Singing (E) HT+1 [2]-12.

***Secondary Skills:*** Meditation (H) Will-2 [1]-10 *and* Theology (H) IQ-1 [2]-11. ● 3 points chosen from among Professional Skill (any) (A) DX-1 [1]-9 or (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; First Aid/TL or Gardening, both (E) IQ [1]-12; Administration, Farming/TL, Research/TL, Teaching, or Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Accounting, Artist (Calligraphy *or* Illumination), Law (Catholic Canon), or Pharmacy/TL (Herbal), all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; or Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-2 [1]-10.

***Background Skills:*** Gesture (E) IQ [1]-12 *and* Public Speaking (A) IQ-1 [1]-11. ● 2 points chosen from among: Astronomy/TL, Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy), History, Literature, Mathematics/TL, or Philosophy, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; or Autohypnosis (H) Will-2 [1]-10.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lenses

*Nun* (-5 points): Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) [-5].

*Friar* (-15 points): Add one of Vow (Poverty) [-15] or Wealth (Poor) [-15].

## Priest

**65 points**

This template is for a competent parish priest. Historically, many rural priests were barely competent and the GM should reduce skill levels or the comprehension level of Latin for incompetent NPCs. This is also the basis for high-ranking secular clerics, such as bishops; simply increase Religious Rank (then add enough Wealth to support the resulting Status).

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** Secular Cleric lens (p. 89) [15]; Clerical Investment (Ordained) [2]; Language: Latin (Accented) [4]; Religious Rank 3 [15]; Status 1 [0]†; *and* Wealth (Comfortable) [10]. ● 10 points chosen from among Charisma [5/level], Common Sense [10], Devotion [5/level], Green Thumb [5/level], Honest Face [1], Independent Income [1/level], Intuition [15], Pitiable [5], Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15], Voice [10], or additional Religious Rank [5/level].

***Disadvantages:*** -30 points chosen from among Charitable [-15*], Clueless [-10], Disciplines of Faith [-5 to -15], Fanaticism [-15], Gullibility [-10*], Hidebound [-5], Honesty [-10*], Incurious [-5*], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Oblivious [-5], Pacifism [-10 to -15], Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty [varies], Shyness [-5 to -15], Skinny [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], or additional Vow [-5 to -15].

***Primary Skills:*** Public Speaking (H) IQ [2]-11; Religious Ritual (H) IQ+1 [8]-12; *and* Theology (H) IQ [4]-11.

***Secondary Skills:*** Administration (A) IQ-1 [1]-10 *and* Singing (E) HT [1]-10.

***Background Skills:*** 3 points chosen from among Area Knowledge, Current Affairs/TL (Local), or Savoir-Faire (High Society), all (E) IQ [1]-11; Farming/TL, Politics, or Propaganda, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Accounting, Diplomacy, Law (Catholic Canon), Philosophy, or Psychology, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; or Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-9.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.
† Free from Religious Rank.

## Warrior Monk

**60 points**

This template is for a member of a religious order of knights such as the Knights Templar or the Hospitallers.

***Attributes:*** ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Dmg 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** Regular Cleric lens (p. 89) [10]; Fit [5]; *and* Military Rank 2 [10].

***Disadvantages:*** Code of Honor (Chivalry) [-15]. ● Remove Nonhazardous from Duty (in the lens, p. 89) [-5]. ● -15 points chosen from among Fanaticism [-15], Honesty [-10*], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-5*], Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty [varies], Shyness [-5 to -15], Skinny [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], or additional Vow [-5 to -15].

***Primary Skills:*** Riding (Horse) (A) DX+1 [4]-12 *and* Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-12. ● *One* of Lance or Spear, both (A) DX+1 [4]-12.

***Secondary Skills:*** Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11. ● *One* of Axe/Mace or Broadsword, both (A) DX [2]-11.

***Background Skills:*** Heraldry (A) IQ [2]-10; Leadership (A) IQ [2]-10; *and* Religious Ritual (H) IQ-2 [1]-8. ● *One* of Brawling or Jumping, both (E) DX [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

*Learning is our soul's requirement, and suffering our most persuasive teacher.*
*– Stephen R. Lawhead,* ***Byzantium***

# Sample Characters

The following characters were designed for realistic ***GURPS Middle Ages 1*** campaigns. Bother Owain was created for a Saxon campaign or for ***GURPS Vikings.*** The second character, Archdeacon Hugh, was designed for a Norman campaign.

## Brother Owain, Infirmarian of Shrewsbury

Owain ap Madoc was born into a minor noble family from the Kingdom of Gwynedd in the latter half of the 10th century. At the age of seven, he entered the monastic school at Glastonbury, a center of the monastic revival occurring at the time. Owain excelled in his studies and took a keen interest medicine. He had plenty of opportunity to learn, as the abbey served as one of the only hospitals in England. At 18, Owain took his vows and became an official member of the infirmary staff.

The next year, an expedition attempting to reestablish contacts – severed by Viking raids – with the monasteries surrounding the Irish Sea was planned. Owain eagerly volunteered to go, and a small group set out on their journey.

After a year of successes, the delegation ended in tragedy. The monks arrived at a small abbey along the coast of Ireland, just as a band of Norwegian raiders attacked. Owain fought alongside his brothers before being badly wounded. The monks were eventually overwhelmed. Owain managed slip away in a small boat, but lost and losing blood, he fainted and drifted out to sea.

Luckily, he washed ashore on an island inhabited by a hermit named Éamon. The old man had been with a band of monks who fled to the island when their monastery was sacked. The refugees managed to rescue some of the precious books as they fled. Over the years, the brothers had dwindled to just the lone monk.

Owain stayed for five years learning Greek from the old hermit, and studying the rare books – which contained knowledge thought lost in the rest of Europe. When Brother Éamon died, Owain decided to return to Glastonbury.

His return was considered miraculous, and his fame as a physician grew due to the ancient knowledge he had recovered. Owain eventually moved to the tiny abbey of Shrewsbury on the Welsh border to expand their infirmary.

### *Campaign Uses*

The PCs are most likely to encounter Owain in his capacity as a physician. His medical skills make him highly sought out. He may also be useful as a Greek translator.

### *Owain ap Madoc of Gwynedd*

**125 points**

An active and energetic Benedictine with sandy brown hair and blue eyes. Often disheveled but rarely seen without his bag of medicines, herbs, and surgical instruments.

**ST** 9 [-10]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16; HP 10 [2]; Will 11 [-5]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.
Age 32, 5'9", 145 lbs.

### Social Background

*TL*:* TL3 (TL2 Medical, -60%) [2].

*CF:* Celtic [0]; Western [1].

*Languages:* Ancient Greek (Broken/Accented) [3]; Irish (Broken/None) [1]; Latin (Accented/Native) [5]; Old English (Accented) [4]; Welsh (Native) [0].

### Advantages

Healer 2 [20]; Regular Cleric (p. 89) [10]; Religious Rank 3 [15]; Reputation +2 (As a skilled physician; By British intellectuals; 10 or less) [2]; Resistant to Disease (+3) [3]; Status 1 [0]†.

### Disadvantages

Insomniac (Mild) [-10]; Oblivious [-5]; Pacifism (Cannot Kill) [-15]; Sense of Duty (Sick and injured) [-10].

*Quirks:* Attentive; Dislikes Norse pagans; Humble; Messy (disheveled clothes and hair, often forgets to wash his hands, herbs and surgical instruments strewn all over his room or dumped at random in his bag); Mumbles to himself while working. [-5]

### Skills

Area Knowledge (Ireland) (E) IQ [1]-12; Area Knowledge (Wales) (E) IQ [1]-12; Astronomy/TL2 (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Boating/TL3 (Unpowered) (A) DX [2]-10; Diagnosis/TL2 (H) IQ+2 [4]-14‡; Esoteric Medicine (Hermetic) (H) Per+3 [8]-15‡; Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy) (H) IQ [4]-12; First Aid/TL2 (E) IQ+2 [1]-14‡; Gardening (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Gesture (E) IQ [1]-12; Literature (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Mathematics/TL2 (Applied) (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Meditation (H) Will [4]-11; Naturalist (H) IQ [4]-12; Pharmacy/TL2 (Herbal) (H) IQ+2 [4]-14‡; Philosophy (Neoplatonism) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Physiology/TL2 (H) IQ [1]-12‡; Public Speaking (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Religious Ritual (Catholic) (H) IQ [4]-12; Research/TL3 (A) IQ [2]-12; Singing (E) HT+1 [2]-12; Staff (A) DX +2[4]-11; Surgery/TL2 (VH) IQ+1 [4]-13‡; Survival (Island/Beach) (A) Per-1 [1]-11; Teaching (A) IQ [2]-12; Theology (Catholic) (H) IQ [4]-12; Weather Sense (A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

* Medieval Europe has regressed in certain areas and is TL3 (TL1 Science & Medicine).

† Free from Religious Rank.

‡ Includes +2 from Healer.

# Archdeacon Hugh of Lincoln

Hugh was born in 1131 A.D., the acknowledged illegitimate son of a Norman knight, Henri de Béthencourt, and Emma, a widowed dyer. He grew up in his mother's house with his older half-brother and sisters, helping out in the family business. When in the city, his father would visit and fill the young boy's head with tales of valiant knights and glorious battles. When he turned seven, his father arranged for Hugh to attend the cathedral school.

When his father was killed at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, the young boy's prospects seemed dim. Most of the father's wealth was inherited by his legitimate children, and Hugh's half-brother was set to inherit their mother's business. However, money was found to keep the boy in school, where he was a promising student.

On completing his studies, Hugh took a position as a clerk in the bishop's chancellery. His head for business, quick wit, and family ties to the local merchants soon made him invaluable to his employers. He rose quickly through the ranks, acquiring several lucrative beneficences along the way, which provide him with a stable income. By the time he was 25, the bishop had appointed him to one of the archdeaconries in the diocese.

Hugh's mistress, Edith, is the daughter of a wool merchant who handles the produce of the bishop's flocks. They share a posh townhouse, which Hugh prefers over his drafty rooms in the cathedral college. Edith has a growing wool trade of her own, exporting wool out of Boston to Flanders. She and Hugh plan to use the land from his benefices to produce high-quality wool for their exports.

Though his wealth is secure, his political power is not. As the current bishop ages, Hugh fears he could be replaced when a new bishop is selected. His illegitimate birth, his relationship with Edith, and his close ties to the merchants of the city (including some in the Jewish community) make him unpopular with the more sanctimonious members of the college. Fortunately for him, the current ruling faction is more concerned with the smooth operation of the diocese than with the piety of its officials. Hugh knows the only way to safeguard his position and to ensure that his daughter has a stable role in society is to secure a diocese of his own.

## *Campaign Uses*

Hugh would be an ideal Patron or Enemy for a group of clerics or merchants. The GM could portray him as a sensible and pragmatic leader opposed by fanatical and intolerant enemies, or as a greedy and crass schemer who uses religious power to his own advantage.

*. . . I knew that we can lose ourselves in the parts we play . . .*

*– Barry Unsworth,* ***Morality Play***

## *Hugh Fitzhenry of Lincoln*

**255 points**

A handsome cleric with blond hair, green eyes, and aquiline features.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [-5]; Per 13 [0]; FP 11 [0]
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.
Age 28, 5'11", 160 lbs.

### Social Background

*TL:* TL3 [0].

*CF:* Western [0].

*Languages:* Latin (Accented/Native) [5]; Middle English (Native/Broken) [4]; Norman French (Native) [0].

### Advantages

Alcohol Tolerance [1]; Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Business Acumen 1 [10]; Charisma 1 [5]; Contact Group (Merchants of Lincoln; Business skills 21; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [40]; Independent Income 20 [20]; Patron (Robert de Chesney, Bishop of Lincoln; 9 or less) [10]; Religious Rank 5 [25]; Secular Cleric (p. 89) [15]; Smooth Operator 2 [30]; Social Chameleon [5]; Status 3 [0]*; Voice [10]; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

### Disadvantages

Dependent (Infant daughter; Built on 0 or fewer points; Loved one; 6 or less) [-15]; Duty (To the Bishop of Lincoln; Nonhazardous; 12 or less) [-5]; Enemies (Political rivals, Rival; 6 or less) [-5]; Greed (12) [-15]; Obsession (9) (Become a bishop) [-15]; Obsession (12) (Find a noble husband for his daughter) [-5]; Reputation -2 (As unrepentant fornicator; Among pious Christians; 10 or less) [-2]; Selfish (15) [-2]; Vow (Celibacy) [-1].

*Quirks:* Dislikes "the country" (unless he can go hawking); Incompetence (Dancing); Loves jewelry (particularly gaudy rings); Proud; Wears brightly dyed cloaks and hats over his clerical garb (-1 reaction from ascetics). [-5]

### Skills

Accounting (H) IQ [2]-13†; Acting (A) IQ+1 [1]-14‡; Administration (A) IQ+2 [4]-15†; Area Knowledge (Lincoln, city) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Area Knowledge (Lincolnshire) (E) IQ [1]-13; Carousing (E) HT+2 [1]-13‡; Current Affairs/TL3 (England) (E) IQ+2 [4]-15; Detect Lies (H) Per+1 [2]-14‡; Diplomacy (H) IQ+2 [1]-15‡§; Falconry (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+3 [1]-16‡§; Finance (H) IQ-1 [1]-12†; Games (Chess) (E) IQ [1]-13; Heraldry (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Law (Catholic Canon) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Law (Norman England) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Merchant (A) IQ [1]-13†; Philosophy (Neoplatonism) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Politics (A) IQ+3 [1]-16‡§; Propaganda/TL3 (A) IQ [1]-13†; Psychology (H) IQ [4]-13; Public Speaking (A) IQ+5 [2]-18‡§¶; Religious Ritual (Catholic) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Research/TL3 (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+2 [1]-15‡; Theology (Catholic) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

* Free from Religious Rank and Wealth.
† Includes +1 from Business Acumen.
‡ Includes +2 from Smooth Operator.
§ Includes +2 from Voice.
¶ Includes +1 from Charisma.

# Bibliography

Some reference material was particularly helpful.

## Non-Fiction


Bartlett, Robert. *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Cantor, Norman F. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (Harper Perennial, 1994).

Gies, Joseph and Gies, Frances. *Life in a Medieval City* (Harper Perennial, 2016).

Knowles, David. *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge University Press, 1963).

Lawrence, Clifford Hugh. *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Longman, 1984).


## Fiction


Eco, Umberto (William Weaver, trans.). *The Name of the Rose* (Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983).

Lawhead, Stephen. *Byzantium* (HarperPrism, 1996).

Peters, Ellis. *A Morbid Taste for Bones: The First Chronicle of Brother Cadfael* (Mysterious Press, 1994).

Unsworth, Barry. *Morality Play.* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1996).


## Games


King, Edwin. *Lionheart: Living in History, England 1190AD* (Columbia Publications, 1987).

Love, Richard; Romer, Christian Jensen; Thomas, Sheila; and White, Alexander. *Ars Magica: The Church* (Atlas Games, 2011).

Ryan, Matt and Shirley, Mark. *Ars Magica: Art & Academe* (Atlas Games, 2008).

Steele, Lisa J. *Fief: A Look at Medieval Society from its Lower Rungs* (Cumberland Games, 2001).


## *Pyramid* Articles


Falco, Salvatore T. "Warrior Monks: The Military Holy Orders of the Crusades," *Pyramid* magazine, Volume 2 (Steve Jackson Games), **pyramid.sjgames.com/sample.html?id=158**.

Stoddard, William H. "Designer's Notes: ***GURPS Fantasy,***" *Pyramid* magazine, Volume 2 (Steve Jackson Games), **pyramid.sjgames.com/sample.html?id=5085**.


*Even the very system of bishoprics galled the devout adherents of the old, saintly Celtic church, that had no worldly trappings, courted no thrones, but rather withdrew from the world into the blessed solitude of thought and prayer.*

*– Ellis Peters,*
***A Morbid Taste for Bones***

## Special Thanks


Special Thanks to Pyramidians William H. Stoddard, Peter Knutsen, and Lisa J. Steele for reviewing a draft of this article and offering their kind suggestions.

# Section 3
# Adventures

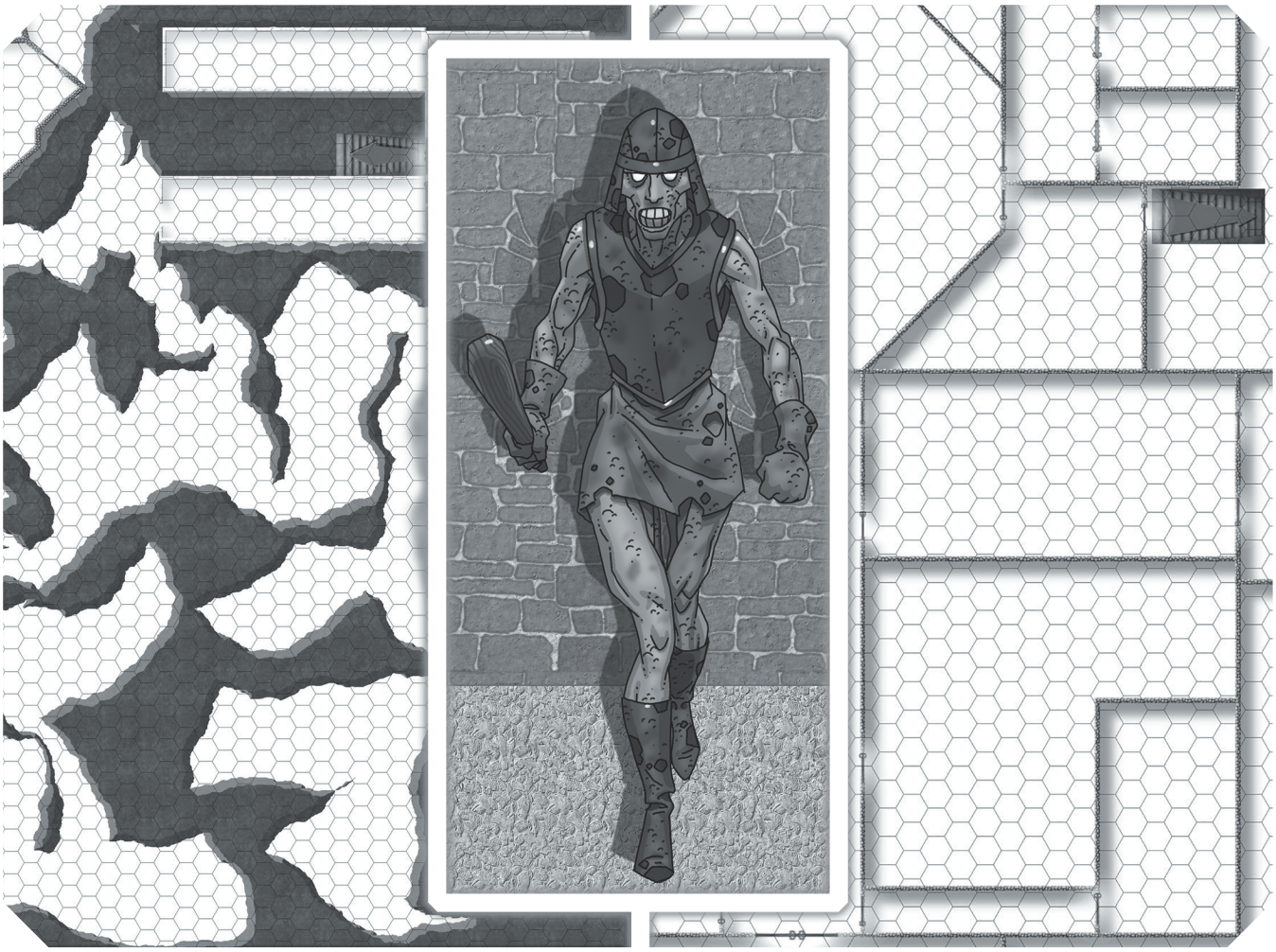
The notion of the "adventure" is central to ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy.*** A fun adventure puts together interesting places, threats, objects, and ideas, and melds them into a challenging good time for the players.

Matt Riggsby – the author of the three outlines contained in this collection – is no stranger to crypt-crawling adventure. He wrote the first two adventures in the ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** line – ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 1: Mirror of the Fire Demon*** and ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 2: Tomb of the Dragon King*** – setting the tone for what a ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** adventure should be. He also wrote the follow-up to ***I Smell a Rat*** (the adventure included with the ***Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*** boxed set), entitled ***Against the Rat-Men.***

But the same spark that has now found success in the ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** line flared previously in *Pyramid* magazine. It's great to have the chance to update classic adventures that first appeared in *Pyramid* to ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** specifications, ensuring they'll find a new era of popularity.

The adventures here feature maps that are numbered but contain no other revealing information. They give the GM the option of starting the adventure by offering the heroes a tantalizing taste of what's to come (or providing a boon for players who don't much care for mapping).

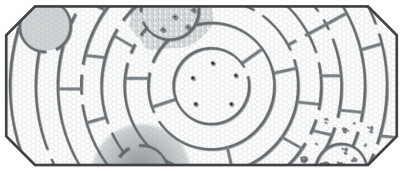
Whether you're looking for a one-shot (pp. 117-125), beginning a campaign in extraordinary circumstances (also pp. 117-125), providing the heroes with a tantalizing mission (pp. 104-116), or presenting a quest for an awesome artifact (pp. 97-103), there are hours of fun waiting for your gaming table. Don't delay; adventure awaits!



# The Labyrinth of Five Essences

by Matt Riggsby

Character development. Social interaction. Grand strategy. Internal conflict. These are all well and good, but sometimes you just need to kill things and take their stuff. This adventure is appropriate for a small number of modestly powerful characters (say, four to six characters built on standard ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** templates). In this adventure, the heroes become aware that an important magical artifact is at the center of the ruins of a stronghold built by a now-defunct magical brotherhood. That artifact is behind a series of magical barriers. The barriers can be deactivated by gathering talismans, which may be used to remove a magical barrier. Once the adventurers are through the barriers, they can retrieve the artifact, but they have to face a ferocious demon first.



## The Labyrinth

The Labyrinth of Five Essences was constructed by a mystical brotherhood devoted to the study of certain magical forces. They threw themselves into the study of shadow, stone, water, wind, and wood. The labyrinth was built as a combined refuge, treasury, and safe place for research. Long ago, it became the site of a battle between a demonic army and the wizards of the brotherhood. The fight destroyed the stronghold which once stood over the labyrinth, wiped out the brotherhood, and eliminated most of the attacking demons. The most notable survivor was the ferocious demon prince who led the army. He was lured into a trap and confined. By the time the battle was over, anyone who knew how to release him had either fled or died. And so he has been waiting there for countless years.

In the intervening centuries, the structure has decayed somewhat. Some of the finest treasures were carried off by the last remaining members of the brotherhood or their servants, others were destroyed, and yet more have crumbled away. Of what remained, some have been taken away by animals fascinated by shiny objects and others looted by members of the occasional band of orcs or goblins which have found temporary shelter there. Still, a few durable valuables remain in the darkness, and several powerful artifacts can still be found at the center of the labyrinth. Unfortunately for prospective treasure hunters, the center of the labyrinth is where the demon is confined . . .

### The MacGuffin of Motivating

The immediate object of this adventure is the artifact at the center of the maze. Just what the artifact is, we're not specifying. It's up to the GM, the better to fit it into a campaign. The usual motivation for a dungeon crawl is simply to score some loot, in which case the artifact is simply an immensely valuable object which is likely to be made of metal or stone, or a magic item. Plenty of suitable items are available in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 6: 40 Artifacts***, ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables***, and ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 2: Epic Treasures***. But if you absolutely must have a deeper reasons to fit the adventure into a larger campaign, here are some suggestions:

- The artifact is a special-purpose magical item which will heal a mystically injured ally, provide a magical defense, or power an information-gathering effort.
- The PCs are sent by a patron to recover the artifact for one of the above reasons but have no personal interest in its recovery beyond loyalty to their patron. They may also be in the dark about why they're going to recover it. (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds*** covers a great many possibilities for this hook.)
- The PCs become aware that the artifact is sought after by an enemy and try to get there first. Again, they needn't know why the enemy needs it (though they may); they just need to know that their enemy *really* wants it.

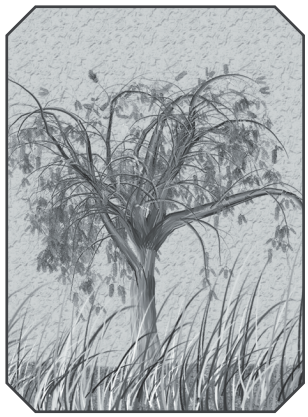
# Talisman Chambers

The labyrinth contains five round rooms, one for each of the brotherhood's mystical "essences." Each of these contains a talisman in the form of a brass medallion, inscribed with a symbolic labyrinth (none of them bear any particular resemblance to the actual layout of the labyrinth in which they're found) and an elemental symbol. Each talisman has a matching niche in a series of pillars around the protected zone at the center of the labyrinth. When all five are in place, the barriers will drop and anyone can enter or exit the area at will. To reactivate the barriers, the talismans must all be removed from the niches, though the delvers may not know that.

A map of the labyrinth can be found on p. 102. Numbers in the paragraph headers refer to locations on the map. No entryway is marked on the map, but one can be created anywhere around the outermost ring of the labyrinth the GM cares to put it. Alternatively, delvers may enter through a hole in the floor or ceiling or even be teleported in from elsewhere. No matter where they come in, though, they still have to gather all the talismans.

## *1. Chamber of Shadow*

This chamber and its surroundings are in constant darkness. Lights burn less brightly, or the light is simply swallowed up around the room. Any hex outside the chamber touched by the dark nimbus is at a -3 darkness penalty, and lights provide only half of their usual bonus. The chamber itself is in full darkness, as per the spell. The blind bear (p. 100) sleeps in this chamber. Unless adventurers are completely silent as they approach, he'll be awake and grumpy. He's also wearing the talisman for this chamber on a chain around his neck.



The room also contains the scattered pieces of a suit of armor: mail sleeves and leggings with a zig-zag pattern of brass-plated rings worked in among the plain steel ones and a steel breastplate with the figure of a two-headed bull engraved on it. It provides no more protection than regular armor and is not magical, but the suit will sell for a good price: $3,000, 42 lbs.

## *2. Chamber of Stone*

The corridors around this chamber are littered with stones, half as tall as they are wide on the map. None of the passages are completely blocked, but getting around requires some climbing, and sprinting is impossible. The chamber is inhabited by three small earth elementals (p. 100), each of which has a swarm of fire bees (pp. 100-101) living in it. The stone talisman floats on the surface of a pit of lava in the center of the room. Even a slight touch does 1d burning damage, and falling or stepping into it does 6d burning damage/turn.

Sharp-eyed adventurers may notice that some of the rocks in the chamber contain opals. On a successful roll on an appropriate skill, such as Jeweler or Prospecting, characters may recover 1d opals (doubled for a critical success) of 1d carats each (roll size separately for each opal; see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8,*** p. 19 for details).

## *3. Chamber of Water*

The floor of the water-covered area drops off sharply, three feet per hex away from the water's edge. The talisman is at the bottom of the center of the chamber, on a necklace pinned to the floor by a large knife made out of transparent glassy material. The knife provides no magical bonuses, but it performs as though it were a fine-quality metal knife; the unusual weapon would be worth at least $1,000. The chamber is also occupied by six leech snakes (p. 101).

## *4. Chamber of Wind*

This chamber and its surroundings are filled with a howling whirlwind (blowing clockwise, should it come to matter). Hearing rolls are at -9 in the chamber itself and at -6 in the adjacent corridors immediately to the west and northeast. Anyone in the chamber must roll against ST each turn to avoid being knocked over. The room also has two flickering columns of lightning (the symbols in the northwest and southeast of the room). Anyone passing through either hex must dodge or take 2d burning damage; metal armor provides DR 1.

The talisman for this chamber is being tossed around with an effective Move of 8. Any character facing the talisman can attempt to catch it (roll vs. DX-3) at it passes through his hex (or vice versa).

The room is occupied by four air elementals (p. 99), who will use their air jets to knock other characters down or into the lightning columns, or just keep the talisman out of their hands. The room contains nothing resembling treasure.

## *5. Chamber of Wood*

Despite being deep underground, this chamber and its surroundings are filled with plant life, from tangles of vines and high grasses to several bad trees (p. 101) in the chamber itself. Each turn anyone moves through the overgrown area indicated by shading on the map, roll 1d. On a 6 (or on a 4, 5, or 6 within the chamber itself), they step into a patch of trapper vines somewhere along their path. The talisman here is embedded in the tree growing in the center of the chamber. It has to be cut out to be recovered; the tree will do its best to prevent that.

Scattered through the plants, characters may find the pages of a "book," with dense text engraved on thin sheets of bronze. The entire text contains complete instructions on how to cast five spells (these should be spells which are typically rare or restricted in the campaign; if there are no such spells, it may teach five unusual skills, such Enthrallment or cinematic martial-arts skills and techniques). It could be a valuable resource for PCs to learn rare skills, or at least be a salable object worth several thousand $. However, the entire text, made up of heavy sheets of metal (this is not fine dwarven craftsmanship), weighs about 60 lbs.

# Other Chambers

In addition to the talisman chambers, there are sections of the labyrinth which have become occupied by monsters and other hazards.

### *6, 9, 11, and 15. Undermined Floors*

The floors in these sections are unstable, undermined by subsurface erosion over the centuries. Every character who walks through must roll 13 or less on 3d. On a failed roll, a section of floor collapses and, if an adventurer fails a DX or Acrobatics roll, they fall six feet onto a hard surface, leaving an open pit in the floor. Once the heroes have been through the area, assume that the uncollapsed sections of floor will continue to hold weight.

### *7. Orcish Lair*

A group of orcs has temporarily set up a refuge in a section of the southwest section of the labyrinth, reaching it through a hidden, natural fissure in the earth and a collapsed section of ceiling. There are about 12 orcs in the band; at any given time, just under half of them will be asleep (unless awoken and sent out to fight the heroes) and at least two will be wandering the maze, picking over the ruins for lost treasure but not having a great time of it. The orcs have been using their corner of the labyrinth as a hideout for several weeks and have settled in fairly well. They know the labyrinth reasonably well, and they learned enough not to enter any of the chambers (there used to be 20 orcs). If they become aware of the PCs, they'll attempt to surround them and, as is appropriate for this kind of adventure, try to kill them and take their stuff.

The orcs have few possessions beyond their weapons and some unpleasant but technically edible provisions, though they do have coins and other small valuables with a value of $3d×10 each. Ironically, since they have no mages with them, they've overlooked an actual treasure. PCs may find a small and somewhat tarnished but nicely decorated tin box tossed into a corner. It has a false bottom, which reveals a cubic foot of space created by Hideaway and enchanted with the Preserve Food spell. In addition to the innate value of the item, it contains a pair of minor healing potions and several ounces of spices with a value of $2,500.

### *8 and 14. The Pits*

Each of these sections has two living pits (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 3: Born of Myth and Magic,*** p. 13); the GM may place these as necessary. Each contains $2d×50 in assorted coins.

### *10 and 13. Rot Worms*

For a while, the labyrinth was inhabited by a variety of undead. Not any more, though. Now it has a modest infestation of rot worms. Each of these sections has half as many rot worms (***Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 3,*** p. 20) as there are delvers (round up), including one hydra rot worm and one giant rot worm. But the chambers also contain $3d×50 in coins and jewelry.

### *11. Demon Meeting*

There are demons aware that the demon prince is trapped in the labyrinth. Now and again, some come by to check on current conditions. Their reasons are obscure, but they don't appear to be trying to rescue him, since they only observe. But they're perfectly happy to try to kill mortals. This section contains half as many Demons of Old (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1,*** p. 10) as there are adventurers.

### *12. The Prison*

The central circle is very well protected, with the equivalent of Utter Dome and Pentagram (enchanted with a skill of 25, in case anyone tries to challenge it). The artifact the heroes have come for is inside the barrier, as is demon prince, and he's *very* grumpy. His first impulse is to kill anyone he sees, and he will fight to the death if it comes to that. If the PCs flee, he'll escape the labyrinth and lay waste to the countryside. If that happens, people in the affected region may or may not know that the PCs are responsible, but one hopes that the adventurers have the decency to feel guilty about it.

# New Monsters

In addition to creatures in some of the ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** volumes, the labyrinth has a number of its own monsters.

## Air Elementals

There's a wide variety of elementals for any given element. The particular type of air elemental in the labyrinth is relatively substantial, being somewhat vulnerable to physical attacks.



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 6 | **HP:** 8 | **Speed:** 6.00 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 12 (Air) |
| **IQ:** 8 | **Per:** 12 | |
| **HT:** 12 | **FP:** 12 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 1 |

**Air Jet (13):** 4d knockback; jet attack with 1/2D 5, Max 10.
**Lightning (13):** 2d-2; jet attack with 1/2D 5, Max 10. Metal armor only provides DR 1. Costs 1 FP per use.
**Thrown Rock (12):** 1d-4 crushing; Max 5.

***Traits:*** Callous; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Flight (Lighter Than Air); Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse); No Fine Manipulators; No Legs (Aerial); Vulnerability (Vacuum and wind-based attacks ×2).
***Skills:*** Innate Attack (Beam)-13; Throwing-12.
***Class:*** Elemental.
***Notes:*** The elemental's air jet and lightning attacks are natural abilities resembling the spells in ***GURPS Magic,*** p. 24 and p. 196 respectively, but are not themselves spells. They don't require concentration before use or prerequisite spells. These air elementals typically use their air jet attacks to disorient and knock down opponents, then hit them with lightning when they're at a disadvantage to defend themselves.

# The Blind Bear

The blind bear is a peculiar animal altered by magic. It could wander around the labyrinth if it wanted to, but prefers the permanent darkness of its lair.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 27 | **HP:** 27 | **Speed:** 5.75 |
| **DX:** 11 | **Will:** 11 | **Move:** 7 |
| **IQ:** 7 | **Per:** 11 | |
| **HT:** 13 | **FP:** 13 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 8 | **Parry:** 10 (Brawling) | **DR:** 3 |

**Bite (14):** 3d+1 cutting. Reach C.
**Claws (14):** 3d+2 cutting. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Bad Temper (12); Bestial; Blindness; Cannot Speak; Discriminatory Hearing; Discriminatory Smell; Vibration Sense (Air).
***Skills:*** Blind Fighting-16; Brawling-14; Stealth-15; Wrestling-15.
***Class:*** Dire Animal.
***Notes:*** The blind bear, being smarter than the average bear, uses relatively sophisticated tactics, taking advantage of its abilities to attack stragglers from behind rather than directly assaulting who or whatever happens to be close.

> *A good is never productive of evil but when it is carried to a culpable excess, in which case it completely ceases to be a good.*
>
> *– Voltaire*

# Earth Elementals

These particular elementals aren't quite so fire resistant as, say, lava lizards, but their rocky structure makes them particularly hard to burn. And, indeed, between their stone "skin" and undifferentiated internal structures, they're hard to hurt in any event. They mostly like to sit and watch slowly bubbling lava and get very upset with anyone or anything which might disturb them from doing so.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 13 | **HP:** 13 | **Speed:** 5.75 |
| **DX:** 10 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 5 |
| **IQ:** 8 | **Per:** 10 | |
| **HT:** 12 | **FP:** 12 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 8 | **Parry:** 9 (Brawling) | **DR:** 5 |

**Punch (12):** 1d+1 crushing. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Damage Resistance 15 (Heat/Fire); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous); Pressure Support 3; Vacuum Support.
***Skills:*** Brawling-12.
***Class:*** Elemental.
***Notes:*** These elementals have little in the way of tactics beyond wading into battle and punching things until one side or the other falls over. However, they're very well suited to absorbing absurd amounts of damage, so it's not necessarily a bad choice for them.

# The Demon Prince

The demon prince started out unpleasant, and having been trapped in a small room for centuries, his mood has not improved. He speaks several demonic languages which are still current, but the only human tongues he knows are several centuries out of date. He may be able to communicate with linguistically skilled adventurers, but he's probably disinclined to do so.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 24 | **HP:** 24 | **Speed:** 7.00 |
| **DX:** 13 | **Will:** 14 | **Move:** 7 (Air 14) |
| **IQ:** 14 | **Per:** 14 | |
| **HT:** 14 | **FP:** 14 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 11 | **Parry:** 13<br>**Block:** 11 | **DR:** 4 |

**Sword (18):** 4d+4 cutting or 2d+4 impaling. Attacks have *either* armor divisor (2) and +2 additional damage from flame after penetrating armor and other bonuses *or* affects insubstantial and +2 additional damage from extreme cold after penetrating armor. Reach C, 1.
**Punch (15):** 2d+2 crushing. Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Combat Reflexes; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Extra Arms 2; Extra Attack 2; Flight (Winged); High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Immunity to Mind Control; Magery 0; Night Vision 5.
***Skills:*** Acting-13; Brawling-15; Broadsword-18; Fast-Talk-15; Hidden Lore (Demon Lore)-14; Intimidation-18; Leadership-15; Shield-14; Stealth-13.
***Class:*** Demon.
***Notes:*** The demon prince is armed with a pair of enchanted fine thrusting broadswords. One is enchanted with Flaming Weapon and has Armor Divisor (2); the other is enchanted with Icy Weapon and can effect insubstantial objects. He also carries a medium shield (DB 2), but relies on his natural DR for armor.

# Fire Bees

Fire bees, possible relatives of fire elementals, appear as candle-flame-sized flying points of light. A swarm is about 30, with the combined light of a good campfire. They have Move 8 and do 1d-2 burning damage; DR protects normally. Enclosed armor (for example, full plate) is likely to provide complete protection from direct damage; however, it can get hot. The temperature increases by 2°F per turn the wearer is attacked. This usually just makes the suit uncomfortable and can be alleviated by stopping momentarily to cool down after combat is over, but persistent attacks can make the armor dangerously hot. A swarm is dispersed after losing 10 HP. Fire bees take 1d-2 HP of injury from drenching and water sprays.

Fire bees can be semi-domesticated. A swarm has IQ 2 for training purposes. Kept in stone hives, they are most often used to provide a mobile light source and a bit of extra protection.

## Leech Snakes

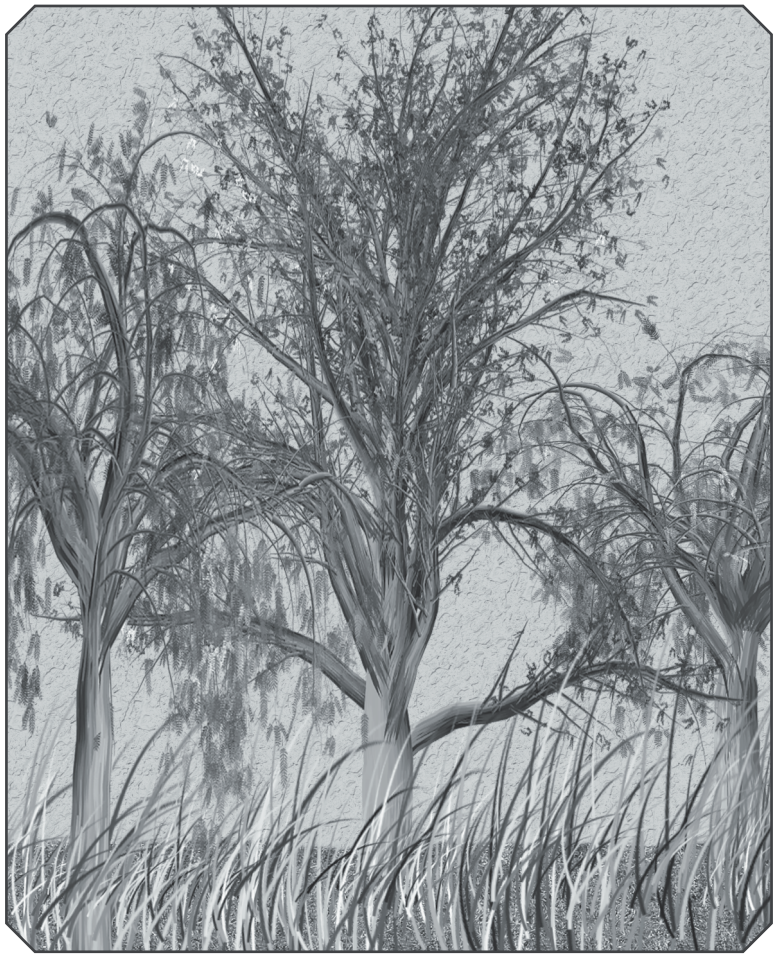
Leech snakes are dangerous aquatic parasites which drink their victims' blood. Treat them as rattlesnakes (p. B458), but instead of a toxin follow-up, they automatically latch onto any living target after any attack which penetrates DR and do 1 HP of injury every subsequent turn. A leech snake can be ripped off (treat as breaking free of a grapple), but the target takes an additional HP of injury if successful.

## Bad Trees

Bad trees are malevolent, but not particularly magical. They lash out at animate creatures around themselves, killing their targets to fertilize the soil they grow in, but spend most of their time quite immobile.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 22 | **HP:** 40 | **Speed:** 5.75 |
| **DX:** 11 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 0 |
| **IQ:** 10 | **Per:** 10 | |
| **HT:** 12 | **FP:** 12 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 8 | **Parry:** 10 | **DR:** 4 |

**Punch (15):** 2d+4 crushing. Reach C.



***Traits:*** Doesn't Breathe; Extra Arms 3; Extra Attacks 2, Injury Tolerance (Homogenous); Lifting ST 5; No Legs (Sessile).
***Skills:*** Brawling-15, Wrestling-14.
***Class:*** Plant.
***Notes:*** It's very important not to get close to bad trees unaware. With their extra limbs and attacks, they can grapple and still strike their prey. Their major vulnerability, of course, is that they can't move, so anybody who knows about them can either avoid them or stand off at a distance and wear them down with missile weapons. However, given their sturdy construction, that's easier said than done. Bad trees are *completely mundane* sentient trees, not magical constructs or the like, and too intelligent to affect with Plant spells – use Mind Control magic.

## Orcs

It's a dungeon, so of course there are orcs.

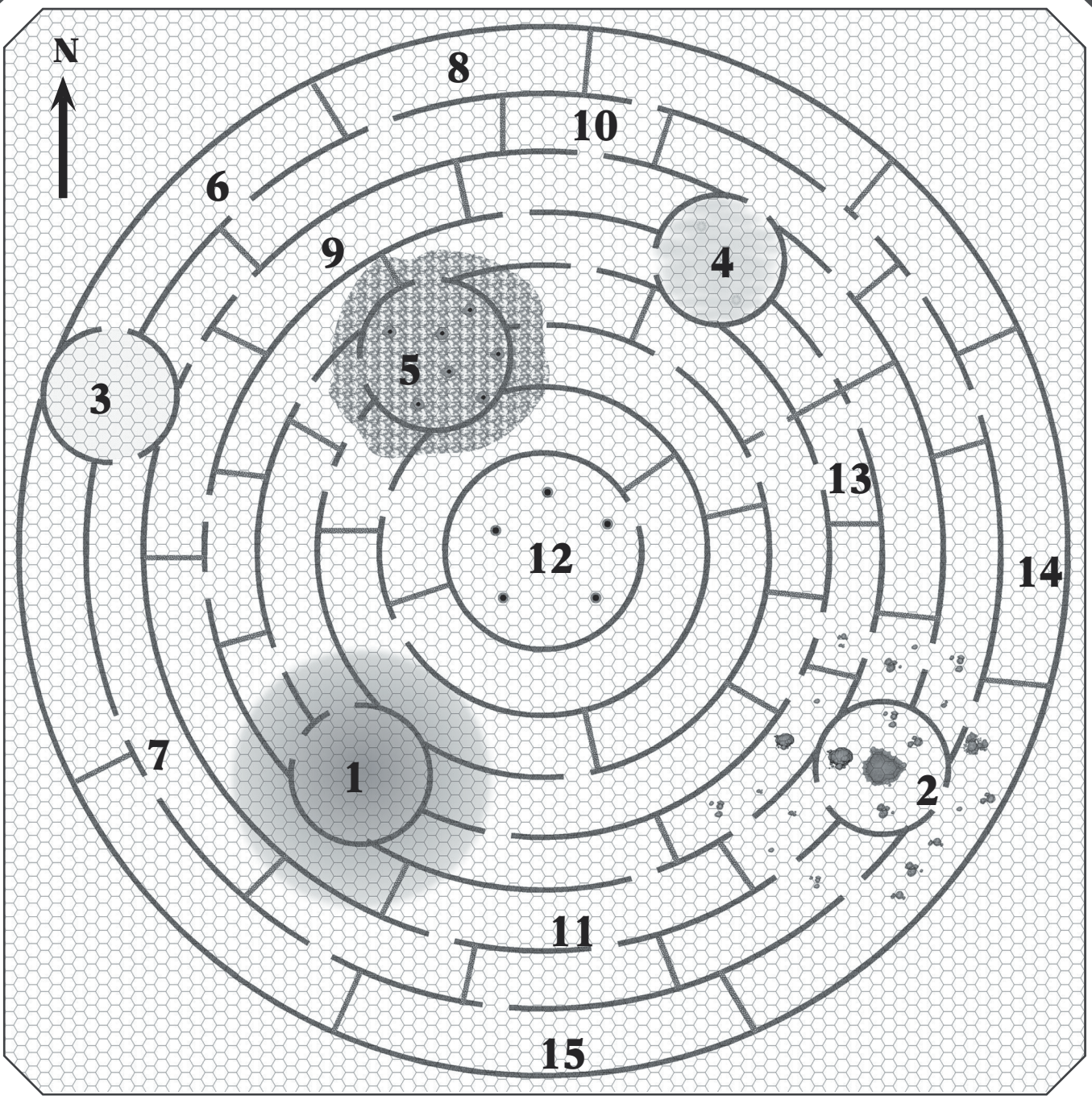
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 16 | **HP:** 18 | **Speed:** 5.75 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 5 |
| **IQ:** 9 | **Per:** 10 | |
| **HT:** 12 | **FP:** 12 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 8 | **Parry:** 10<br>**Block:** 9 | **DR:** 2 |

**Punch (12):** 1d crushing. Reach C.
**Weapon (14):** Axe (2d+4 cutting, Reach 1) *or* shortsword (2d+2 cutting, 1d+1 impaling, Reach 1).

***Traits:*** Acute Hearing 2; Appearance (Ugly); Bully (12); Infravision; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+3).
***Skills:*** Axe/Mace-14 or Shortsword-14; Brawling-12; Shield-12; Stealth-14.
***Class:*** Mundane.
***Notes:*** The orcs are equipped in equal proportions with an axe ($50, 4 lbs.) or a cheap shortsword ($160, 2 lbs.). All are equipped with a medium shield (DB 2; $60, 15 lbs.) and a full suit of leather armor ($340, 19.5 lbs.).

## Trapper Vines

Trapper vines are animate plants which entangle their prey, kill them, and live off of the nutrients their bodies provide. When someone steps into a hex of trapper vines, the vines will attempt to grab the character (treat as a Binding attack), pull him down (treat as a takedown), and fully immobilize him (treat as a Binding attack with the Engulfing enhancement). An immobilized target then suffers the effects of suffocation. Trapper vines have a ST of 1 per vine; most hexes contain 1d+6 vines, but those in the Chamber of Wood contain 2d+8. A hex of trapper vines has HP 12 and Injury Tolerance (Homogeneous). They aren't aware enough of their surroundings to avoid attacks, so they get no active defenses, but they are difficult to spot (Camouflage-16).



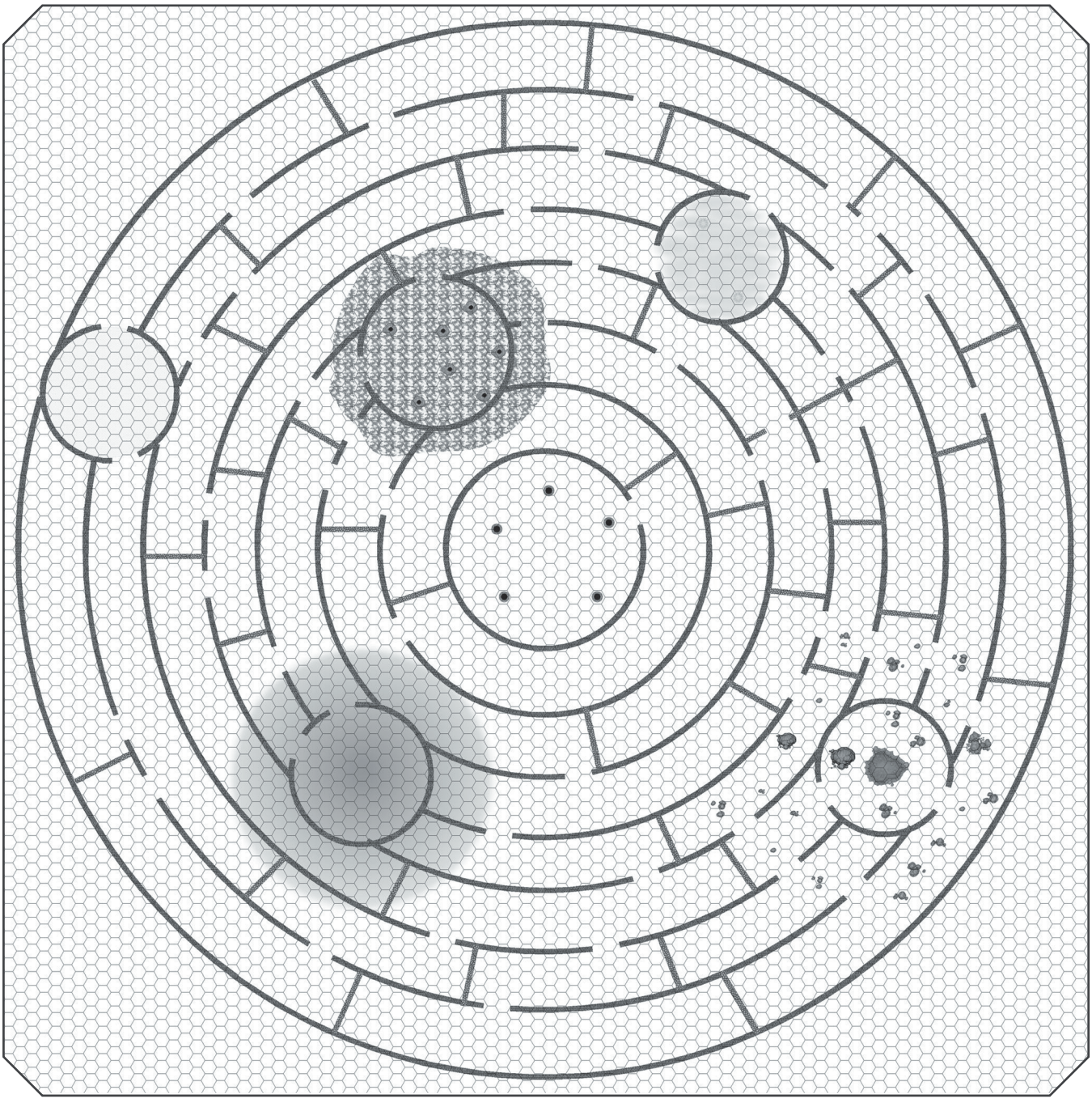

**Map of the Labyrinth of Five Essences**

*Scale:* 1 hex = 1 yard.

*The labyrinth was built by a mystical brotherhood as a combined refuge, treasury, and safe place for their research into shadow, stone, water, wind, and wood.*

*The creative person is both more primitive and more cultivated, more destructive, a lot madder and a lot saner, than the average person.*

*– Frank Barron*



## Map of the Labyrinth of Five Essences, Unlabeled

*Scale:* 1 hex = 1 yard.
Use this map as a player aid or to customize the adventure.

# The Search for Ed

## by Matt Riggsby

*Joe the Barbarian, with his friends Ed the Barbarian and Marge the Barbarian, went down into a cave. They saw lots of monsters and killed them and took their treasure. A dragon ate Ed. Joe and Marge ran away.*

***– GURPS Basic Set: Campaigns***

When Joe and Marge the Barbarian fled the dragon's lair, they left behind a fortune in gold, jewelry, and magical items. In this adventure for ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy,*** the delvers are a group of four to six 250 point dungeon delvers who are offered the chance to go after the treasure which Joe, Marge, and Ed left behind.

Any adventurer worth the name has heard about Ed, Joe, and Marge and their ill-fated encounter with a dragon. The heroes are approached by an old man in a tavern who tells them "In my younger days yadda yadda yadda long journey blah blah terrible battle something something *legendary treasure*." Or, at least, that's what the adventurers are likely to hear. This week's old man in a tavern offers the group a map which will lead them to the lost treasure of Ed, Joe, and Marge. He'll give them a map to (but not *of*) the location, about a week's journey away through the wilderness, in return for a promise of a cut of the treasure. He doesn't downplay the potential risk (after all, Ed the Barbarian was plenty tough), but he expands on the magnitude of wealth there and he'll settle for a fairly small cut of the proceeds. He can even suggest a few shortcuts along the way and mentions a nearby town where an old witch-woman sells potions.

So, unless they want to play ***Car Wars*** instead, the adventurers soon find themselves in front of the doors of the evil cult's lost stronghold. The old man's travel tips are good, and there's a small town where they can stock up on mundane supplies and a few low-end potions from the old lady. And now, it's into the dungeon . . .

### *Orcish Horde +/-*

Several rooms in this dungeon indicate N opponents or some number calculated from N (always round up, and the minimum is 1). This is to scale opposition, to some degree, to the delving party. N is the number of active adventurers in the party at the time they first enter the room. If there are six delvers and the room has 2 × N goblins, they'll find 12 goblins when they kick open the door. If there are three delvers dragging around two paralyzed or entangled companions and the room has N/2 zombies, there'll be two zombies.

# The Dungeon

The dungeon in which Ed lost his life consists of three levels. The highest is the former stronghold of an evil cult, dug into the side of a hill, now occupied by feuding goblins. Beneath it are catacombs inhabited by some undead and natural caves serving as the lair of a dragon.

The traps presented here follow the format established in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons,*** pp. 19-20.

## Level 1: Evil Temple

This level was once the headquarters of an evil cult worshiping icky gods. The cultist stronghold was abandoned years ago, but their treasure remained behind. A number of the monsters who infest the area have taken up residence. Most are petty goblins (p. 110), who are divided into two factions by the central hallway, plus a few larger monsters who are allied with one faction or the other. They have small quantities of valuable goods over which they fight constantly, but the real wealth lies elsewhere.

Unless otherwise noted, all doors are of average wooden construction and provide no bonus or penalty to Lockpicking (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons,*** p. 18). All are locked, but none are barred, unless, again, specifically noted.

A map of this level can be found on p. 114. Numbers in the paragraph headers refer to locations on the map.

### *1-1. Entry Hall*

The first thing a visitor sees is the entrance hall, a chamber with a marble floor and walls carved with eldritch runes. Or rather, the runes are individually eldritch but taken together are nonsense. They were carved by someone who was given the runes but no words to write with them, so they don't mean anything, but adventurers can be excused for believing that they're a secret code.

The entry hall is full of long, pale, spindly vines which have grown in from outside, a few small skeletons (of the non-threatening, inanimate variety, mostly animals which have wandered in from outside and been eaten), and a lot of dirt and rocks. There are also N/2 horrible spider swarms (p. 111) hidden in the debris and one more on the ceiling, waiting to attack passers-by.

## 1-2. Guard Room

This room was set aside for the use of burly armed men to keep the stronghold safe without cluttering it up with visible muscle. It contains a table, at which the guards often played dice and other gambling games, and a rack for spears and pikes.

The guard room is host to 1.5 × N dinomen (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1,*** p. 11). They wandered in a few days ago to take shelter and don't know anything about treasure or the site's other inhabitants. Beyond their gear, they have about $100 each in mixed copper and silver; the leader has about $200, and a nice fur-trimmed cloak worth another $200 if the delvers don't hack it to bits first.

## 1-3. Main Hallway

The stronghold's central hallway is decorated by a series of mosaics on walls and ceiling depicting a large, horned deity destroying armies and being worshiped by multitudes. The mosaics are made of small, cloudy glass tiles, but particularly greedy characters may notice that some of them appear to be gold. Actually, they're just gold leaf laminated between thin sheets of glass, so there's not much value there. A very diligent character might pry out $80 worth of gold.

About half-way down the hallway, there's a trap. A stretch of hallway about 10 feet long is on a slab which pivots on a concealed axle running over a pit across the hall:

*Detect:* Per-2.
*Disarm:* Find the hidden switches (Per-2).
*Circumvent:* Fly or leap over the 10-foot area.
*Evade:* Characters with ground Move 7 or better can make a DX-3 roll to run across in a single turn without being tipped into the pit.
*Effects:* Fall 10 feet.
*Shots:* Constant.
*Steal:* No.

The hallway is also a frequent battlefield between petty goblin factions, so it is covered with skeletons and a few rusted, broken weapons, but no monsters are present.

## 1-4. Storeroom 1

This plain room was mostly used to store goods for outdoor use: cloaks and other heavy clothing, tents and luggage for longer expeditions, and tools for digging and gardening. The room is currently occupied by one petty goblin (p. 110) of each color and a stone troll (p. 110; this is subtly different from the *rock* troll in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 3***), who are arguing over a sturdy-looking metal box embossed with a zigzag pattern. The door to the room is barred to prevent anyone from interrupting them. The box contains a valuable, though not enchanted, unholy symbol worth $400; treat as a blessed holy symbol (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables,*** p. 23), only a bit more ornate. However, there's a trap on the box. Anyone who opens it – by *any* means – without using the original key triggers a lightning trap:

*Detect:* Detect Magic.
*Disarm:* Use the original key; picking the lock is not enough. Of course, the original key has been lost for years.
*Circumvent:* No.
*Evade:* Dodge.
*Effects:* 3d damage; metal armor provides only DR 1.
*Shots:* One.
*Steal:* No.

### Mana and Sanctity

Despite being the former stronghold of an evil cult, the dungeon is quite unremarkable when it comes to ambient magic and divine energies, perhaps because it has been deserted by its original owners and taken over by others who haven't bothered to keep up with maintaining a suitably evil presence. While a few specifically composed curses remain in force, the entire complex has normal mana and sanctity.

## 1-5. Library

In addition to storing books, this room is for study and teaching. Students sat on plain benches while being read to from a lectern. The room is plain stone, but the walls are lined with wooden shelves. Many books, or at least their remains, are fastened to the shelves with chains to prevent theft, and a number are locked to prevent the uninitiated from reading them.

The room is occupied by a stone troll (p. 110) and N petty goblins (p. 110), none of whom have the slightest idea of the value of the items in the room. Most of the books are decayed, but there are N-1 in good condition; use the tables on ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8,*** p. 27, to determine their form and value, or just assume that they're all textbooks on not immediately useful topics. One other book's pages are a portal to a hell dimension. When opened, a flaming skull (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2***, p. 23) leaps out and attacks whoever is nearby; others follow at intervals of 2d seconds until the book is closed or destroyed. The first page notes a ritual to prevent this from happening, but a new reader will be hard-pressed to read it and recite the words while flaming skulls are trying to kill him. The book is worth thousands to the right people, and exceptionally devious owners may realize that they can shove small objects back through in the other direction once they've stopped the flaming skulls from coming out.

## 1-6. Dormitory 1

This is one of the two rooms containing sleeping quarters for ordinary cultists. The floor is plain flagstones. The walls are plastered and have crude but extensive frescoes depicting the cult's gods destroying unbelievers and rewarding the faithful with power. The furnishings are narrow cots accompanied by small chests for clothes.

*Anybody can win, unless there happens to be a second entry.*

*– George Ade*

This room more or less retains its old function as a residence. It is the home territory of a faction of monsters who hate the ones on the other side of the hallway. It is occupied by 2 × N petty goblins (p. 110), including two Reds.

## 1-7. Storeroom 2

This room is used to store a variety of miscellaneous goods: bales of fabric for evil robes, bedding, curtains, and so on; planks, mortar, and other digging and construction supplies; stacks of parchment to bind into new books; extra ritual items (wavy knives, copper bowls into which to drain the blood of sacrifices, incense, censers, etc.); soaps and other cleansers; and many other items.

The room is full of precariously stacked crates and bales, the useful contents of which have long since decayed into uselessness or solid lumps. The room also hosts N/2 hidden small horrible spiders (p. 111) and a hexagonal colloid (pp. 111-112) waiting for someone to pass through the wrong hex.

## 1-8. Dormitory 2

To avoid scandal in their evil community, the cultist segregated sleeping quarters for men and women. This is the women's dormitory, though you'd never know it if you didn't open any of the chests, and even then most of the clothing the cult allows is unisex. The furniture and architecture are identical to the other dormitory.

This room has come to much the same fate as Dormitory 1. It is occupied by 2 × N petty goblins (p. 110), including two Blues, who hate the goblins on the other side of the hallway.

## 1-9. Refectory

Even evil cultists gotta eat, and this is where they did it. It retains two long parallel sets of benches and tables, which are a bit rough, but solidly built to the point where they're still in use today. This room is used as a sanctuary by N Black petty goblins (p. 110), who spend a lot of time hiding under the tables.

## 1-10. Kitchen

This room, with smoke-blackened plaster walls, is for food preparation and storage. The kitchen has a well in one corner. A bucket on the end of a coiled rope can go down nearly 50 feet to a pool deep below, which happens to be the pool on level 2 (p. 107). Characters who are SM -1 or smaller can climb down the rope to reach the next level. Of course, anyone (or any*thing*) SM -1 or smaller can climb up as well. A pair of swamp trolls (pp. 110-111) live here, using water from the well to keep themselves moist. The smell of decay is terrible; any scent-based rolls are at -5. Anything which once had a value has become rotten or rusted through.

## 1-11. Apartment 1

This room is set aside for the cult's #2. It is sparsely furnished; the leader's assistant was a true ascetic who preferred a quiet evening scourging himself to any luxuries.

The cult's second in command was also a very nasty character who managed to avoid death by transforming himself into a demon, albeit not a terribly successful one. He still occupies his old rooms as a toxifier (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2***, p. 26). The room contains little else of interest save for a few well-made torture implements which might fetch as much as $300 from specialist collectors.

## 1-12. Apartment 2

These rooms, consisting of an outer audience chamber and an inner private chamber, are set aside for the cult's leader and whatever other nubile cultist he wants to keep around. It is decorated with polished wooden panels on the walls and soft rugs on the floor, as well as comfortable furniture. The locks are somewhat higher quality than elsewhere on this level (-2 to Lockpicking) but no more durable. Two stone trolls (p. 110) and N petty goblins (p. 110) occupy this space. The once-fine furnishings are now greatly decayed, but a secret panel in the north wall guarded by a crossbow trap (use the stats on ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2***, p. 20) hides a stash of $500 in coin and $1,000 in jewelry.

## 1-13. Ceremonial Chamber

This large octagonal chamber is where the cult conducts most of its rituals. The high-domed chamber has marble-lined walls resembling those in the entry hall and is provided with an enormous chandelier at the center of the room, though the candles have long since burned out or been chewed by vermin. A series of full-sized demon statues hold up the arches which form the ceiling dome. There is a solid stone altar at the north end of the room. The chamber is protected by a magical trap which afflicts any intelligent nonbeliever who enters the room:

*Detect:* Per + Magery for magicians or Detect Magic.
*Disarm:* No (short of destroying the room).
*Circumvent:* No.
*Evade:* No; people initiated into the cult are unaffected, but since they all died decades ago, the delvers are out of luck.
*Effects:* Resist skill 20 with Will or be afflicted with the Curse spell (-2).
*Shots:* Infinite.
*Steal:* No.

In addition to the curse, four of the figures around the room are stone golems who will attack any nonbelievers who enter the room; they take a few seconds to activate, so the delvers can get completely into the room before the golems start moving. Use the stone golems on ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 26, but instead of having Unhealing, they regenerate 1 HP/hour. If the adventurers fight them, run away, and come back later, the golems will have recovered.

### *1-14. Cells*

Naturally, the cult practices human sacrifice and needs a place to stash the prospective victims until it's time to use them. Some of the occupants have scratched brief messages on the coarse stone walls. The cell at the end contains a crushroom (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 22), but the other cells have little of interest, and certainly no loot. Concealed beneath a loose stone in the first cell is, sadly, a partly dug escape tunnel nearly a foot wide and about 10 feet long, stopping in a dead end.

### *1-15. Secret Chamber*

Behind the back wall of the ceremonial chamber is a smaller, *secret* ceremonial chamber for the inner circle's rituals. The black marble-lined chamber has a sarcophagus containing the remains of the founder of the cult. This room contains nothing but some old bones. They're not magical, not cursed, not undead, not anything at all except old and easy to break.

## Level 2: Catacombs of the Spider Queen

One of the reasons the evil cult built their headquarters where they did is that it sits atop extensive natural caves inhabited by evil creatures. A colony of horrible spiders (p. 111) occupies a series of unworked natural chambers, while the Dead Philosopher (p. 112) lives with a number of experimental zombies in his roughly finished rooms.

A map of this level can be found on p. 115. Numbers in the paragraph headers refer to locations on the map.

### *2-1. Crypt*

Notables in the cult are interred in the crypt, laid on the altar until their flesh decays. The room and the adjacent catacombs are lined with carved white marble, showing more images of ferocious monsters consuming wailing victims. The doors at the bottom of the stairs are heavy and ironbound (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2***, p. 18). They're also barred on the *outside*, facing the stairs. The catacombs which extend from the crypt proper are essentially hallways lined with stone shelves. This section contains nothing but a few broken bones and tattered old shrouds. Smart delvers may take the lack of anything resembling a complete skeleton as an ominous clue.

### *2-2 to 2-10. Spider Chambers*

These areas are rough, unshaped stone chambers with dirt-and-rubble-covered floors, liberally covered with dry old webbing, bones, and other detritus. The old webs are sufficiently covered by dust that they're no longer sticky, though they provide excellent camouflage for hiding spiders. The webs can be damaged by fire, but don't really burn. Chamber 5 (see below) contains a deep pool of surprisingly pure (that is, drinkable rather than filled with horrible muck, not suspiciously and unnaturally pure) water. The well in the kitchen from the level above leads down to the southeastern corner of the pool.

For chambers 2 to 10, roll 2d when adventurers enter to see what they encounter there. Stats for horrible spiders are on p. 111.

| *Roll* | *Result* |
|---|---|
| 2 | Nothing |
| 3-4 | N horrible spider swarms |
| 5-6 | N small horrible spiders |
| 7 | N/2 large horrible spiders |
| 8 | N/2 horrible spiders swarms and N/2 small horrible spiders |
| 9 | N/2 small horrible spiders and N/3 large horrible spiders |
| 10 | 2 acid spiders (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 21) |
| 11 | 1 crushroom (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 22; crushrooms don't eat horrible spiders and can coexist peacefully with them) |
| 12 | Roll twice, ignoring results of 12 or 2 |

The floors here are *extremely* uneven and covered with a great deal of lightweight detritus, so it's easy to stick one's foot into a small hole or trip over a hidden bump. Every turn a character walks or runs more than their usual Move (for example, when getting the sprinting bonus or using Haste), roll against the better of Per or DX to avoid tripping. That does *not* apply to the spiders, who are more used to the open ground.

Unless one is a fan of small or broken bones and bits of rusted metal, these rooms do not contain anything valuable.

### *2-5. The Pool*

The pool drops off steeply. It's a yard deep in hexes adjacent to the shore and another yard deep per additional hex. Characters will notice a faint glow from the center of the pool. If they dive in, they'll encounter N/2 aquatic frost snakes; treat as the frost snakes (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 24), but they swim at Move 7, and their chill breath has a range of 1/2 while underwater. However, in addition to doing damage, a successful hit freezes a five-pound block of ice around the afflicted location. Treat ice-encased extremities as grappled until the ice can be shattered with 4 points of damage. The light comes from three small gems "enchanted with permanent Continual Light (level 2) at the bottom of the pool. They're worth about $750 each.

### *2-11. Spider Queen's Throne Room*

This chamber holds the spider queen and some minions (N/2 swarms, N/2 small spiders, 2 large spiders). The other spiders will attack suicidally to keep their queen from harm. Although the other spiders have no use for material things, the queen enjoys shiny things. A corner of the room holds a pile of coin ($3,000 in mixed gold, silver, and copper) and a large, elaborately decorated mirror (20 lbs., worth $4,000, but extremely fragile).

## 2-12 to 2-19. Zombie Chambers

These rooms are constructed from roughly stacked but nevertheless intentionally laid courses of stone by the Dead Philosopher's zombies. The Dead Philosopher's chambers are full of experimental undead. He doesn't directly control the horde zombies, but he *does* make them from time to time, and being dead himself, they don't bother him. For these chambers, roll 2d to see which experiment tries to kill the heroes.

| *Roll* | *Result* |
|---|---|
| 2-4 | N skeletons (use the skeleton template from ***GURPS Magic,*** p. 152) |
| 5-6 | N zombies (use the zombie template from ***GURPS Magic,*** p. 152) |
| 7 | N-1 horde zombies (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 24) |
| 8 | N/2 skeletons and N/2 zombies |
| 9 | N/2 skeletons and (N/2)-1 horde zombies |
| 10 | 2 × N zombie giant rats (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 24) |
| 11 | N+1 zombie dire wolves (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 22) |
| 12 | N/2 zombie flesh-eating apes (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 23) |

For the zombie animals, use the undead lens from ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1,*** p. 38.

## 2-20. Dead Philosopher's Laboratory

The Dead Philosopher putters away in his well-stocked lab, accompanied by three zombies and his latest invention, a zombie siege beast. For the survivors, the room contains a full alchemical lab, one of every potion in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*** worth $500 or less, and a manual on Thaumatology. The Dead Philosopher wears a gold crown worth $7,000; it's also a power item containing 20 FP.

## 2-21. The Grand Chasm

Past the Dead Philosopher's laboratory, the cavern opens out. And down. Way down, changing quickly from a steep slope to a sheer cliff. Characters with good night vision can see another cave wall at least 20 yards away from them, a ceiling about three yards up, and no floor. The blackness extends for at least 200 yards. However, down the slope about 10 yards and over a few, there's an opening with dull red light coming out of it. There used to be a set of wooden steps set into the wall of the chasm leading down to the cave below. However, it has mostly rotted away and those few planks which are left won't support any weight. The delvers will have to make their own way down. Every few minutes, a group of (N/2) + 1d foul bats (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 23) is likely to fly by.

# Level 3: The Vault

The lowest level is really a single large underground chamber with a single strong room separated off from it. Since the cultists died off, a dragon has taken up residence in the large underground chamber. He's got a remarkably cordial relationship with his upstairs neighbor, the Dead Philosopher, but mostly keeps to himself.



A map of this level can be found on p. 116. Numbers in the paragraph headers refer to locations on the map.

## 3-1. Outer Chamber

The outer chamber is a large, high-ceilinged cave. There are two exits. One is the small passageway to the north, which can be reached from the level above. The other is the caverns to the west. Characters can explore the caverns if they wish, but this takes them off the map into monster-infested caves and out of the adventure. As the delvers make their way from the entrance through the narrow passage, the dragon (pp. 112-113) greets them. With his acute senses, he knows they're coming and has a pretty good idea of how many there are and how heavily they're equipped, and he's got his end of the passage staked out. He has, in short, the drop on them.

Assuming they don't rush in and start attacking anyway, he has a proposition. Anyone who can beat him in a game of chess (or *go,* or ***Car Wars,*** or whatever the appropriate game is for the campaign) may enter the vault, take as much as the person can carry, and leave unmolested. The dragon is quite serious about his offer, though if anyone takes him up on it, he'll still keep an eye and an ear on the passageway. Unless he can be distracted (Quick Contest of Fast-Talk or other applicable social skill vs. the dragon's Will), treat it as a Wait maneuver; anyone with clever ideas about jumping around the corner with a loaded crossbow to take a snap shot at his eyes gets a face full of freezing breath.

### *3-2. The Vault*

A small section of the large chamber has been squared off, walled with iron-reinforced stone, and turned into a treasure vault. It is full of wooden chests but is otherwise unfurnished and undecorated. It has ironbound vault doors (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2***, p. 18) which have a very good lock (-4 to Lockpicking). It is also protected by Scryguard (enchanted with a skill of 20) and Teleport Shield.

If the dragon is defeated, either at the table or on the battlefield, at least one delver can enter the vault, a strongroom which formerly held the cult's treasure and now holds the dragon's. It contains the following treasure:

- $5,000 in gold.
- $8,000 in silver.
- $4,000 in copper.
- $5,000 in jewelry.
- A very fine Icy shortsword.
- A Bottomless Purse (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1,*** p. 30).
- 10 arrows of Piercing.
- A meteoric iron (see *Shields,* ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1,*** p. 27) large shield.
- A fine suit of elven (see *Armor,* ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1,*** p. 27) mail for someone SM -1.
- An ornate (+2 CF) suit of spiked plate armor for someone SM 0.
- A pot helm of Invulnerability (grants Fortify +2 and is worth $4,000).
- A Necklace of Fireballs (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1,*** p. 30).
- Four ornate broadswords (+2 CF) and one very ornate axe (+4 CF).
- A rack of 16 potions (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1,*** p. 29): agility, alchemical antidote (2), alchemist's fire (2), liquid ice, magebane, major healing, minor healing (3), perception (2), strength (2), and true water.
- Nine tomes (see ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1,*** p. 26): Thaumatology (3), Occultism (4), and Hidden Lore (Demons) (2). The tomes are well-decorated with gold leaf and semi-precious stones, so they're worth twice the usual price.
- An atlas; by itself, it's worth at least $500. However, coded writing on the maps might be a guide to other treasures.

## The Complicated Ending

The goal of this exercise in killing things and taking their stuff has been to find the treasure guarded by the dragon who ate Ed the Barbarian. But it turns out that things are much more complex than that.

### *The Twist: Ed's Dead, Baby; Ed's Dead*

The vault also contains guards, including a rather surprising one. The dragon didn't *quite* eat Ed. He took a big bite out of him and killed him, certainly, but he didn't consume the intrepid dungeon delver, finding him too tough and stringy. Instead, he had the Dead Philosopher reanimate him and send him down to the vault with a handful of other guards. Zombie Ed, along with a few other undead, now serves as a never-resting guard in the vault, protecting the treasure from pesky adventurers who might slip past the dragon. Use the undead warrior stats (p. 112) for Ed; he's accompanied by N+4 horde zombies (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 24) with mail and broadswords.

### *The Other Twist: The (Second and) Third Barbarian*

When the delvers finally emerge from the catacombs with a big stash of treasure, they've got one more obstacle to face. Although Joe and Marge had to flee the dungeon, they didn't stop wanting the treasure. After years of adventuring, they struck upon an idea. If the three companions couldn't make it through the dungeon alive, then two of them certainly couldn't. However, they could find someone to do it for them. When the delvers get out of the dungeon, they'll have to get past Joe (the old man who gave them the map) and Marge (the old lady selling potions in the nearby town).

Joe and Marge are getting on in years, but they're still tough and more experienced than the delvers likely are. More importantly, they're rested and ready, while any delvers who made it down to the bottom of the dungeon and back are likely low on Hit Points, Energy Reserves, and everything else a delver needs to function. Joe and Marge are ready to ambush them as soon as they return to the light of day. They have considerable skill in both Stealth and Camouflage and aren't afraid to use them. About all the delvers have going in their favor in this very last encounter is that they almost certainly outnumber these final opponents, and while Joe and Marge may attack from cover, they're too impulsive to stay in it, exposing themselves to danger.

*What renders us so bitter against those who trick us is that they believe themselves to be more clever than we are.*

*– La Rochefoucauld*

# New Monsters

While some monsters are from various ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*** supplements, a good many more are local to this dungeon.

## Petty Goblins

Small, weak, and quarrelsome, the petty goblin is an almost inconsequential threat. However, they often appear in sufficient numbers to cause problems even for experienced adventurers. They have little sense of self-preservation, so they will often swarm over their opponents, attempt multiple grapples, and immobilize their enemies so that a few can stab through chinks in armor.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 9 | **HP:** 9 | **Speed:** 5.25 |
| **DX:** 11 | **Will:** 9 | **Move:** 5 |
| **IQ:** 9 | **Per:** 9 | |
| **HT:** 10 | **FP:** 10 | **SM:** -1 |
| **Dodge:** 8 | **Parry:** 9<br>**Block:** 9 | **DR:** 2 |

**Shortsword (12):** 1d-1 cutting or 1d-2 impaling Reach C.
**Spear (12):** One-handed thrust: 1d impaling, reach 1. Two-handed thrust: 1d+1 impaling, reach: 1, 2. Thrown: 1d+1 impaling, Acc 2, Range 9/13.

***Traits:*** Bad Temper (9); Night Vision 3.
***Skills:*** Brawling-12; Shortsword-12; Spear-12; Stealth-12.
***Class:*** Mundane.
***Notes:*** Active defenses benefit from a buckler (DB 1), and DR includes leather armor. Though they can theoretically be negotiated with, petty goblins have a short attention span and a low threshold for frustration, so they'll most likely just attack if there's too much talking.

### *This Is Supposed to Intimidate Me?*

Yes, the petty goblins are . . . well, petty. The same goes for some of the other small monsters here. Their damage is pitiful (rarely enough to penetrate armor), their chances of hitting a target are moderate at best, and a single solid hit will take them down. These are classic cannon fodder. They provide the heroes with the fun of cutting vast swathes through their enemies while presenting them with the challenge of circumventing traits and tactics which are most effective against single opponents; it doesn't matter how good your Acrobatic Dodge is if you're defending against three swords and six spears every turn.

### *Petty Goblin Variants*

Although garden-variety petty goblins qualify as "mostly harmless," there are a few exceptions. Those few goblins have special attacks or defenses which can give adventurers a nasty surprise. They're distinguished by faint markings in colors different than the usual pebbly green, which can be spotted on a successful Vision roll.

*Red Goblins:* These goblins are attuned to fire. Add flaming breath (12), 3d burning incendiary, Range 3, costs 1 FP per use; and DR 5 against burning attacks.

*Blue Goblins:* These goblins are attuned to ice. They can hurl shards of ice (12), 2d(3) imp, Acc 3, Range 10/20, costs 1 FP per use.

*Black Goblins:* These goblins are attuned to darkness. They have Dark Vision and carry a switchable four-yard radius area of darkness around them (treat as the Darkness spell).

## Trolls

Trolls are burly, ugly humanoids at the upper end of the goblin-orc-troll threat spectrum. When not loitering under bridges and shaking down goats, they whack people with large clubs and eat them.

### *Stone Troll*

The stone troll lives underground, venturing out only at night. Its stony skin and flesh gives it great durability, but it must avoid the sun.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 18 | **HP:** 25 | **Speed:** 5.75 |
| **DX:** 10 | **Will:** 9 | **Move:** 5 |
| **IQ:** 7 | **Per:** 7 | |
| **HT:** 13 | **FP:** 13 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** 8 | **DR:** 7 |

**Club (12):** 3d+2 crushing. Reach 1.
**Punch (12):** 1d+2 crushing. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Berserk (12); Night Vision 8. • Stone trolls are paralyzed when exposed to sunlight; they are paralyzed for a turn if struck by Sunbolt or other sunlight-producing spells (but *not* when exposed to flame or regular light spells).
***Skills:*** Brawling-12; Broadsword-12; Stealth-10.
***Class:*** Mundane.
***Notes:*** Trolls just barely qualify as intelligent, and they have little or no conception of subtlety. They have a straightforward bash-over-the-head approach to life and are unlikely to pause for conversation, even if they can understand it.

### *Swamp Troll*

Though they have the same shape and overall features as their rocky cousins, swamp trolls are smooth and rubbery rather than rocky. Though less durable than stone trolls, they recover from wounds quickly and can only be harmed permanently by flames and acids.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 18 | **HP:** 18 | **Speed:** 5.75 |
| **DX:** 10 | **Will:** 9 | **Move:** 5 |
| **IQ:** 7 | **Per:** 7 | |
| **HT:** 13 | **FP:** 13 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** 8 | **DR:** 1/3 (vs. crushing only) |

**Club (12):** 3d+2 crushing. Reach 1.
**Punch (12):** 1d+2 crushing. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Berserk (12); Night Vision 3; Regeneration (1 HP/second; Not vs. fire or acid); Regrowth.
***Skills:*** Brawling-12; Broadsword-12; Swimming-14.
***Class:*** Mundane.
***Notes:*** See Notes for stone trolls (p. 110).

# Horrible Spiders

Horrible spiders are . . . well, horrible. Though individually less formidable than acid spiders, they're certainly dangerous enough and appear in larger numbers around a nest ruled by a queen. Hatchlings travel in frightening swarms, and as they grow, they become more dangerous, using a paralyzing poison (all are subject to a modified HT roll; if the subject fails, they are paralyzed for a number of minutes equal to the margin of failure).

## *Swarm*

A swarm of a dozen horrible Spider hatchlings has Move 8 and 11 HP. It does 1d-2 damage, with a follow-up paralyzing poison (save vs. HT+3). They hide very well, even on walls and ceilings (Clinging, Camouflage-14, Stealth-15), and lie in wait to leap on passing targets, preferring those with soft coverings to anything in solid armor.

## *Small Spider*

This is a somewhat older and therefore larger spider than the swarming hatchlings. As creepy as horrible spiders are, they're actually rather vulnerable once you get past the hard exoskeleton.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 11 | **HP:** 11 | **Speed:** 6.00 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 8 |
| **IQ:** 3 | **Per:** 10 | |
| **HT:** 11 | **FP:** 11 | **SM:** -1 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 3 |

**Bite (13):** 1d cutting with follow-up paralyzing poison (save vs. HT). Reach C.
**Claw Strike (13):** 1d cutting. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Clinging; Extra Legs (Eight Legs); Fragile (Brittle); Horizontal; Night Vision 5; No Fine Manipulators; Peripheral Vision.
***Skills:*** Brawling-13; Camouflage-12; Climbing-14; Jumping-12; Stealth-13.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** A juvenile horrible spider has a bit harder time hiding than its smaller brethren, but follows much the same tactics. In addition to its bite, it can strike with its sharp-clawed legs.

## *Large Spider*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 16 | **HP:** 16 | **Speed:** 6.00 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 7 |
| **IQ:** 4 | **Per:** 10 | |
| **HT:** 12 | **FP:** 12 | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 5 |

**Bite (14):** 1d+1 cutting with follow-up paralyzing poison (save vs. HT-2). Reach C.
**Claw Strike (14):** 1d+1 impaling. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Clinging; Extra Attack (1); Extra Legs (Eight Legs); Fragile (Brittle); Horizontal; Night Vision 7; No Fine Manipulators; Peripheral Vision; Super Jump 1.
***Skills:*** Brawling-14; Camouflage-12; Climbing-14; Jumping-12; Stealth-13.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** A full-grown horrible spider is best at sneaking rather than lying in wait, but it's surprisingly good at leaping on to opponents.

> *When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.*
>
> *– Ethiopian proverb*

## *Spider Queen*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 20 | **HP:** 22 | **Speed:** 6.00 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 12 | **Move:** 7 |
| **IQ:** 12 | **Per:** 12 | |
| **HT:** 12 | **FP:** 12 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 7 |

**Bite (15):** 2d cutting with follow-up paralyzing poison (save vs. HT-4). Reach C, 1.
**Claw Strike (15):** 2d+2 impaling. Reach C, 1.

***Traits:*** Clinging; Extra Attacks 2; Extra Legs (Eight Legs); Fragile (Brittle); Horizontal; Night Vision 8; No Fine Manipulators; Peripheral Vision.
***Skills:*** Brawling-15; Camouflage-12; Climbing-14; Jumping-12; Stealth-13.
***Class:*** Giant Animal.
***Notes:*** At the center of any horrible spider nest is the spider queen. She is an absolute monarch; horrible spiders aren't smart enough to undertake complex actions, but they will do anything she commands and sacrifice themselves for her without a moment's hesitation. The queen has limited telepathic contact with the spiders around her, allowing her to silently command any who are within sight. She is intelligent, but immensely hostile. She may negotiate, but it's really just a deception she maintains until she finds herself in position to attack.

# Hexagonal Colloid

The hexagonal colloid is a large, dense, and relatively solid predatory slime. Left to its own devices, it forms a hexagon about a yard across and six to eight feet tall, but it can twist itself into a wide variety of shapes if it has walls to cling to. It mostly waits for edible animals to walk near it, and falls on its prey to slowly digest it.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 30 | **HP:** 30 | **Speed:** 1.00 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 1 |
| **IQ:** 1 | **Per:** 4 | |
| **HT:** 11 | **FP:** 11 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 4 | **Parry:** N/A | **DR:** 4 |

**Enzyme Attack:** Grappled targets of a Constriction Attack and targets in the same hex as the colloid take 1d-2 damage per turn from acid burns. Armor protects completely for turns equal to its DR and not at all thereafter.

**Tentacle Strike (12):** 3d crushing. Reach 2. The hexagonal colloid can only form and strike with one tentacle per turn, but if damaged it can simply form another.

***Traits:*** 360° Vision; Constriction Attack; Dark Vision; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Sleep; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Immunity to Mind Control; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous, No Blood, No Eyes, No Head, No Neck); Invertebrate; No Fine Manipulators; No Legs (Slithers); Unfazeable; Wild Animal.

***Skills:*** Camouflage-15.

***Class:*** Slime.

***Notes:*** Hexagonal colloids are large blocks of dirty black slime which conceal themselves along damp, dripping corridors. As edible targets pass by, they slam closed *around* the tastiest morsels. They can form temporary tentacles with which to strike opponents, but mostly they just dissolve the prey they engulf. Although a colloid can be effectively destroyed by hacking it to bits, the resulting gobbets of slime are still alive. Left to their own devices, they'll reassemble themselves into their original form. Only damage from fire is permanent.

# Dead Philosopher

The Dead Philosopher is a sort of lich. He used to be a scholar and an alchemist with an interest in revivifying the dead, which came in handy when he fell mortally ill while still having research to do. He isn't *evil* as such, but he is driven by nothing other than his own intellectual obsessions. His one interest in life (or, at least, un-life) is reanimation of the dead, and he's always in search of new and interesting people to turn into skeletons, zombies, mummies, and other dead critters, entirely or in parts. Beyond that, he'd prefer to be left alone to work.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 9 | **HP:** 9 | **Speed:** 6.00 |
| **DX:** 12 | **Will:** 16 | **Move:** 6 |
| **IQ:** 16 | **Per:** 16 | |
| **HT:** 10 | **FP:** N/A | **SM:** 0 |
| **Dodge:** 9 | **Parry:** 9 | **DR:** 0 |

**Bare-Hand Strike (12):** 1d-1 crushing. Reach C.

***Traits:*** Charisma 2; Dark Vision; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Energy Reserve 15 (Magical); Fragile (Unnatural); Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Indomitable; Magery 3; Unaging.

***Skills:*** Alchemy-16; Hidden Lore (Spirits)-18; History-16; Karate-12; Thaumatology-16. ● The Dead Philosopher has all spells listed for necromancers on ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers,*** p. 13 at level 18, all spells for artillery mages at 17, and Innate Attack skills for all of his combat spells at 14.

***Class:*** Construct.

***Notes:*** While the Dead Philosopher is lich-like, he's not a garden variety animated skeleton. He's actually animated by a complex set of alchemical preparations, so he's not vulnerable to True Faith and other abilities which usually turn or destroy the undead. He will send his minions to retrieve any interesting bodies who happen to wander through his neighborhood. He'd prefer them in one piece, but he can put them back together if need be. Most mortals interest him solely as experimental subjects, but he'll happily converse with knowledgeable mystics, sages, and magicians to get new perspectives and news of recent developments in the field of thanatology. And *then* he'll kill them and turn them into zombies. If engaged in combat, the Dead Philosopher will erect defensive spells and leave most of the fighting to his minions, but will fire off lightning bolts and other offensive spells if support is warranted.

*. . . they chase the party around the corner, only to come across a nude Marge the Barbarian rippling her unibrow knowingly.*

***– GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons***

# Undead Warrior

To be honest, the undead warrior isn't the Dead Philosopher's best work. He's basically a magic automaton, retaining most of the source body's physical skills but not quite as much of his mental capacity. But he's still plenty tough.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 19 | **HP:** 24 | **Speed:** 7.00 |
| **DX:** 15 | **Will:** 10 | **Move:** 7 |
| **IQ:** 10 | **Per:** 12 | |
| **HT:** 13 | **FP:** N/A | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 11 | **Parry:** 13<br>**Block:** 13 | **DR:** 5/3 |

**Fine Thrusting Broadsword (19):** 3d+3 cutting or 2d+2 impaling. Reach 1.

**Iron Shield Bash (18):** 2d crushing. Reach 1.

***Traits:*** Absolute Direction; Appearance (Hideous); Bloodlust (12); Cannot Learn; Cannot Speak; Combat Reflexes; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Fragile (Unnatural); High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Unliving); Luck; Magic Resistance 3.

***Skills:*** Axe/Mace-18; Brawling-17; Broadsword-19; Camouflage-14; Carousing-13; Climbing-14; Forced Entry-15; Hiking -12; Intimidation-10; Running -12; Shield-18; Stealth-15; Survival (Mountain)-15; Swimming-13; Throwing-16; Tracking-15; Two-Handed Axe/Mace-15; Wrestling-17.

***Class:*** Undead.

***Notes:*** The undead warrior is wearing a heavy mail suit and carrying a medium iron shield (DB 2). He'll kill whoever he's supposed to kill, but otherwise does nothing.

# Dragon

What would a dungeon crawl be without one?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 36 | **HP:** 36 | **Speed:** 7.25 |
| **DX:** 14 | **Will:** 14 | **Move:** 7 (Ground)/14 (Air) |
| **IQ:** 14 | **Per:** 16 | |
| **HT:** 15 | **FP:** 15 | **SM:** +4 |
| **Dodge:** 10 | **Parry:** 11 | **DR:** 6/12 vs. cold-based attacks |

**Bite (16):** 4d+2 impaling. Reach C, 1.

**Breath (16):** 4d-1 burning, but does not start fires. Cone attack, two yards wide by 10 yards long. Costs 2 FP per use.

**Claws, Front (16):** 4d+2 cutting *or* impaling. Reach C-3.

**Claws, Back (14):** 4d+3 cutting *or* impaling. Reach C-3.

**Horn (16):** 4d+2 cutting. Reach C, 1. May also parry!

**Tail (14):** 4d+3 crushing *or* double that for knockback-only damage. Reach C-4, rear hexes only.

**Wings (16):** 4d+2 crushing *or* double that for knockback-only damage. Reach C-4.

***Traits:*** Bad Grip 2; Compulsive Gambling (12); Dark Vision; Discriminatory Hearing; Extra Attack 2; Extra Legs (Four Legs); Flight (Winged); Greed (12); High Pain Threshold; Horizontal; Indomitable; Magery 3; Nictitating Membrane 6; Peripheral Vision; Sadism (12); Temperature Tolerance 6 (-25°F to 120°F); Unfazeable.

***Skills:*** Blind Fighting-15; Brawling-16; Diplomacy-14; Fast-Talk-16; Gambling-18; Innate Attack (Breath)-16; Observation-15; Psychology (Human)-14; Stealth-15; Tactics-14.

***Spells:*** Clumsiness, Command, Fear, Foolishness, Forgetfulness, Fumble, Hide Emotion, Hide Thoughts, Itch, Sense Emotion, Sense Foes, Spasm, all at 15.

***Class:*** Mundane.

***Notes:*** The dragon is more than a little twisted. He likes to torment his prey, psychologically as well as physically, before killing them. If he has the time, he'll use his Psychology and Fast-Talk skills to size up his enemies, then sow discord and taunt his opponents into making mistakes. Nevertheless, he's got an odd sense of honor. If he can be talked into making a wager (and that's not hard; he may even suggest it himself if his opponents look likely to offer him an interesting game), he will honor it.

# Joe the Barbarian

In the years since leaving the dungeon, Joe has become a far more formidable combatant than he was when he faced the dragon. Still, he figures it's just good sense to let somebody else face all those dangers.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 24 | **HP:** 32 | **Speed:** 7.00 |
| **DX:** 14 | **Will:** 12 | **Move:** 8 |
| **IQ:** 12 | **Per:** 14 | |
| **HT:** 16 | **FP:** 16 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 11 | **Parry:** 13<br>**Block:** 12 | **DR:** Various; see below |

**Fine Axe (18):** 4d+5 cutting. Reach 1.

**Fine Longbow (20):** 2d+3 impaling. Acc 3, Range 432/576.

**Shield Bash (16):** 2d+1 crushing. Reach 1.

***Traits:*** Bloodlust (12); Combat Reflexes; Extra Attack 1; Gigantism; Heroic Archer; High Pain Threshold; Impulsiveness (12); Luck; Odious Personal Habit (Unrefined manners); Outdoorsman 4.

***Skills:*** Acting-12; Animal Handling (Equines)-12; Axe/Mace-18; Bow-20; Brawling-16; Camouflage-16; Climbing-14; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-16; First Aid-12; Fishing-18; Hiking-15; Intimidation-12; Lifting-15; Mimicry (Animal Sounds)-14; Naturalist-14; Navigation (Land)-16; Observation-14; Running-15; Shield-16; Stealth-14; Survival (Woodlands)-17; Swimming-16; Tracking-17; Traps-11; Weather Sense-12; Wrestling-14.

***Class:*** Mundane.

***Notes:*** Joe is likely to attack first when the delvers return from the dungeon. He'll target the least apparently wounded adventurers, making sure everyone is slowed by injuries before closing to attack with axe and shield (DB 2). Notable possessions include a fine longbow and 20 arrows, fine-quality axe worth $700, fine-quality scale sleeves and leggings providing DR 4 ($4,200, 21 lbs. and $5,000, 31.5 lbs. respectively) and a fine-quality steel corslet providing DR 6 ($26,000, 52.5 lbs.).

# Marge the Barbarian

Like Joe, Marge is even more dangerous than she used to be and more prudent as well.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ST:** 19 | **HP:** 27 | **Speed:** 7.25 |
| **DX:** 16 | **Will:** 12 | **Move:** 8 |
| **IQ:** 12 | **Per:** 14 | |
| **HT:** 15 | **FP:** 15 | **SM:** +1 |
| **Dodge:** 11 | **Parry:** 15 | **DR:** 4/2 |

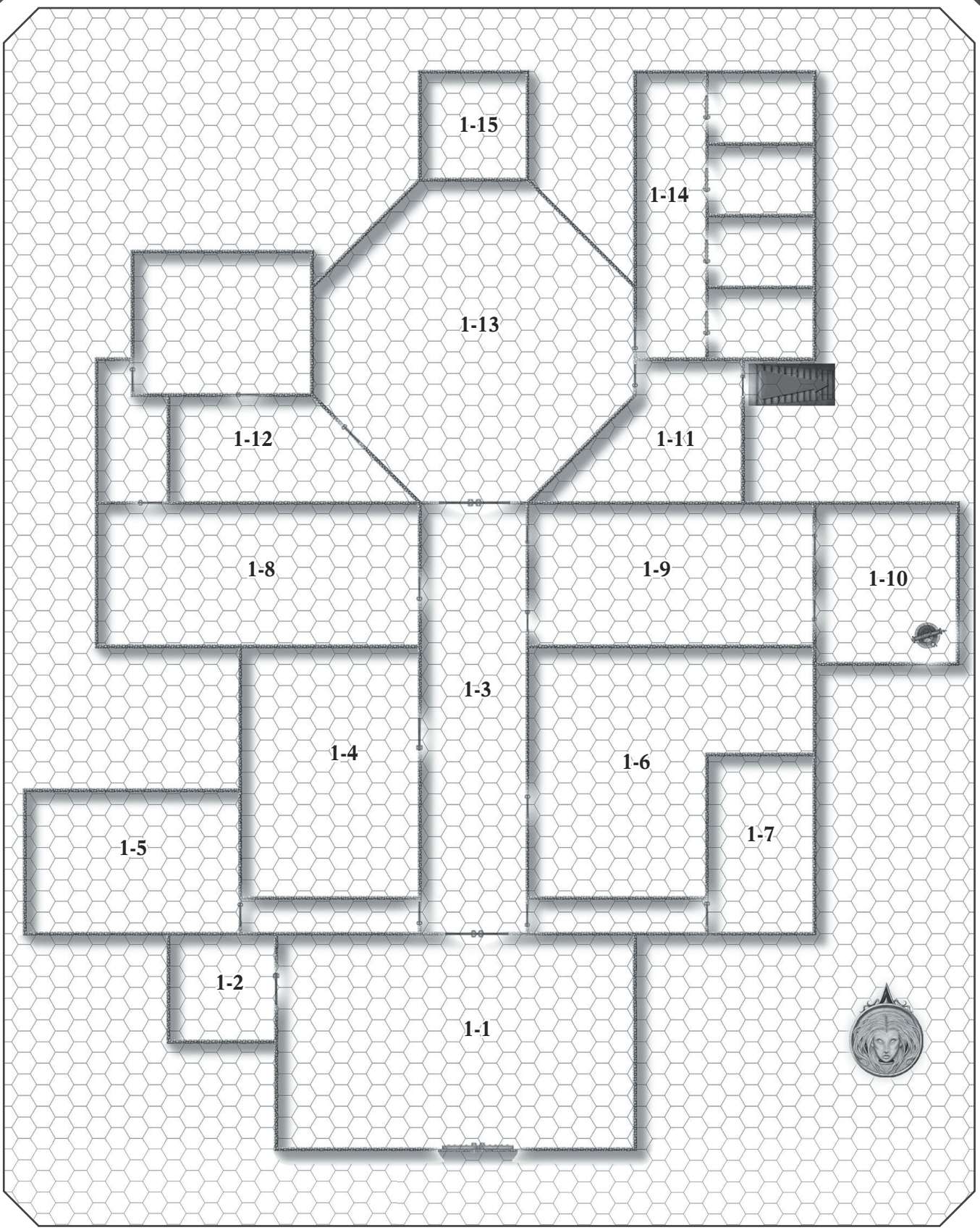
**Fine Broadsword (21):** 3d+10 cutting or 2d+4 crushing. Reach 1.

***Traits:*** Ambidexterity; Bad Temper (12); Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry 1 (Broadsword); Extra Attack 1; Gigantism; High Pain Threshold; Odious Personal Habit (Unrefined manners); Outdoorsman 4; Overconfidence (12); Recovery; Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions); Striking ST 1; Weapon Master (Broadsword).

***Skills:*** Acting-12; Acrobatics-15; Animal Handling (Equines)-12; Brawling-16; Broadsword-21; Camouflage-16; Climbing-15; Fast-Draw (Sword)-18; First Aid-12; Fishing-18; Forced Entry-16; Herb Lore-12; Hiking-14; Intimidation-12; Lifting-14; Mimicry (Animal Sounds)-14; Naturalist-14; Navigation (Land)-16; Running-14; Stealth-16; Survival (Mountain)-17; Swimming-15; Throwing-17; Tracking-17; Weather Sense-12; Wrestling-16.

***Class:*** Mundane

***Notes:*** While Joe is sniping with his bow, Marge is standing between him and their opponents. She's armed with a fine-quality broadsword (worth $2,000 each) in each hand. She's also wearing a suit of fine-quality mail ($12,900, 87 lbs.).




## Map of the Evil Temple

*Scale:* 1 hex = 1 yard.

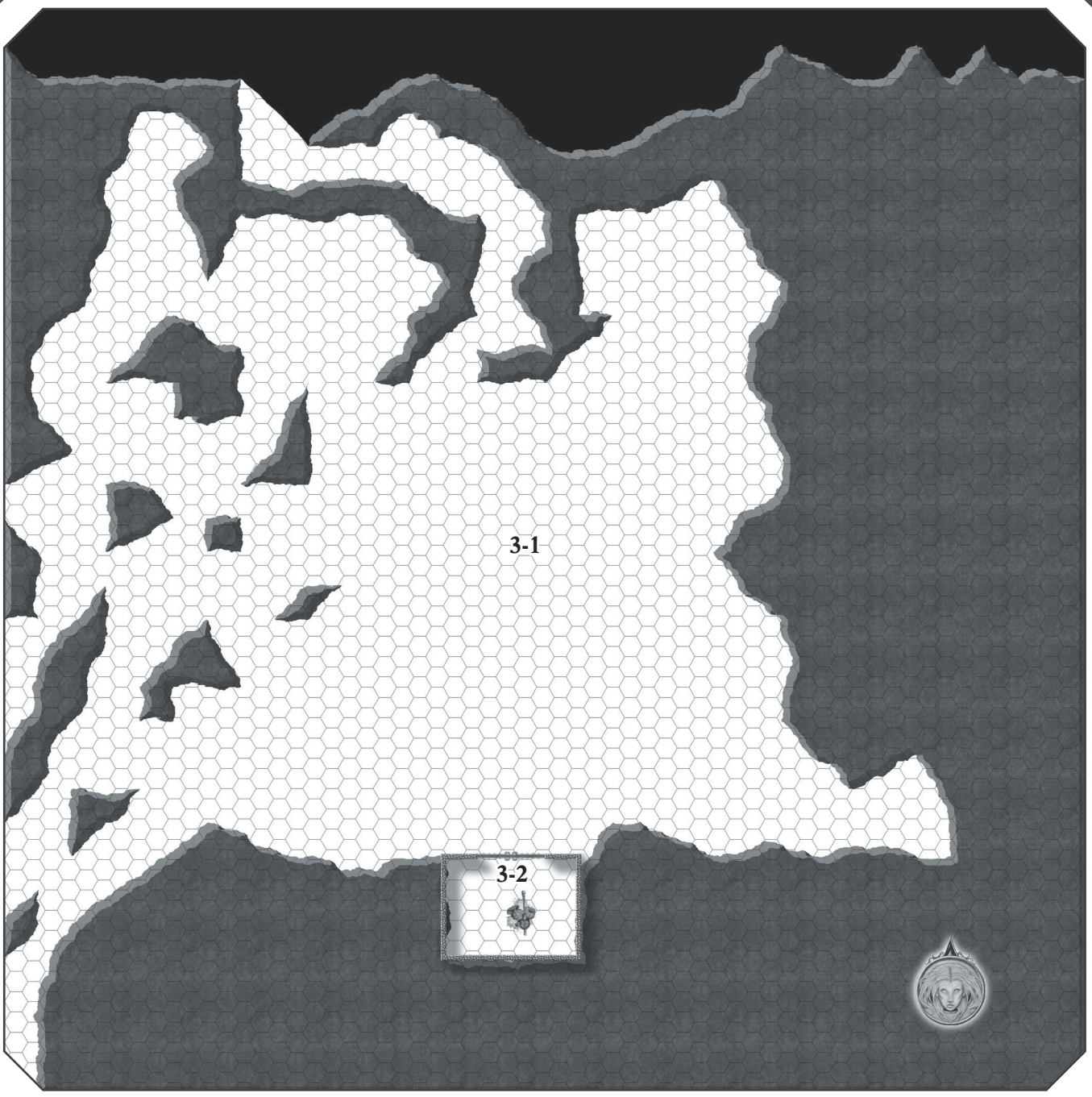



## Map of Catacombs of the Spider Queen

*Scale:* 1 hex = 1 yard.

*The battlefield is a scene of constant chaos. The winner will be the one who controls that chaos, both his own and the enemies.*

*– Napoleon Bonaparte*




## Map of the Vault

*Scale:* 1 hex = 1 yard.

*"In that case," said the man in black, "I challenge you to a battle of wits."*
*Vizzini had to smile. "For the Princess?"*
*"You read my mind."*
*"It just seems that way, I told you. It's merely logic and wisdom. To the death?"*
*"Correct again."*

*– William Goldman,* ***The Princess Bride***

# The Torturer's Apprentice

## by Matt Riggsby

This adventure is appropriate for a group of more than three characters built on a modest number of points. It involves multiple mistaken identities and carrying a human body a considerable distance, so fewer characters would be impractical, and vast cosmic powers would short-circuit most of the challenges, so high-points characters wouldn't be much fun. The adventure also involves lots of lying but not a lot of fighting, so socially functional characters like bards and innkeepers are a must. Sneaky characters like thieves and ninja can also find a lot to do. Since it opens with the heroes in chains and without equipment but doesn't require that the adventurers know one another or work together for any reasons external to the adventure itself, it is well-suited for a one-shot or for the beginning of a campaign.

## Once Upon a Time

Pity poor Yusif al-Lakmah. Yusif was a foundling left by mistake on the back steps of the dungeon (the kitchen door, probably the intended destination, was a bit farther down) of the palace of Emir Khudseen Bey, mercurial ruler of the city of Amanapur. Khudseen Bey is the sort of ruler who orders mass beheadings one minute, then showers surprised visitors with gold the next. Being in a rare moderate mood, he decreed that the child be raised by the man who found him: Idi the executioner.

As the boy grew, Yusif's surprised adoptive father taught him the only trade he knew. Although Yusif had none of Idi's natural talent and dedication to craftsmanship, the foundling became an almost competent executioner, torturer, and jailer. Close enough, in fact, that Idi felt comfortable leaving the dungeons in the hands of his assistant from time to time while he went to visit his sister, who lives in a village some 30 miles distant. Meanwhile, Yusif fell in love. As usual, that's where the trouble began.

While tidying up some loose limbs, Yusif happened to catch a glimpse of Yasmin, the emir's daughter, as she strolled through the courtyard, and was immediately captivated. Alas, as a commoner, an orphan, and a torturer, it would be unthinkable for them to communicate, much less carry on a romantic relationship, but Yusif was determined. He approached Festus Magister, the emir's resident physician and wizard, for assistance. Festus was happy to oblige, in return for appropriate payment. In this case, he asked for a few prisoners to help with his magical research.

This was a price Yusif was more than able to pay. The next time Idi went for a visit with his sister, Yusif picked a few prisoners at random from the many available in the dungeon and sent them along to the wizard's tower. Now he's got a map through the defenses separating the harem from the rest of the palace, keys to a few important doors, and a love potion (Yusif is sure he won't need it and would refuse to use it in any event; Festus was convinced that there was no way Yusif could make his plan to woo Yasmin work without one). But how can he get to someone of whom he's never been within 20 feet to plead his case?

*An adventure of pain, necromancy, and romantic comedy.*

## Part the First: In Which Our Heroes Learn That Love Hurts

The heroes have been arrested for violating one of the emir's whimsical decrees (wearing orange, the favorite color of the emir's deceased mother? Such disrespect!) and are awaiting execution. But Yusif has a way out for them. If they help him win the love of Yasmin, he'll let them go. After all, he's the jailer. Who else would know?

What Yusif needs the adventurers to do is to sneak him into the palace's harem and help him make contact with the princess. The problem, broadly speaking, is that the palace is strictly segregated. Only eunuchs and harem girls are allowed through a monster-guarded maze into the harem. Yusif isn't a harem girl, and becoming a eunuch would defeat the purpose. Even if he had the nerve to pass himself off as a eunuch (which he doesn't) and potentially fight off fierce beasts (which he can't), he would be recognized and stopped before he could even get close. But with a few disguises and the right passwords, a party of brave, worldly dungeon delvers could smuggle him through the guards and into the harem; turnover at the palace is high enough that a few new faces won't be immediate cause for suspicion.

All the heroes have to do is to get him into the harem, carry him around until they find the princess, and keep a lookout for him for as long as it takes for Yusif to present himself and declare his feelings.

By stealing laundry, Yusif has managed to obtain a number of outfits which won't attract too much notice within the palace: no more than two servants' outfits (plain but flowing robes), no more than one guard uniform (oversized pantaloons, a brief vest, a scimitar, and a very large turban), and harem girl outfits (several layers of colorful but translucent veils, blouses, and pantaloons) for everyone else. The servant and harem girl outfits can conceal knives and other small items, but only the guard can carry a sword (or rather, nobody can conceal a sword, and only a guard can carry one openly without looking out of place), and armor is generally out of the question. By strange coincidence, the only clothes which fit the largest, strongest member of the group is a large harem girl outfit. Veils are compulsory only for harem girls, but heroes may be comforted to know that, in this windy city in the desert, it's not unusual for a scarf or other headdress to cover at least part of the face to protect it from blowing sand.

Once Yusif has convinced the heroes to help him (if he doesn't, there's little point in carrying on), they must figure out how they'll get him into the harem. The palace is amply provided with rugs he could be rolled up with, baskets and barrels he could curl up in, and other vessels for the creative. One of the grand festival dishes of Amanapur is a roast ox stuffed with a roast lamb, stuffed in turn with a roast duck, stuffed with a roast chicken stuffed with a baked swallow, which finally is stuffed with a gold-leaf-coated fried almond. Yusif isn't much bigger than a whole roast lamb if he curls up, and it is entirely possible that an oxladukhenallowmond is being prepared in the kitchen at that very moment. Depending on what they carry him in, the heroes may be able to whisper back and forth with Yusif, or might only be able to communicate with a series of coded knocks (one for yes, two for no . . .).

## *The Route*

Yusif can also outline the path the heroes must take. The palace is shaped like a capital C made of five squares. (A map to help the GM – and suitable as a player handout – is on p. 125.) Each square serves a particular purpose and is connected to one or two of its neighbors by guarded gateways.

The adventurers are currently in the square at the top right, a series of rooms around what is called the "service courtyard." This section of the palace houses the dungeon, the main kitchens, the main laundries, stables, and storerooms.

A gateway connects the service courtyard to the adjacent square (at the upper left of the C), the public courtyard. The public courtyard is where petitioners wait for an audience with the emir, tradesmen come to sell or simply deliver their wares, and bodies of the emir's troops who serve as the city's police go in and out of the palace. It is, in short, the front entrance and waiting room of the palace.

The palace's main gate is at the center top of the square. The public courtyard connects to the "forest of the throne," a many-pillared room where the emir holds court at the center left of the C, which in turn connects to the semi-private "citadel of the pen," an area of courtiers' apartments and offices at the lower left of the C. That, finally, connects to the harem, at the bottom right of the C.

The palace is equipped with a tower (occupied by Festus Magister) at the very upper left of the C, just off the public courtyard, and another (occupied by the private apartments of the emir) at the lower right, just off the harem. The heroes must make their way around the C and into the harem, with Yusif in whatever container he happens to be in. Simple? Sure it is.

## *Two Dinars!*

No sooner do the heroes leave the dungeon (with Yusif presumably in tow) than an elderly servant woman runs up to them and starts shouting at one of the adventurers with a covered face. The near-sighted, hard-of-hearing old lady is convinced that the hero, who happens to be wearing a distinctive outfit, is someone she loaned some money to a few weeks ago, and she wants it back. The sum isn't huge, but it is more than pocket change, and in any case, the heroes don't have any money on them (Yusif doesn't either; crime may not pay, but neither does punishment). The adventurers may distract or evade her (for example, losing her in a crowd, giving her a purse full of pebbles which she won't count until later), but only temporarily. Unless they manage to pay her off, she will reappear from time to time, demanding her money in the same shrill tones.

## I Am Outta Here

So why shouldn't the prospective heroes of this piece just stuff Yusif in the nearest iron maiden and take their leave? For one thing, there are any valuable possessions they once had. Those are now under lock and key somewhere else in the palace, and they need Yusif alive and cooperative to get them back (which they certainly will, should everyone survive, but not a moment before they've completed the proposed mission; Yusif isn't a *complete* idiot). Second, getting out of the palace isn't as easy as it sounds. The doors to the dungeon are locked on *both* sides, requiring an outside guard to unlock them. Again, they need Yusif to see the light of day. To sweeten the pot, Yusif can promise to *try* to get them a more substantial reward, but he and the princess may have to leave the palace and live the life of paupers once they declare their love for one another, so he can't make guarantees.

And they shouldn't even try to beat Yusif into submission to get his cooperation. He's driven by True Love, making him nearly impervious to coercion. Just as importantly, he is, despite a lack of natural aptitude, a trained torturer and will be more appalled at the adventurers' poor technique than their brutality. He might even offer some pointers.

## Pass the Parcel

Once they get out of the service courtyard, the heroes must cross the public courtyard. And today, it's crowded. A party of religious pilgrims has come to ask the emir's blessings before setting out (and has brought their camels with them), scores of hopeful merchants and tradesmen have brought bundles of wares to try to sell to the notoriously open-handed emir, a minor nobleman has brought a pair of elephants with him as a gift for the emir in hopes of influencing him, and apparently a lot of people are dissatisfied with the city's lesser judges and have come to appeal to the emir for new decisions on their cases. Getting through the dense crowd with a 150+ pound bundle of Yusif won't be easy.

And it doesn't get any easier when the elephants start acting up and the people closest to them try to scatter. In the subsequent confusion and jostling, it's almost inevitable that the heroes will drop Yusif. When they do, they'll first have to find the bundle, box, or roast ox he's wrapped up in. And after they've done that, perhaps after they get out of the public courtyard and into the forest of the throne, they'll have to realize that they've picked up the wrong bundle, go back into the crowd, and exchange their bundle for the one he's actually in. Without, of course, giving anything away.

This isn't, by the way, an opportunity for the adventurers to escape. The guards have closed the gates to keep the courtyard from being *more* crowded, so there's no way out just now.

## Peel Me a Grape!

The forest of the throne is far less densely packed than the public courtyard. Lit by skylights but kept cool by a tiered roof held far overhead by countless pillars, this is the room where the emir holds court. At this very moment, he sits on a pile of cushions at the far end of the chamber, doing the business of government while scribes copy letters and examine records, courtiers await the emir's convenience, commoners stand in line awaiting a hearing, and guards police the proceedings. Although the room is fairly quiet, with most people speaking in whispers, there are enough people going here and there that the adventurers shouldn't be conspicuous.

Shouldn't, that is, if the biggest, strongest adventurer weren't wearing an outfit which belongs to the emir's favorite wife. When the heroes get about half-way across the room, the emir calls on them to halt. When they've had a moment to absorb the shock, the emir calls his "dear Zukelia" over to sprinkle rosewater over his brow. It may not be clear just who he's talking to, but since the emir will keep talking to "Zukelia" if a group of harem girl-clad heroes approach him, it should be easy to figure out.

Although the emir is relatively liberal, letting the women of the harem walk around the palace if accompanied by a guard, he's not about to let one be unveiled in public, so "Zukelia" has nothing to fear there. However, the emir will want her to stay close, feed him the occasional tidbit from nearby trays of sweets, and perhaps cuddle a bit.

Then, growing tired of work, he'll ask "her" to sing for him. The real Zukelia is an accomplished player of the oud (a sort of lute) and a reasonably good alto. It seems unlikely that the adventurer dressed as Zukelia is either. A smart adventurer might come up with a plausible excuse for "Zukelia" not to sing (she has a sore throat, she's saving her voice for a grand performance tonight, etc.). If that happens, the emir will indulgently accept the excuse and send "her," with a parting affectionate swat on the rear, off to the harem to rest.

### If All Else Fails

At some point, despite their best efforts, the adventurers may be unable to maintain their disguises or to keep Yusif hidden. If that happens, chaos erupts. Any guards in the vicinity when the adventurers are unmasked will attempt to capture them and any bystanders around at the moment can identify them to other pursuers, but the heroes will have to take to their heels and stay ahead of the guards until they can think of something else to do. Word of a problem will make its way to the palace gates faster than the adventurers possibly can, and they'll end up locked in. There are alternate routes out of the palace, but they can be problematic. If some bright player thinks of heading for the harem, which will keep non-eunuch guards from following, skip to *Follow That Princess!,* pp. 120-121.

## Back in My Day

The guard post between the citadel of the pen and the harem is a post of considerable honor among the harem guards. It is held, with great dignity and ceremony, by Fuad, the most senior of the eunuchs. Fuad is 87 years old, and he's seen it all. He's not impressed by newfangled ways, and he has more than a tendency to ramble. Consequently, an attempt to get into the harem will go something like this:

*Fuad:* What's the password?

*Adventurer:* The wind blows sand through the tower.

*Fuad:* Oh, we don't get sand blowing through the tower like we used to. Why, back in the Year of the Angry Yak, there was a sandstorm that lasted for a whole month and you couldn't take a bite without grinding your teeth. Filled the tower, it did. We had to get out shovels to clear out the first three stories. Sent up 10 men to work from the top down and 20 more from the bottom up. Now what did you say you wanted?

*Adventurer:* Um . . . I said, the wind blows sand through the tower!

*Fuad:* Why, that's no kind of password! Back in my day, I can tell you we had . . .

*Adventurer:* Open the door, you fool!

*Fuad:* That's not even a good insult! The old emir, gods elevate his soul to the ninth heaven, he knew how to talk down to people. Why, he'd call you the blasphemous son of a flea on an ill-bred outcast dog as soon as look at you . . .

Conspicuous shouting can continue in this vein for quite some time. The way to get past Fuad is for "Zukelia" to get in his face and shout the password at him. He'll still ramble on as he opens the gate to the harem section of the palace, but he'll recognize Zukelia if "she" gets close enough and acts accordingly.

### *Cloak and Dagger*

To further complicate matters, and set up more problems for Part II, someone bumps into one of the adventurers dressed as a servant and press something into his hands. A cloth-wrapped bundle contains a note and a sheathed dagger. The note simply reads "Tonight!" The blade of the dagger is covered with an ominous oily liquid. The adventurer has been mistaken for an assassin (Yusif has terrible, terrible luck in disguises). The hilt of the dagger is marked with a curious double-spiral pattern; the note is signed with the same symbol. An expert in conspiracies or hidden lore will recognize it at the symbol of the Halvavin, the Order of Halva Eaters, a dreaded secret society noted for their fondness for sweets.

## *A-Maze-Ing*

Between the citadel of the pen and the harem is a maze full of monsters (any complicated map will do, like the unmarked one for *The Labyrinth of Five Essences,* p. 103, but the layout is largely irrelevant as long as Yusif has his map). Rather than ravening beasts, the monsters are there doing a job, as they have for time immemorial for the emirs of Amanapur. The monsters ask riddles of passers-by, and eat those who answer incorrectly. They do recognize the emir and his immediate family and will let them pass, but the monsters aren't going to be fooled by disguises. On the other hand, they don't really care who tries to get through the maze. It's simple: answer the riddle and pass, or fail and get eaten.

To get to the harem, the heroes must pass by these monsters in widely separated parts of the maze:

A peshkali (***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons,*** p. 25).

Two siege beasts (***Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 25).

A trio of fabulously dressed as-Sharak (***Dungeon Fantasy 2,*** p. 21), including one Agni, one Prithvi, and one Vayu.

Each monster or set of monsters has a suitably folkloristic riddle. The GM may make these easy or difficult as suitable to the players, though "what have I got in my pockets?" is right out. All of the monsters are unwilling to negotiate, but they *can* be talked into accepting the adventurers' answer if they're suitably convincing; roll a Quick Contest between Fast-Talk and the monster's Will if a suitable rationalization is offered. Once past the monsters, the delvers find themselves in front of the door to the harem, for which Yusif has the key.

Why are the monsters working for the emirs? Nobody really knows, and neither the monsters nor the emirs care to discuss their business arrangements.

## *Follow That Princess!*

Finally, the adventurers find themselves in the harem. Nothing stands between the heroes and their goal . . . except for knowing where the princess is. Yusif has never been in the harem, so he doesn't know the layout, and none of the eunuchs or harem girls know exactly where the princess is. At every room they enter, they're sent on to the next. ("She was just in the garden, but she was talking about going to read in the library.")

Unlike the outer parts of the palace, though, new additions to the harem are uncommon, and the women there will be curious about any newcomers, and why "Zukelia" isn't speaking. The longer the heroes stay in the harem, the more likely it is that they'll arouse suspicion; for each room they go into, make a roll against Fast-Talk, at a cumulative -1 per room, to gracefully back out before someone becomes insistent that the heroes identify themselves. With any luck, the adventurers will figure out that the princess is working her way around the harem in the direction they've been going, and by running around the harem in the opposite direction, they're more likely to intercept her before it's too late.

They can catch up with her in the harem's baths, a low-tech swimming pool and spa. Surrounded by damp, largely unclad women doing one another's hair (and surrounded by a number of guards, reminding them that this is a place where trespassers are messily executed), they can try to figure out how to get Yusif into a safely secluded spot with the princess.

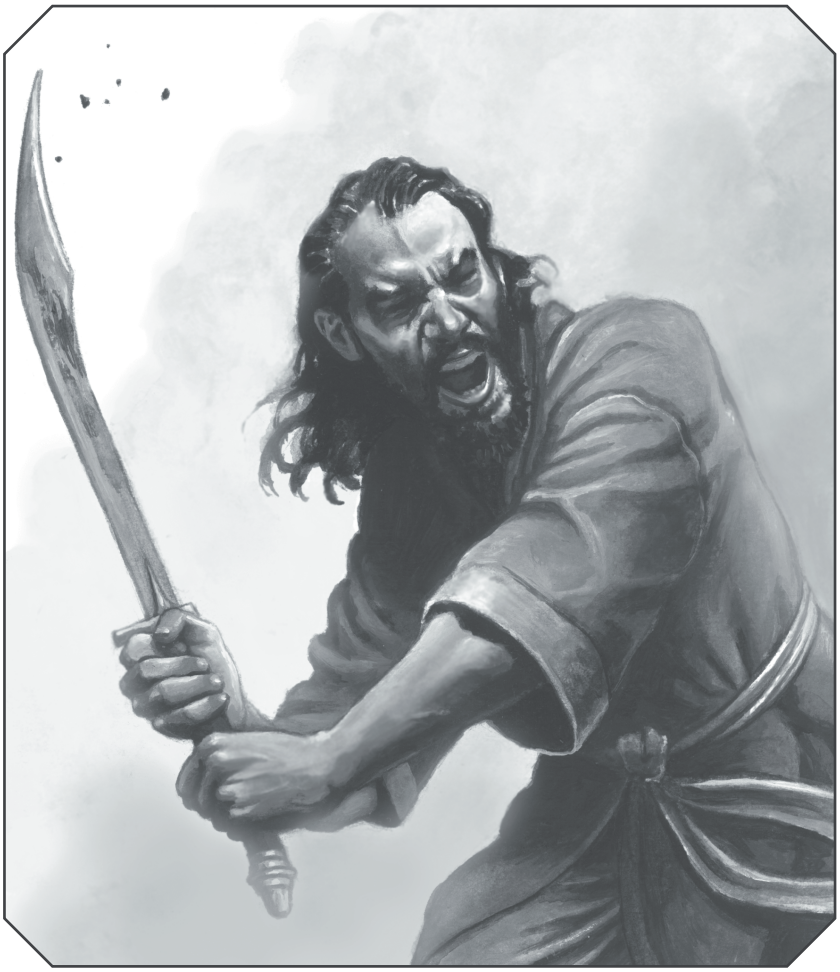
There are a few major obstacles to the adventurers' objective. First, the women in the baths are just as inquisitive as elsewhere in the harem. They'll be particularly suspicious if the heroes dressed as harem girls don't take off their veils and relax for a while; they'll also extend several invitations to swim. Female delvers, of course, will be able to get along just fine here; others, not so much. Second, although Yasmin, at the center of a knot of servants and other ladies, is close at hand, she seems disinclined to go anywhere or disengage from her friends.

Third, after a minute or two, the heroes will hear a voice behind them pointedly demanding, "What are you doing in my dress!" The real Zukelia has entered the baths and spots the one wearing one of her favorite outfits. Discovery is now inevitable. When it becomes clear that something is up, the guards become very interested, if not downright hostile, and it may be time for a frantic chase scene. Yusif, realizing that this is as close as he's going to get, struggles out of his bundle to help. And when Yasmin finds that a group of prisoners has been carting around the assistant torturer wrapped up in a basket (or rug or barrel or, by now, rather cold roast ox), she's furious. At the adventurers. How dare they treat her beloved so poorly! He could have smothered inside that basket/rug/well-cooked but unappetizingly cold carcass! If they can calm her down, perhaps by throwing Yusif at her, the story quickly becomes clear: while walking through the courtyard one day, she spied a handsome young man tidying up some loose limbs . . . and Festus Magister's love potion is obviously unnecessary, as Yusif expected.

*Come live with me, and be my Love;*
*And we will all the pleasures prove.*
*– Christopher Marlowe*

Given a few minutes, Yasmin can calm things down, calling off the guards and quieting the screaming harem girls. She's the princess, so people will listen to her, and the romance of the situation gives her the sympathy of her fellow harem inmates. As long as the heroes haven't led a chase back out into the more public parts of the palace or chopped up too many guards, the situation can be contained. The party has Yasmin's gratitude (and Yusif's, for what it's worth) and tentative support from the rest of the harem, though Zukelia is a bit miffed. Everyone can live happily ever after.

For a few minutes. Until Yasmin's favorite elderly servant runs in and announces, "The father of the princess's betrothed is arriving!"



# Part the Second: In Which a Funny Thing Happens to the Heroes on the Way to the Harem

For the past several months, the emir has been carrying on negotiations with the fierce desert chieftain Sheikh Yabutti. The sheikh and the emir exchanged hostages, one of Khudseen's brothers for one of the sheikh's sons (Rakhim al-Nayat al-'Ang, his sixth and youngest). Now, a long-term treaty has tentatively been concluded. Sheikh Yabutti is on his way to Amanapur and, after a lavish feast, the treaty is to be formalized by Yabutti's son, the hostage, being engaged to Yasmin. Yasmin, however, will refuse the marriage.

To this, Yusif adds what he calls "the bad news." Since the sheikh's son was, technically, a prisoner, he ended up in the dungeons of the emir's palace with no ceremony or fanfare. Not knowing who the prisoner was, Yusif sent him along for Festus Magister's magical experiments. Not only is an engagement standing between Yusif and Yasmin's happiness (and between the heroes and the door), Rakhim's confinement could lead to a serious diplomatic incident.

Yusif again appeals to his erstwhile companions for aid. Without their assistance, he says, Yasmin will not know happiness and the city will be threatened (not so much a problem if the heroes aren't from the area, but a considerable issue if they are). He won't be so crass as to mention that if Yasmin is exposed, there will be no one to shield the adventurers from the emir's considerable wrath, but the party should be smart enough to figure that out. What they need from the adventurers, he and Yasmin decide, is assistance recovering Rakhim and keeping up appearances until the betrothal ceremony is complete. After Sheikh Yabutti has returned to his desert home, Yusif and Yasmin can make a quiet escape.

While Yusif helps Yasmin pack some veils for their planned flight and exile, the adventurers are given the job of visiting Festus Magister's tower, finding Rakhim, and escorting him back to the dungeon. They should try to convince him that Yusif had to move the prisoners to the wizard's tower while the dungeon was being cleaned, and now that that's done, he can move back. Before they go, they can, if they desire, change clothes. They can find enough eunuch guard and eunuch servant outfits for everyone. Yusif is also happy to recover the heroes' gear at this point, although it may take some time. He has to talk to the sergeant of the guard, who was responsible for depositing their belongings with the quartermaster. Yusif has little idea how long it'll take, but in any event it will be a matter of hours.

## *Goodnight, Sweet Prince*

Getting into the wizard's tower won't be a big problem. Servants are in and out of every place in the palace all day and night, bringing in food, sweeping the floors, washing this and that, taking away rubbish, and so on. Getting all the way up to Festus Magister's chambers and laboratory is somewhat more difficult. Festus doesn't like being disturbed, and most servants are sensibly terrified of the potentially hazardous nature of most of the items in the lab. Festus reacts to most of the adventurers with barely suppressed annoyance and condescension, but he will take aside for a moment the one contacted by the Halvavin (see *Cloak and Dagger,* p. 120). Festus tells him "It shall be at the third horn. Hakim and Aref are on their guard, but make sure that Mansoor knows as well.

Now be on your way!" If the hero indicates that he has no idea what the magician is talking about, Festus will give him a long, hard look and send him away anyway, having marked him as a problem. The unfortunate adventurer will be attacked by lone assassins with poisoned daggers up to three times, if he makes it that long, before dinner.

More difficult than getting into the tower will be getting Rakhim out without Festus knowing, since the magician keeps track of his zombies. What Yusif didn't know is that Festus Magister knew about the impending treaty far in advance and recognized Rakhim when he was delivered. Festus killed him and reanimated him as a zombie. He's working on a plot to take over both Amanapur and the desert tribes, using the zombie Rakhim as a pawn and his fellow members of the Halvavin as hired killers. About the only things the heroes have going for them are that zombie-Rakhim will take simple orders from just about anyone, the body is still fresh so he looks unhealthy but not notably dead or rotten to the casual glance (long term viewing or close inspection will raise suspicions, though; several parts have been cut off and stuck back on with wax), and that if they get him out of the tower, Festus Magister can't make a huge fuss about it for fear of attracting suspicion to himself as well. If they can distract Festus long enough to get a shambling prince out of the tower, they've got breathing room.

## The Plot, Such As It Is

Festus Magister has long wanted to seize power, but lacked the means until Yusif delivered Rakhim to him. Once the betrothal is formalized, for which Rakhim doesn't actually have to say anything, he plans to instigate a crisis, wipe out Amanapur's ruling class, and seize power through zombie-Rakhim, claiming that the young man has come down with a terrible illness and Festus is speaking for him. But while he's got a not-very-bright zombie horde ready to roll to wipe out most of the kingdom's aristocracy (he's intending to release them the moment the betrothal happens, but will panic and send them in in the event of any kind of major commotion, such as the adventurers being caught trying to smuggle Yasmin out of the palace), he wants to be doubly sure he gets Khudseen Bey, so for that he's engaged assassins.

Festus Magister is a senior member of the Halvavin and has several assassins to help him with his plan. All are dressed in similar garments. One of the adventurers has been given one of their outfits, which is why he's been mistaken for an assassin himself. The beliefs of the Halvavin consist mostly of being mystical and obscure for their own sake (in ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds*** parlance, they're a hermetic cabal), but their goals are secrecy and the acquisition of power.

### *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*

Once they get to the public courtyard, they run into more tumult. Sheikh Yabutti has arrived. The heroes can try to head for cover, but since Rakhim is dressed in his distinctive desert nomad garb and any number of people around the palace recognize him (Yusif, who doesn't get out much, is in the minority), it will be very difficult to keep him hidden. And if he's found, people will want to bring him forward to greet his father. This isn't as scary as it sounds, if the heroes play their cards right. Rakhim can shamble around and moan a bit. In the noise of the crowd, his father wouldn't be able to make out his words anyway, and if the heroes have made it this far, they're probably smart enough to think of the "Rakhim is ill" ploy on their own, letting them whisk the young man away.

For the next few hours, the challenge to the adventurers is to keep Rakhim on the move so that no one can get too close a look at him. "He's not feeling well" will only go so far, and Festus didn't have the chance to disguise his more visible joins. They might briefly stash him in a spare wardrobe or chest, but inevitably someone will appear needing something out of that container, and the adventurers will have to explain what Rakhim is doing in there. Well-wishers will want to wish Rakhim well on his engagement, the politically ambitious will want to get their foot in the door with the next generation of leadership, masters of ceremonies will want to be sure he knows what he needs to do tonight, and so on. They can *not* stash him in the harem, no matter how much Yasmin would be willing to help. Disguising Rakhim as a eunuch is difficult at best, and a dead body shambling around the womens' gardens and baths is probably more than Yasmin would be able to keep under wraps.

Everyone of any importance in and around Amanapur attends the celebratory dinner that evening to announce the treaty and the betrothal of Yasmin to Rakhim. With enough Fast-Talk and Savoir-Faire rolls, the heroes can stick close to Rakhim and act as his servants for the evening, keeping most other people at bay; they can even arrange to get him dressed in his elaborate robes for the evening. The seating plan is also reasonably favorable. The emir and several of his wives have a low table where the emir had been holding court earlier that day, the sheikh and a handful of his people have a separate table to the emir's left, and Yasmin and Rakhim have a table to themselves to his right, all set with vast candelabras to provide enough light to properly show off the jeweled garments everyone is wearing. They're on display, but won't be approached closely. The rest of the room is filled with other low tables and over a hundred dignitaries, with servants circulating throughout with vast trays of saffron-colored rice, spiced eggplant, dates and other fruit, and remarkable quantities of roast animals stuffed into other roast animals.

Between the heat of the candles and general wear and tear, Rakhim is also going to have trouble holding himself together. Festus Magister didn't have time to properly reinforce Rakhim's sealing-wax joins. The more he moves, and the hotter the room gets, the greater the chance something will fall off. The food is also a problem. Although he won't digest, Rakhim can be told to eat the food put in front of him. However, he's also been opened up and sealed closed across the belly, so if he eats and drinks too much, he may split open, or at least start leaking copiously. The more exertion zombie-Rakhim has been through that day, the greater the chance that he'll start falling apart.

*When loving lovers love,*
*They loving love on wings of gold.*
*In loving love we fly above.*

*– Pearl Forrester,*
*in **Mystery Science Theater 3000** #822*

As the meal progresses, the heroes may notice that several servants dressed identically to the one contacted by the Halvavin are staying close to the emir. They circulate through the diners, pouring drinks and clearing away dishes, but move in ever-tightening circles near the emir's table. A fanfare is blown at the beginning of the meal and a second when a grand celebratory elphoxladukhenallowmond is brought into the room. Just after that, one of the identically dressed servants whispers into the ear of the "Halvavin" adventurer, "Salah, when do we strike?" The heroes could try to hustle him into a dark corner and beat a confession out of him (indeed, they could try that as soon as they figure out that the assassins are all dressed the same), but sooner or later they'd have to explain their own presence to somebody.

If the heroes don't attempt to stop the assassins (or if they somehow manage to covertly dispose of all of the assassins) and Rakhim hasn't fallen apart by then, the emir rises to announce the betrothal of his daughter. After brief preamble about friendship between the people of the city and the people of the desert, his brotherly love for Sheikh Yabutti, and so forth, he formally declares Rakhim's intention to marry his daughter.

He orders Rakhim to arise and make the traditional ritual gestures which will make the betrothal official: bow to the sheikh to show his respect, to the emir himself to show his obedience to his new father-in-law, and to Yasmin to show his love. On the third bow, the horns blow again, the assassins (if any are left) spring into action, three dozen zombies attack (treat them as horde zombies, ***GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons,*** p. 24, but with IQ 6 and without the infectious attack), and Rakhim's head falls off. Best of luck to heroes who try to sort things out.

### *After the Deluge*

Sooner or later, the palace is attacked by Festus Magister's zombie horde. Clever adventurers will realize that saving the emir's life can only work in their favor. That's particularly the case at the betrothal, when the eunuch guards around the room will be prevented from reaching the emir by the screaming crowd of revelers shocked by the disintegrating desert prince and incoming angry corpses. Besides, combat-oriented adventurers should be spoiling for a fight by that point; the GM may as well give it to them.

Once the chaos is over, the heroes are still probably going to have to explain themselves, particularly when Yasmin declares her love (as she most certainly will) for the torturer's apprentice. The emir can't very well have his daughter's head chopped off, but he'd be more than willing to have anyone else connected with the enterprise slowly tortured to death, and never mind the logistics of who's going to do that while Idi is away and Yusif is the only professional in that area in easy reach. Moreover, the sheikh is upset at just about everyone, and the emir needs some way of appeasing him or risk a war. If the adventurers were involved in saving the emir's life, they may be able to talk their way out of execution with some favorable Influence rolls, but it would be nearly impossible to avoid acquiring the sheikh as an Enemy.

Very clever heroes, however, might remember that Yusif still has a potion which will make the person who takes it love him. Festus Magister is a professional, after all, and is precise about his meanings; it's a love potion, not a lust potion. Slipping that to the emir will get him firmly on Yusif's side, and therefore the party's side, but leave the problem of the sheikh. Getting it to the sheikh would give them a way out of both problems. Sheikh Yabutti would be willing, and indeed eager, to adopt Yusif and marry him to Yasmin. This gives Yusif sufficient leverage to beg clemency for any heroes who assisted him, who thereby get out of it alive.

But not necessarily scot-free. If the GM is inclined to add a coda, someone will note that they're still guilty of whatever crime landed them in the dungeon to begin with. If so, the emir commutes their sentence to a week's imprisonment, to be spent eating oxladukhenallowmond while restrained on lovely carpets by chains of gold (which they may keep when they are released). After several days of this most unusual punishment, Idi returns while Yusif is off being prepared for his lavish wedding to Yasmin. Seeing his dungeon turned into a pleasure palace, he'll demand to know what's going on. Needless to say, whatever the adventurers tell him, he won't believe it.

## Important Characters

These are suggested stats for many of the important figures of the adventure, but the GM may adjust them as necessary.

### *Emir Khudseen Bey*

**ST** 10; **DX** 10; **IQ** 12; **HT** 11.
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10; Will 12; Per 12; FP 11.
Basic Speed 5.25; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8.

***Advantages/Disadvantages:*** Bad Temper (9); Compulsive Generosity (9); Status 4; Very Wealthy.

***Skills:*** Administration-13; Bow-9; Falconry-12; Intimidation-15; Law (Amanapur)-12; Leadership-15; Riding (Horse)-11.

## *Festus Magister*

Calling him the Grand Vizier would make it too obvious that he was the villain of the piece, but he's still the ruler's chief advisor, scheming to take power for himself.

**ST** 10; **DX** 10; **IQ** 14; **HT** 10.
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10; Will 14; Per 14; FP 10.
Basic Speed 5.00; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8.

***Advantages/Disadvantages:*** Callous; Magery 3; Status 3; Wealthy.
***Skills:*** Alchemy-12; Esoteric Medicine-12; Fast-Talk-13; First Aid-16; Fortune-Telling (Astrology)-13; Herb Lore-12; Intimidation-15; Law (Amanapur)-12; Naturalist-12; Physician-14; Poisons-14; Politics-13.
***Spells:*** Affect Spirits-15; Air Jet-15; Air Vortex-15; Animate Shadow-15; Apportation-15; Banish-15; Body of Air-15; Burning Death-14; Clouds-15; Complex Illusion-15; Continual Light-15; Control Zombie-15; Create Air-15; Create Fire-15; Create Water-15; Darkness-15; Death Vision-15; Decay-15; Dehydrate-15; Destroy Water-15; Entrap Spirit-15; Evisceration-14; Fear-15; Frost-15; Hail-15; Haste-15; Heat-15; Hinder-15; Ignite Fire-15; Lend Energy-15; Lend Vitality-15; Light-15; Lightning-15; Materialize-15; Minor Healing-15; No-Smell-15; Odor-15; Perfect Illusion-15; Pestilence-15; Phantom-14; Purify Air-15; Purify Water-15; Rain-15; Repel Spirits-15; Seek Water-15; Sense Emotion-15; Sense Foes-15; Sense Spirit-15; Shape Air-15; Shape Darkness-15; Shape Fire-15; Shocking Touch-15; Sickness-15; Simple Illusion-15; Skull-Spirit-15; Snow-15; Solidify-15; Soul Jar-14; Sound-15; Steal Energy-15; Steal Vitality-15; Storm-15; Summon Spirit-15; Test Food-15; Turn Spirit-15; Turn Zombie-15; Warm-15; Wind-15; Windstorm-15; Zombie-15.

## *Yasmin*

Small and pretty, Yasmin has nevertheless learned some lessons about making people do what she wants. When she stamps her little foot, people listen.

**ST** 9; **DX** 10; **IQ** 11; **HT** 9.
Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9; Will 11; Per 11; FP 9.
Basic Speed 4.75; Basic Move 4; Dodge 7.

***Advantages/Disadvantages:*** Destiny (Be happy with Yusif); Status 3; Very Beautiful; Wealthy.
***Skills:*** Administration-12; Artist (Calligraphy)-11; Gardening-11; Intimidation-14; Leadership-10; Poetry-11; Sewing-11; Singing-10; Strategy-12; Swimming-10.

## *Yusif*

**ST** 11; **DX** 11; **IQ** 10; **HT** 10.
Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11; Will 10; Per 10; FP 10. Basic Speed 5.25; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 9 (Wrestling).

***Advantages/Disadvantages:*** Bad Sight (Nearsighted); Confused (12); Destiny (Find happiness with Yasmin); Fearlessness 3; Ham-Fisted 1; Handsome; Serendipity 1; Social Stigma (Executioner).
***Skills:*** First Aid-10; Interrogation-11; Intimidation-9; Physiology-9; Professional Skill (Torturer)-12; Savoir-Faire (Servant)-12; Wrestling-12.

## *Eunuch Guard*

Except for Fuad, who is hardly combat-effective, the eunuch guards are large and tough.

**ST** 14; **DX** 12; **IQ** 10; **HT** 12.
Damage 1d/2d; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14; Will 10; Per 10; FP 12.
Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6; Dodge 10; Parry 9 (Broadsword).

***Advantages/Disadvantages:*** Bad Sight (Nearsighted).
***Quirks:*** Neutered.
***Skills:*** Broadsword-14; Savoir-Faire (Military)-11; Soldier-12.

## *Halvavin Assassin*

The Halvavin assassins carry fine-quality knives coated with a slow but powerful poison. If an attack penetrates DR, roll against HT-5. The poison does 1d additional damage over the next hour, and an additional 1d after an additional hour for every point by which the HT roll is missed (missing the roll by 4 would mean 5d damage over 5 hours). HT rolls for additional attacks are at a cumulative +3, and the poison will wear off the knife after three or four attacks, whether they penetrate DR or not. A successful Physician roll for each hour the poison is in effect will negate that hour's damage.

**ST** 11; **DX** 12; **IQ** 10; **HT** 10.
Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11; Will 10; Per 10; FP 10.
Basic Speed 5.50; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 8 (Knife).

***Advantages/Disadvantages:*** Fanaticism (Order of Halva Eaters).
***Skills:*** Disguise-10; Holdout-12; Knife-13; Savoir-Faire (Servant)-11; Stealth-12.

## What's the Point?

After the adventure, heroes should get at least two character points for each of the following:

- Surviving, safely delivering Yusif to Yasmin.
- Keeping Rakhim's secret until circumstances require him to fall apart.
- Saving the emir.
- Keeping the peace between Amanapur and Sheikh Yabutti.

In addition, the first adventurer to observe that they are in Khudseen Bey's company deserves a point, as are the first to realize that, as court physician, Festus Magister is the doc of the bey, the first one to sing lyrics from K.C. and the Sunshine Band, and anyone who intelligibly claims that the sheikh's sixth son is sick.

Public Courtyard

Service Courtyard

Forest of the Throne

Layout of the Palace



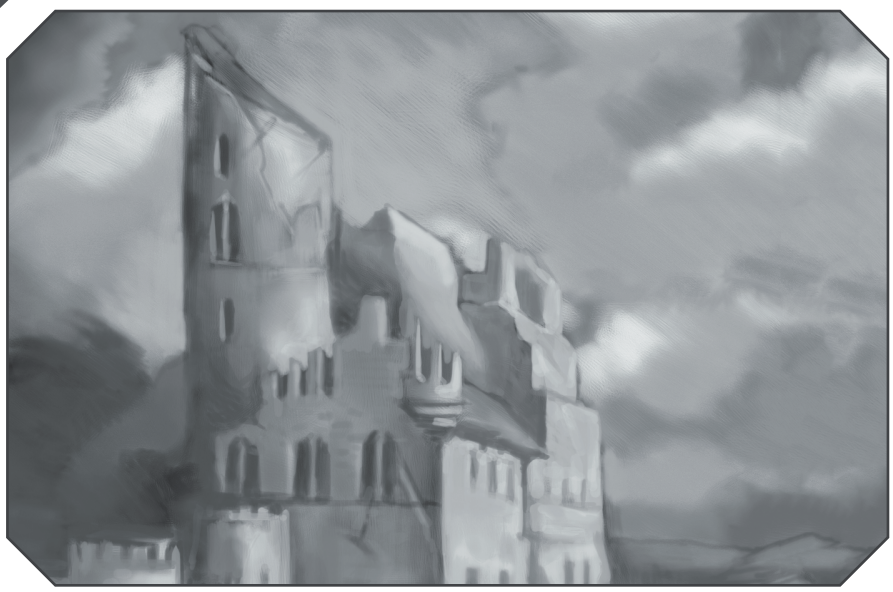
Citadel of the Pen

Maze and Harem

# Index


!Zaaak'kee, 57.
Administrative Rank advantage, 90.
Advantages, *clerical,* 89-92; *magic,* 72-74.
Adventure outlines, *Labyrinth of Five Essences,* 97-103; *Search for Ed,* 104; *Torturer's Apprentice*, 117-125; *see also Campaigns*.
Air college, *ingredients,* 78.
Air elementals, 99.
Alaba the Serpent-Priestess, 62-64.
Algofoye, 52, 55, 58.
Amadan, 39-44, 54, 55; *on world map,* 58.
Amanapur, 55, 117-125.
Animal college, *ingredients,* 78.
Animals, *bears,* 82, 83, 100; *getting and keeping exotic,* 81; *leech snakes,* 101; *riding,* 7, 81-83; *see also Monsters, Plants, Turtles*.
Aquaclaro, 53, 54, 58.
Ashak, 67.
Assassins, *Halvavin,* 125.
Astlan Mountains, 54, 58.
Auld Moffret, 57.
Aulos, 5-11, 56; *map,* 11.
Bad trees, 101.
Barbarians, *NPC,* 113.
Bears, *blind,* 100; *great,* 82, 83.
Bees, *fire,* 100-101.
Bekembe, 52, 55, 56, 58.
Bibliography, 21, 95.
Body Control college, *ingredients,* 78.
Caerceol, 12-18, 55; *maps,* 13-15, 58.
Caiman, *grand,* 82-83.
Campaigns, *Alaba the Serpent-Priestess,* 63; *Aulos,* 10-11; *Caerceol,* 17-18; *customizing number of enemies,* 104; *Goblin Market,* 21; *Kunruk,* 27; *Labyrinth of Five Essences in,* 97; *location as dungeon,* 18, 33, 50; *new NPCS,* 62-68, 93-95, 113, 123-124; *Saroo,* 33; *Tanir Aesayya,* 37-38; *Tkarsh,* 68; *Uxuloth,* 50; *Wellsprings of Creation,* 57; *world,* 51-60; *see also Adventure Outlines, Monsters*.
Caravans, *wandering,* 84-85.
Carazani, 54, 57, 58.
Castle, *maps,* 13-15; *room descriptions,* 12-17.
Catacombs, *map,* 115; *room descriptions,* 107-108.
Caverntown, 56, 58.
Celibacy Vow, 91.
Centaurs, 55.
Champre's Steam, 56, 58.
Chanter Alliance, 57.
Chaos Jet spell, 74.
Chaos magic, 72, 74-76; *character lens,* 76; *raw chaos,* 74; *side effects table,* 75.
Chaos Shielding spell, 74, 76.
Characters, *customizing number of enemies,* 104; *dragons,* 53; *dwarves,* 52; *elves,* 16, 37, 52; *fatigue debt,* 76; *goblin-kin,* 52; *humans,* 52; *medieval education,* 89; *new NPCS,* 62-68, 93-95, 113, 123-124; *other races,* 52; *Rites skill,* 73; *see also Clerics, Magery, Magic*.
Chastity Vow, 91.
Church, *as guild,* 90.
Clerical Investment advantage, 89.
Clerics, *bibliography,* 85; *designing,* 88-90; *fighting order Ranks,* 91; *guilds,* 90; *lenses,* 89; *medieval education,* 89; *ordained,* 88, 89; *overview,* 88-89; *related traits,* 89-92; *sample,* 93-95; *templates,* 92-93; *titles,* 90, 91; *women,* 88, 92.
Communication and Empathy college, *ingredients,* 79.
Cursed, *rings of José Von Lee,* 70-71; *Sword of Hsima,* 69.
Dead Philosopher, 112.
Demon prince, 99, 100.
Devotion Talent, 91.
Devouring Lands, 55, 58.
Dinosaurs, *domestic,* 83.
Disadvantages, *clerical,* 91-92.
Divine realms, 56.
Dragons, 53, 113.
***Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game,*** 64, 96.
Dwarves, 22-27, 52.
Eagles, *giant,* 82, 83.
Earth college, *ingredients,* 79.
Earth elementals, 100.
Eastern Islands, 55, 58.
Echeth Dominion, 55, 58.
Echo Wall Mountains, 55, 58.
Elementals, 99, 100; *fire bees,* 100-101; *realms,* 56.
Elves, 16, 34-38, 52.
Enchantment college, *ingredients,* 79.
Energy Reserve, crystals, 9.
Enota, 53-55, 57; *map,* 58, 59.
Equipment, *crystals,* 9; *magic ingredients,* 77-80; *rings,* 70-71; *shields,* 31, *sword,* 69.
Eunuch guards, 125.
Fatigue debt, 76.
Festus Magister, 125.
Fire bees, 100-101.
Fire college, *ingredients,* 79.
Food college, *ingredients,* 79.
Friar lens, 92.
Gerash al-Nabil, 66-67.
Goblin Market, 19-21, 56.
Goblin-kin, 52.
Goblins, *petty,* 110.
Golden Geniza of Ezkali, 55.
Gryphons, *riding,* 7.
Guards, *eunuch,* 125.
Guilds, *church as,* 90.
***GURPS,*** 3, 51, 72, 86, 89, 91, 92; ***Banestorm,*** 89; ***Basic Set,*** 64, 73, 91, 104; ***Cliffhangers,*** 63; ***Dungeon Fantasy,*** 3, 37, 51-53, 61, 63, 73, 86-89, 92, 99, 104, 110; ***Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers,*** 38, 43, 70, 81, 108, 109, 112; ***Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons,*** 55, 81, 104-109, 112, 120, 123; ***Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level,*** 16, 37, 52, 64, 65, 89; ***Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages,*** 73, 84, 89; ***Dungeon Fantasy 6: 40 Artifacts,*** 70, 71, 97; ***Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables,*** 9, 20, 25, 48, 80, 97, 98, 105; ***Dungeon Fantasy 10: Taverns,*** 84; ***Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen,*** 20, 84, 85, 92; ***Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures,*** 8, 81; ***Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds,*** 19, 26, 88, 90, 97, 122; ***Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic,*** 80; ***Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 1: Mirror of the Fire Demon,*** 55, 96; ***Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 2: Tomb of the Dragon King,*** 55, 96; ***Dungeon Fantasy Encounters 1: The Pagoda of Worlds,*** 4, 55; ***Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1,*** 18, 99, 105, 108; ***Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 3: Born of Myth and Magic,*** 99, 105; ***Dungeon Fantasy Setting: Caverntown,*** 56; ***Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 1: Glittering Prizes,*** 20, 80; ***Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 2: Epic Treasures,*** 97; ***Fantasy,*** 89, 91, 95; ***Infinite Worlds,*** 88; ***Locations: Hellsgate,*** 53, 55; ***Locations: The Tower of Octavius,*** 54; ***Low-Tech Companion 1: Philosophers and Kings,*** 89; ***Magic,*** 8, 9, 28, 64, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 87, 99, 108; ***Middle Ages I,*** 88, 93; ***Power-Ups 3: Talents,*** 91; ***Powers,*** 71, 73; ***Social Engineering,*** 90, 91; ***Social Engineering: Pulling Rank,*** 91; ***Thaumatology,*** 87; ***Vikings,*** 88, 93; *see also* ***Pyramid.***
Halvavin assassins, 125.
Healing college, *ingredients,* 79.
Hellsgate, 53, 55, 58.
Hexagonal colloid, 111-112.
Holy vapors, 26.


*An idea is a feat of association,*
*and the height of it is a good metaphor.*
*– Robert Frost*




Hsima, *cursed sword,* 69.
Hugh Fitzhenry of Lincoln, 94-95.
Humanity, 52.
Illusion and Creation college, *ingredients,* 79.
Incantation magic, *ingredients,* 80.
Independent Income advantage, 90.
Joe the Barbarian, 113.
Khefric Desert, 55, 58.
Khudseen Bey, 123-124.
Knights Templar, 91.
Knowledge college, *ingredients,* 79.
Kuhud, 57.
Kunruk, 22-27, 56; *on world map,* 58.
Labyrinth, *map,* 102, 103; *room descriptions,* 97-99.
Learned magic, 72, 73.
Leech snakes, 101.
Legal Enforcement Powers advantage, 91.
Legal Immunity advantage, 91.
Lenses, *new,* 76, 89, 92.
Light and Darkness college, *ingredients,* 79.
Lightbringers, 57.
M'tube-Keff, 57.
Magery advantage, 72-73, 54; *chaos magic and,* 74; *Taboo Trait against lying,* 72.
Magic, *crystals,* 9; *new system,* 72-76; *spell ingredients,* 77-80; *see also Chaos Magic*.
Making and Breaking college, *ingredients,* 79.
Maps, *Aulos,* 11; *Caerceol,* 13-15; *catacombs of the spider queen,* 115; *evil temple,* 114; *Labyrinth of Five Essences,* 102, 103; *palace of Emir Khudseen Bey,* 125; *unlabeled,* 103; *vault,* 116; *world of the Wellsprings of Creation,* 58-60.
Marge the Barbarian, 113.
Martial templates, *tree,* 87; *warrior monk,* 93.
Medieval clerics, *see Clerics*.
Medieval education, *traits gained,* 89.
Meta-Spells college, *ingredients,* 79.
Military Rank advantage, 91.
Mind Control college, *ingredients,* 79.
Mixaztlan, 55, 58.
Monk template, 92.
Monsters, *customizing number of,* 104; *new,* 99-101, 110-113; *see also Animals, Characters, Plants*.
Movement college, *ingredients,* 79.
N, *explanation,* 104.
Narrow Sea, 55, 58.
Necromantic college, *ingredients,* 79.
Not Ordained limitation, 89.
Nun lens, 92.
Oracular visions, 26.
Orcs, 65-68, 101.
Owain ap Madoc of Gwynedd, 93-94.
Paths of the Dead, 56.
Patrons advantage, 91.
Peddler template, 85.
Plant college, *ingredients,* 79.
Plants, *monsters,* 101; *template,* 86-87.
Pocket dimensions, 56.
Poverty Vow, 91.
Power Investiture advantage, 91.
Priest template, 92-93.
Protection and Warning college, *ingredients,* 80.
*Pyramid,* 3, 51, 61, 96 ; *#3/120: Alternate* ***GURPS*** *V,* 72; *#3/36: Dungeon Fantasy,* 54; *#3/38: The Power of Myth,* 55; *#3/40: Vehicles,* 54; *#3/41: Fantasy World-Building,* 55; *#3/50: Dungeon Fantasy II,* 54; *#3/64: Pirates and Swashbucklers,* 55; Volume 2, 89, 95.
Qaram Emirates, 55, 58.
Rabilus, 55, 57; *map,* 58, 60.
Regular Cleric lens, 89.
Rank advantage, *Administrative,* 90; *Military,* 91; *Religious,* 88-91.
Religious Rank advantage, 88-90; *Patrons and,* 91.
Ring of, *Dainty Lass,* 71; *Disease Resistance,* 71; *Handsome Bloke,* 70, 71; *Peeping Tom,* 71; *Too Short To Touch The Ground,* 70; *Virility,* 71.
Rites skill, 73.
Rote magic, 72, 73.
Ruk, 66.
Saroo, 28-33, 56.
Saurian Islands, 54, 58.
Secular Cleric lens, 89.
Seek spells, 79.
Semaria, 53, 56, 57; *map,* 58, 60.
Shansin Mandarinate, 57.
Shields, Saroo, 31.
Silence Vow, 91.
Skills, *medieval education,* 89; *new,* 73, 74.
Snakes, *leech,* 101.
Snow Margin, 54, 58.
Sound college, *ingredients,* 80.
Spells, 73; *casting with materials,* 77-78; *casting without materials,* 78; *chaos,* 74, 76; *ingredients,* 77-80; *rote,* 73; *Seek,* 79; *see also Magic*.
Spiders, *horrible,* 111.
Status advantage, 91.
Sword, cursed, 69.
Tables, *chaotic side effects,* 75; *Religious Rank,* 90; *riding animal,* 83; *wandering caravan,* 84.
Talent advantage, 91.
Tanir Aesayya, 34-38, 54; *on world map,* 58.
Telekineticist template, 87.
Templates, *clerical,* 92-93; *lenses,* 76, 89, 92; *peddler,* 85; *telekineticist,* 87; *tree-folk,* 86-87.
Temple, *map,* 114; *room descriptions,* 104-107.
Tenure advantage, 91.
Than, 55, 58.
Thaumatology skill, 73.
Thebor, 55, 58.
Thesseter River, 54, 58.
Tianshilong, 54, 55, 57, 58.
Tigers, *war,* 82, 83.
Tkarsh, 65, 68.
Trapper vines, 101.
Tree-folk, 86-87.
Trees, *bad,* 101.
Triceratops, *domestic,* 83.
Trolls, *stone,* 110; *swamp,* 110-111.
Turtles, *hill,* 83; *location,* 29-30, 33.
Undead, *Alaba,* 62-64; *warrior stats,* 112-113; *world population,* 53, 55; *see also Uxuloth*.
Uxuloth, 45-50, 53, 55; *on world map,* 58.
Vault (underground chamber), *map,* 116; *room descriptions,* 108-109.
Vines, *trapper,* 101.
Von Lee, José, 70.
Vow disadvantage, 91-92.
Warrior Lakes, 55, 58.
Warrior monk template, 93.
Water college, *ingredients,* 80.
Weather college, *ingredients,* 80.
Wellsprings of Creation, 51-60.
Wild Talent advantage, 73, 74.
Willowdeep, 54, 58.
Wolves, *coursing,* 81-83.
World, *campaign,* 51-57; *map,* 58-60.
Xuchlazek Diabolism, 57.
Yasmin, 125.
Yusif, 125.

# STUCK FOR AN ADVENTURE?
# NO PROBLEM.

## Warehouse 23 sells high-quality game adventures and supplements in print and PDF formats.

- Free downloadable adventures for ***GURPS*** and ***In Nomine***!
- Fun gaming accessories – shot glasses, shirts, specialty six-siders, and more!
- PDFs from Atlas Games, Amarillo Design Bureau, Goodman Games, and many others – plus gems from the up-and-comers.
- Original material for ***Transhuman Space*** and new ***GURPS*** supplements from Kenneth Hite, Phil Masters, David Pulver, Sean Punch, and William Stoddard!
- Fully searchable files of ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition* supplements.
- Digital editions of out-of-print classics, from ***Orcslayer*** and the complete run of *ADQ* to ***GURPS China*** and ***GURPS Ice Age***.
- Buy board games and roleplaying PDFs in the same order! Download digital purchases again whenever you need to.



**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

**warehouse23.com**