

# GURPS®

Fourth Edition

# CARAVAN TO EIN ARRIS



*An e23 Sourcebook for GURPS® from Steve Jackson Games*

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# INTRODUCTION

The air is buzzing in the market of Khedris – the great market that stretches from the fishmongers on the shore to Caravan Square. Halmaro the Red – master of the powerful Merchants’ Guild, second in power in Khedris only to the emperor of Lantara himself – is organizing a caravan! And this is no ordinary caravan; it will carry goods and gifts for the wedding of Halmaro’s daughter Kira to Prince Eiru of Mashanda.

The caravan will be huge, even by Khedran standards. It includes 220 camels, 50 horses, 40 head of fattened cattle, and 50 oxen pulling five wagons. The wagons are quite a rarity in a caravan; some of the wedding gifts must be huge!

The word is out that Halmaro is looking for herdsmen, scribes, translators, cooks, guides, physicians, laborers, and other hirelings for the caravan. Many of these will come from the various guilds, but there will be plenty of room for freelancers. Of course, guards will be needed too. Caravanning is not without its risks; bandits, highwaymen, and thieves take their toll on the caravans, as do sandstorms, heat, and floods.

Halmaro will pay \$600 to \$1,000 per person for about 6-8 weeks’ work – one quarter when the caravan sets out, another quarter when the caravan reaches Ayun on the Mashandi border, and the rest when the caravan gets to Ein Arris, the capital of Mashanda. (How much each employee is paid depends

on the job and how well they impress their foremen; there is a possibility of a bonus for exceptional work when the caravan reaches Ein Arris.) Halmaro treats his employees fairly, and even encourages his hirelings to trade on their own (he’s always looking for people who might be merchant material).

Not everyone who applies will be hired, of course, but nothing ventured, nothing gained. And you’ve worked for the Merchants’ Guild in the past when you needed a stretch of steady pay. Right now you are looking for a chance to travel and do something a little out of the ordinary. This might be that chance.

(GMs: You may read the above paragraphs to the players, if you wish, before they start to create characters. The rest of the material in this adventure is for your eyes only unless specified otherwise.)

## Important NPCs

Character descriptions and stats for the important NPCs in this adventure may be found on the following pages: Halmaro, p. 9; Tsorvano, p. 8; Katsaya, p. 6; Kira, p. 13; Karhan the Brigand Chief, p. 17; Fighters I, II, and III (generic NPC warriors), p. 14; Riana, p. 22; Tekoff the Pawnbroker, p. 19; and Farvaro, p. 7

## Character Creation

This adventure is designed for three to six 125-point characters. The following skills will be useful; skills marked with a \* will be very useful. After hearing the introduction, the players may figure this out on their own; if not, you may want to offer some hints.

Combat skills*	Desert Survival*
Horse Riding	Camel Riding*
Animal Handling*	Thief skills in general
Merchant	Bard
Diplomacy	Fast-Talk
Detect Lies	

Horse Riding and Camel Riding default to each other at -3.

\*Animal Handling requires specialization: Camel, Equines, Oxen, and Cattle will all be necessary on this trip.

### Languages

The local “common tongue” is called Lantrai; it is the official language of the empire. Other languages that might be useful on this trip include Nomic (related to Lantrai approximately as Swedish is related to Norwegian), Yat Ayun (the language of an island kingdom to the south), Shandassa (the language of Mashanda – this

is spoken in Ein Arris), and Ayuni Trade Pidgin. A character who speaks Khedran Lantrai will have a default of Nomic at (Lantrai-1) and Ayuni Trade Pidgin at (Lantrai-2). Note that the Ayuni Trade Pidgin cannot go above Broken; no matter how smart someone is, he will never be able to translate Shakespeare (or his Lantrai counterpart) into Trade Pidgin, or even do much more than trade and carouse. This language could be written in Ayuni script, but nobody would ever bother; it is only useful as a spoken tongue. See box, p. 15.

### Patrons

The following organizations may be useful as patrons for local characters:

The *Merchants Guild* is a powerful force in Khedris. Twice in the past, strikes declared by the Merchants’ Guild have caused a change of emperors, and the threat of a third nearly caused a civil war. The Guild has offices in all Lantrai cities of any size, and conducts diplomacy with similar organizations in other countries. Treat it as a very powerful organization that can give orders but appears rarely – a 10-point advantage.

A member of the Guild has a +2 on any reaction from Tsorvano or Halmaro, should it be necessary to make one.

# Character Creation

*White Sword* is an association of freelance bodyguards, watchmen, and mercenaries. Think of it as a temporary help agency for soldiers of fortune. Members are entitled to wear the “white sword” insignia – some flaunt it, some display it discreetly, some don’t bother. It is a reasonably powerful organization that appears fairly often but cannot order its members – a 15-point advantage.

A member of the White Sword has a +1 on any reaction from Tsorvano, Halmaro, or any city guard who knows the PC is working for Halmaro. Unemployed members of the White Sword wouldn’t rate much of a reaction bonus except from other White Sword members!

## *Equipment*

Each PC needs personal weapons (unless he’s a total non-fighter) and his “personal travel belongings.” Armor is certainly possible. However, the weather all along the travel route is quite hot. Normally, nobody wears armor except troops in battle. Plate is absolutely not worn here; even scale and chain are rare. Anyone with Merchants’ Guild experience knows the desert brigands wear no armor at all – not from bravery, but for comfort.

Anyone wearing any armor heavier than heavy leather will have a -2 on all reactions from townsfolk.

## *Trustworthiness*

When the players make up their characters, it would make sense if one of them were a member of either the Merchants’ Guild (in which case they will be loyal to Halmaro) or White Sword (in which case he is paying them to be loyal). If no one wants to belong to one of these organizations, someone in the party should have Sense of Duty, Honesty, or a good local Reputation. Halmaro will be sending the party on important missions, and he needs someone he can trust! These jobs would not be assigned to random street scum.

And, during the adventure, there will be a number of opportunities for the PCs to take valuable items and run. In every case, Common Sense would warn them that they would do better by serving Halmaro loyally. For good role-playing, let the PCs act according to their nature – but for the best possible adventure, most of the PCs should be trustworthy.

# 1. HIRING ON

It seems that everyone in Khedris is applying for positions in Halmaro’s caravan, but of course not everyone will be accepted. Halmaro wants competent help, and rather than rely on verbal interviews (Khedrans are well known for their fast-talk ability) he has arranged a series of practical tests for potential employees.

The PCs have no trouble finding Halmaro’s recruiters; they are wearing red-and-white sashes, and are surrounded by hopeful applicants. The recruiters give all the PCs the same

message: everyone is to meet at Caravan Square the next day. There will be a full day of “placement trials” before the caravan gets underway. Those who excel at the trials will get the best jobs. There will be plenty to eat and drink.

The recruiters won’t know much more than that though if a PC gets a good reaction roll from the recruiter, he gets an additional bit of information. Roll a die to see what is learned:

## World Background

Any character who makes it to Lantara for this adventure would know the following:

Lantara is a large state occupying the central portion of the continent. Khedris is its capital and the largest city on the continent, with some 300,000 people. The main industries in Lantara are government, tourism, and trade. Common trade goods are the farm products grown along the Kindino River and ore mined in the north. Lantara is ruled by an emperor; the guilds are also very powerful (there is some dispute as to whether the Royal Family or the Merchants’ Guild is more powerful). Advancement in the Merchants’ Guild is by skill and competence (and the ability to survive guild politics, of course).

The Royal Line stretches back many generations; few of the names are remembered by any but historians. One

name still remembered is Khedren, a wise emperor who abolished slavery, lowered taxes, and raised the general standard of living. Khedris is named in his honor.

Lantara has a Tech Level of 3. Lantarans consider themselves a scientific, enlightened culture with no superstitions – i.e., no magic. In rural areas, folk may believe in the “evil eye,” charms, etc. There may be magic in this world, but the characters will not encounter it in this adventure.

The Lantrai religion is polytheistic; the gods personify activities or virtues (commerce, law, charity, music, etc.). The gods are relatively benign entities. Fanaticism, especially religious fanaticism, is rare and generally not tolerated.



## Replacement Characters

If the PC dies along the way, or is so badly wounded that he cannot continue, the GM may allow the player to create a new 100-point character.

If the lost PC was a spy for Katsaya, the replacement should also be her agent if the original spy was not revealed. If the first agent had been unmasked, the replacement should be loyal – since other players will suspect him no matter what.

1 –Halmaro's No. 1 wife will be there, too. Halmaro is a strong man, but she's just as strong. And she plays for keeps. Don't cross her or you will have an enemy for life.

2 –Halmaro believes in receiving value. The recruiters will be looking for people who are willing to work and who look like they'll be loyal to Halmaro. The food and drink are free to applicants, but anybody making a pig of himself will hurt his chances of being hired.

3 –Big Red (Halmaro) is looking for a few good fighters and scouts. The team he had intended to use is overdue from a mission in Ajir.

4 –Almost everyone who is any good should be able to get a place in this caravan. It's so big that the transients and indigents who normally camp by the river in Caravan Square are being displaced – something no one can remember ever happening before!

5 –Everybody calls Halmaro "Big Red" – but not to his face. If you're in the Merchants' Guild you call him "Guildmaster." Otherwise, you call him "Sir."\*

6 –Halmaro has a reputation for fairness. If you do your job and keep your nose clean he'll take care of you. If you cross him, you won't do it twice.\*

\*Members of the Merchants' Guild will know number 5 and 6 already. If a member of the Guild gets either of these, roll again.

Before the PCs reach Caravan Square they will hear the noise; in fact, they'll hear it halfway across the city. Caravan Square is usually a quiet park with an occasional caravan forming up; today it's a swarming mass of people, animals, and more people.

Each character should decide what job he wants to apply for. There are plenty of red-and-white sashed aides here, and any of them will be able to direct applicants to the appropriate areas. They will be divided into groups; entertainers in one section (many of these will be performing at the wedding), herdsmen in another, guards in another, and so forth. (Players may try out in more than one section. In fact,

## The Tests

1. Guards who claim hand-weapon ability will fight in sham combat, without armor. They will be issued wooden weapons and told to go at it. The first character who strikes three "touches" wins the contest. They are not to use their full strength (if a character decides to use his full strength, and hits, tell him he's injured his opponent and lost the contest).

It isn't necessary to create complete NPCs for opponents. Give the NPC all of the character's weapon skills at -1, or use one of the NPC fighters on p. 14.

Archers and crossbowmen get five shots each round at a man-sized target 100 yards distant. Hitting the target three times out of five is considered a successful round. In the first two rounds, everyone has time to aim. Later rounds will not allow aiming!

2. Entertainers, cooks, and most other applicants will be paired off two by two and engage in contests of the appropriate skill. These contests have a practical purpose (feeding and entertaining the contestants) as well as comparing the applicants.

Again, complete NPCs aren't needed here. Give each character's opponent skill equal to or one less than the character's skill, and a couple of quirks to make the encounter interesting.

3. Animal handlers will be required to show that they can control and take care of the animals. To do this, they

must make several Animal Handling rolls with several different animals. Appropriate animals are camels, horses, mules, oxen, and cattle. Remember that Animal Handling is a skill with specializations, and if you try to use your skill on the wrong kind of animal, you'll suffer a penalty – anywhere from -2 to -6, depending on how different the animals are.

If the character is trying to handle a camel and doesn't have that skill specialty, the character rolls his Animal Handling at -4 (camels are notoriously obstinate). If the character misses the roll, the camel ignores him. On a critical failure, the camel embarrasses the character by kicking or spitting at him. The judges expect this and will probably be amused unless it happens excessively. They must also demonstrate their Horse Riding and Camel Riding skills.

Each character will compete at least twice and perhaps as many as five times, depending on how much fun the players are having. Use your own judgment here. Halmaro and Katsaya, together or separately, are seen watching some of the tests.

Each PC's salary will start at \$600; for each contest won, his salary will go up by \$100, to a maximum of \$400 extra. If the character works in two capacities, he will get an extra \$200.

Halmaro might prefer it, since the fewer people he takes along the lower his expenses will be.)

The GM may make a whole adventure out of *The Tests*, or skip over them with a few die-rolls. They are described in the box on p. 5.

After the trials end, the PCs will be accepted for the caravan. They will be told their pay rates (which depend on their

test performance) and ordered to report for work the next morning.

They will also be invited to a party, already under way at the Usurper's Beard tavern on the edge of Caravan Square. It's free to everyone who will be working for Halmaro this run.

## 2. THE OBLIGATORY TAVERN SCENE

It's traditional for a caravan crew to get together the night before they set out, for "one for the road." One big long party, that is. Halmaro is footing the bill! The characters may eat and drink as much as they like, speculate about the upcoming adventure, and get to know one another. This tavern checks weapons at the door; this is not their first pre-caravan party.

Use the interior game map for the tavern.

There will be tables, a bar, a game of darts in the corner, serving wenches, and other entertainment. There is gambling in one of the back rooms. Games include the local equivalent of craps, roulette, and poker. You can improvise the games, or just have a character hold a Contest of Skills against the house (which has a Gambling Skill of 18).

Here are some possible tavern encounters; feel free to include your own.

- As a PC gets up to go to the bar, a man bumps into him. "Hey!" he shouts. "Watch where you're going!" No matter how polite the answer is, the man wants to pick a fight. If the character walks away, the man will yell at him for a while and then go find someone else to run into.

- A drunk ambles over to the PC table, sits down, and immediately begins a long, rambling monologue about the good old days. It seems the drunk has mistaken the PC for a friend of his named Vildo. If the character tries to get rid of the drunk, or denies that he is Vildo, the drunk will be insulted and make a scene.

- A good-looking member of the opposite sex walks up to the PC and flirts for a moment. Soon after the flirt leaves, the PC notices that his coin-pouch is missing. (You may allow a Pickpocket, Streetwise, or IQ roll for the victim to notice someone is tugging at their pouch – -3 if the victim is Lecherous.)

- The PC runs into a fop who has been everywhere and done everything and thinks everyone should know about it. This fop will be difficult to shake.

- A serving wench leans over to set down a tankard. Before either the wench or the PC can say anything, a large, burly man grabs the character. "*What was that you said?*" he demands. The PC now has five seconds to get a good reaction roll at -6, which will convince Burly that he did not mean to insult his girl.

- A small, shifty-eyed man attempts to sell the PC a gold ring of invisibility for \$20. He next offers a treasure map. And a set of good luck charms. And a bottle of love potion. He will follow the character around the tavern for a while, offering him incredible deals on merchandise of highly questionable value, until his victim (a) buys something, (b) leaves the tavern, (c) points out someone in the tavern who looks like he might buy something, or (d) takes a swing at him.



### Katsaya

**189 points**

Early 40s; Flashing black eyes, dark curly hair; 5'1", 120 lbs.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 13 [60], IQ 13 [60], HT 12 [20]

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d, BL 20, HP 10, Will 13, Per 13, FP 12, Basic Speed 6.25, Basic Move 6, Dodge 9, Parry 10.

**Advantages:** Very Wealthy [30]; Status (+4 on reactions, Catho or Lantara) [20].

**Disadvantages:** Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Bully (12) [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].

**Quirks:** Angry about aging and lost beauty; Dislikes Lantara; Loyal to Catho when it suits her interest; Resents being married to non-hereditary noble; Stingy and generous by turns, unpredictably. [-5]

**Skills:** Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Fast-Draw (Knife) (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Leadership (A) IQ+2 [8]-15; Politics (A) IQ+3 [12]-16; Savoir-Faire (Catho) (E) IQ+2 [4]-15; Savoir-Faire (Lantara) (E) IQ [1]-13; Stealth (A) DX-2 [1]-11.

**Languages:** Cathan-Native [0]; Lantra-Accented [4]; Shandassa-Accented [4].

**Total reaction roll:** +0 (+4 in Catho and Lantara)

**Weapons:** Small Knife: 1d-3 cutting, 1d-3 impaling

## Farvaro

**96 points**

Early 40s; Pasty skin, wispy brown hair, brown eyes; 5'7", 160 lbs.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 11 [20], IQ 13 [60], HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d, BL 20, HP 10, Will 13, Per 13, FP 10, Basic Speed 5.25, Basic Move 5, Dodge 8, Parry 8.

Wears light leather (DR 1).

**Advantages:** None

**Disadvantages:** Laziness [-10]; Bully (mental only, but that's bad enough) [-10]; Cowardice [-10].

**Quirks:** Dislikes roughing it; Hums tunelessly; Ignores those "beneath him"; Enjoys gambling, strange forfeits, and sucker bets; Thinks he's a good navigator (he's not).

**Skills:** Administration (A) IQ [2]-13; Camel Riding (A) DX [2]-11; Diplomacy (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Gambling (A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Horse Riding (A) DX [2]-11; Knife (E) DX [1]-11; Merchant (A) IQ+3 [16]-16; Sleight of Hand (H) DX+1 [8]-12.

**Languages:** Ayuni Trade Pidgin-Broken (default) [0]; Lantraï-Native (default) [0]; Nomic-Accented [4]; Shandassa-Accented [4].

**Weapons:** Large Knife: 1d-2 cutting, 1d-2 impaling.

### *Gambling with Farvaro*

After only a couple of days' travel, the PCs will observe that Farvaro loves to gamble. He will offer to bet on

absolutely anything, argue about the odds, argue about the stakes . . . you name it.

Farvaro will repeatedly challenge the PCs to bets on anything and everything. While riding on camelback, he'll offer to bet about which way a lizard will run. And so on. Eventually, he gets around to wagering on dice.

But what Farvaro really loves to do – even more than win money – is suggest embarrassing wagers and forfeits. He thinks that he is being jovial with his underlings. A woman who's just lost her shirt to him (literally), or a man who has to eat a sand-lizard raw, may think differently. For some reason, Farvaro rarely loses this type of wager.

Because he cheats. Not often – just enough to give himself an edge. He automatically wins when he cheats. (The GM should conceal his rolls to cover this.) Each PC gets one chance to detect each cheat. Roll a Contest of Skills between the PC's Vision roll (at a -2 for firelight) and Farvaro's Sleight of Hand of 12.

Farvaro will certainly have some fun with the PCs if they let him. If anybody really annoys him, he suggests an even worse forfeit: the loser has to walk toward the moon until it goes down, and then try to find his way back to the caravan. This will result in his getting lost (see sidebar, p. 10). If by some chance Farvaro loses, he'll go just out of sight of the caravan and hide, returning in the small hours of the morning, in a foul mood.

If anyone offers Farvaro physical harm, he threatens them with Tsovrano, Halmaro, and the whole Merchants' Guild. The camel-drivers hate Farvaro but will not permit the PCs to attack him.

Note that several of these encounters may lead to fights. If a PC chooses to fight, his opponent will have a Brawling ability of (1d+10) – that is, roll 1 die and add 10 to get his skill. Roll 3 dice three times to get the opponent's ST, DX, and HT; assume he has no armor.

If the players don't flee after the fight, they will either end up unconscious or be there when the City Watch shows up. In that case, they spend the night in jail and are released in the morning, in time to report to work. Assume that – by whatever means – anyone who gets badly beaten is healed back up to HP-3 the next morning.

## INTRIGUE

*GMs: If you want a straightforward adventure with no possibilities of internal betrayal, ignore this section.*

As the characters are partying, one of them is approached privately by a short, dark, curly-haired fellow – he looks like he could be from Catho. This man is an agent of Katsaya, Halmaro's chief wife. Katsaya is a political power in her own right; her marriage to Halmaro is one of convenience only, and she often intrigues against him.

The character approached will be the one most likely, in the GM's opinion, to betray his new employer. Thus, greedy individuals, known thieves, and the like will be approached first; those with a sterling reputation, Merchants' Guild members, and so on, will be approached last.

The agent keeps trying until he fails with everyone or until he recruits one of the PCs (if there are five or six PCs, he may recruit two). After the party, each loyal PC gets an IQ roll (at +2, if he was approached himself) to realize the agent talked to several PCs. What each does with this knowledge is his own concern.

The agent's proposal is simple. The PC will get a retainer of \$500 now and another \$1,000 when the caravan reaches Ein Arris. His job will be to keep an eye on Tsovrano, and report anything "interesting" to Katsaya. He may be called upon for other tasks; if any of these are arduous, there will be extra pay.

If a PC refuses, the agent smiles, and leaves – returning later to try again on someone else. If a PC agrees, he is given a simple recognition code, by which he will know others of Katsaya's spies. (Anyone discussing their flower garden in a certain way is a fellow agent.)





The PC gets his \$500 – and that’s that, for now. A PC who raises a fuss gets a quick knife-wound in the arm (2 hits damage, armor doesn’t protect); the spy fades into the darkness, and a different agent will contact any remaining PCs.

It may occur to a PC to take the money and then report to Halmaro or Tsorvano. (Reporting to anyone but those two or another PC will earn the doubly treacherous PC three assassination attempts, spaced over the adventure!) If the PC offers to play “double agent,” make a reaction roll for Halmaro. A “good” or better reaction means approval. A neutral reaction

means dismissal from the caravan; a worse reaction means the PC won’t leave the interview alive. In the latter cases, the unlucky player may create a new character, and Katsaya’s agents will go on down the line of PCs looking for someone else to corrupt. (GMs: If for some reason you don’t want a reaction that severe, change Halmaro’s reaction or fudge the roll!)

If a PC becomes an agent of Katsaya, there will be several chances for intrigue and betrayal during the adventure. An agent of Katsaya can confess to Halmaro at any time after tonight; reactions will be as above, but at a -1.

### 3. INTERVIEW WITH HALMARO

When the characters show up at Caravan Square in the morning, they will be told to report to Halmaro himself. They follow their guide to an area where about 15 camels are being readied. There they meet a tall, broad-shouldered man with long red hair and a full red beard; his dress is casual but obviously expensive. This is Guildmaster Halmaro.

“The freefolk you asked for are here, Guildmaster,” the guide says.

“Thank you,” the tall man says. “You may go.” He looks them over carefully, then smiles approvingly. “Yes. Yes, I’m sure you’ll do.”

“You are to be part of my personal retinue. There are a number of important things that will need to be done on this journey, and I need good people I can trust to do them for me.” Halmaro turns and calls to the man supervising the workers. “Tsorvano! Come here, if you please.”

Halmaro turns and leaves. Tsorvano looks the PCs over, gets their names, and points to the group of camels he is readying. “To start with, you will be traveling with our advance force. One does not drive a large caravan into town without adequate preparation. For instance, the caravan will be spending two or three days in Tatsori. You will be leaving early to make preparations for the caravan to pass through.” He indicates a slight-looking man standing off to one side. “You are to guard and assist Farvaro, here; he will take care of negotiations and arrangements in town.”

Tsorvano then puts the players to work, helping to get the camels ready to leave. Each PC must make one Animal Handling (Camel) roll, at -4, while dealing with the camels. Anyone who fails will be the target of a faceful of camel spit and Tsorvano’s laughter. A critical failure means a kick or bite doing 2 hits of damage. See section 3 in The Tests box.

The normal trade route goes west from Khedris and skirts the edge of the desert until it comes to the Parlama River, where it turns and follows the river to Tatsori. Some time in the past another river dried up and left a wadi which is used as an alternate road during the dry season.

The main caravan will take the River Road. It is much longer, but the ox wagons would never make it through the desert; the caravan wouldn’t be able to carry enough water.

The advance group, on the other hand, will take the Desert Road, though it is not without its dangers. The party will need extra time to get their preparations made for the caravan’s arrival in Tatsori.

There are 30 people in the advance group. Besides the PCs, there are 20 camel-drivers, several laborers, and Farvaro. The PCs are the only guards. Each character will ride a camel (sup-

plied by Halmaro). Food, water, tents, and other supplies are carried by the camels; they are also supplied by Halmaro, and the players need not concern themselves with these details.

The party will leave Khedris sometime around sunset, well ahead of the main caravan.

#### *Tsorvano*

**273 points**

Tsorvano is an ex-brigand who met Halmaro years ago at sword’s point, while Halmaro was an aggressive young caravan-master. Neither one will say who won that first encounter, but soon afterward Tsorvano became the merchant’s loyal henchman.

Tsorvano wears his broadsword for everyday use, but if he expects trouble, he’ll sling his greatsword on his back.

Early 40s; Swarthy, bald, hooked nose, brilliant green eyes; 6’4”, 220 lbs.

**Attributes:** ST 13 [30], DX 14 [80], IQ 13 [60], HT 12 [20]

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d/2d-1, BL 34, HP 13, Will 13, Per 13, FP 12, Basic Speed 6.50, Basic Move 6, Dodge 9, Parry 11.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Damage Resistance DR 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3]; Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

**Disadvantages:** Miserly (12) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Halmaro and Guild) [-10]; Stubborn [-5].

**Quirks:** Dotes on Halmaro’s daughters; Dislikes clerics, will always wear the minimum for comfort and propriety; Enjoys embarrassing his inferiors; Likes open spaces; Very cold to strangers. [-5]

**Skills:** Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-16; Desert Survival (A) Per+3 [12]-16; Fast-Draw (Two-Handed Sword) (E) DX [1]-14; Fast-Draw (Knife) (E) DX [1]-14; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+2 [8]-15; Knife (E) DX+3 [8]-17; Kalba (musical instrument) (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Merchant (A) IQ+3 [12]-16; Mountain Survival (A) Per+2 [8]-15; Two-Handed Sword (A) DX+3 [12]-17.

**Languages:** Lantrai-Native [0] (default); Shandassa-Native [6]; Nomic-Native [6]; Ayuni Trade Pidgin-Broken [0] (default).

**Weapons:** Broadsword: 2 dice cutting, 1d+1 crushing; Greatsword: 2d+2 cutting, 1d+2 crushing; Large Knife: 2d-3 cutting, 1 die impaling.





## 4. SANDSTORM

There are 30 camels in the advance party; food, water, tents, and supplies will be divided among them. The camels require little water and can carry heavy loads easily; the party will average 25 miles a day.

The PCs soon learn that their nominal leader, Farvaro, is totally unfit for command. Whenever he is asked for advice or instructions, he says, "Do what you think best." If pushed, he will grow irritable: "Your job is to get me to Tatsori, not to

waste my time with stupid questions." Farvaro prefers to spend his valuable time sleeping, drinking, humming to himself while staring into space, and gambling.

(If anyone wants to gamble with Farvaro, see the box, p. 7).

The party travels for four days. Nothing of lasting significance happens; the GM may roll once per day for minor events. No event will repeat itself.

### *Halmaro*

**383 points**

Mid 40s; Fair skin, long red hair, thick red beard, dark brown eyes; 6'2", 190 lbs. broad-shouldered.

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20], DX 12 [40], IQ 14 [80], HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-1/1d+2, BL 29, HP 12, Will 14, Per 14, FP 12, Basic Speed 6, Basic Move 6, Dodge 9, Parry 10.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Reaction roll:** +12 (!!)(Charisma, Voice, Reputation, Status)

**Reaction roll:** +14 (Charisma, Voice, Reputation, Status) for people he's doing business with.

**Advantages:** Charisma (+1 on reactions) [5]; Voice (+2 on reactions) [10]; Reputation (+4, all the time) [20]; Status (+5 on reactions) [25]; Talent: Business Acumen +2 [20]; Talent: Mathematical Ability +1 [10]; Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50].

**Disadvantage:** Sense of Duty to Merchant's Guild [-10]

**Quirks:** Always impeccably groomed, even when on the

road; Collects paintings and sculptures; Genuinely likes people; Likes to travel; Workaholic. [-5]

**Skills:** Accounting (H) IQ [4]-17 \* \*\*, Administration (A) IQ-1 [1]-15 \*; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Camel Riding (A) DX [2]-12; Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-15 + ++; Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-14; Economics (H) IQ+1 [8]-17 \*; Fast-Talk (A) IQ-1 [1]-16 + ++; Horse Riding (A) DX [2]-12; Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Law (Lantara Business) (H) IQ [4]-14; Leadership (A) IQ+1 [4]-16 ++; Mathematics (H) IQ+2 [12]-17 \*\*; Merchant (A) IQ [2]-16 \*; Politics (A) IQ+1 [4]-17 +; Public Speaking (A) IQ-1 [1]-16 + ++; Savoir Faire (Lantara) (E) IQ+4 [12]-18; Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-14 + ++; Singing (E) HT [1]-14 +; Streetwise (A) IQ -1 [1]-16 + ++.

\* Includes +2 from Business Acumen; \*\* Includes +1 from Mathematical Ability; + Includes +2 from Voice; ++ Includes +1 from Charisma.

**Languages:** Ayuni Trade Pidgin-Broken [0] (default); Cathan-Native [6]; Lantrai-Native [0]; Nomic-Native [6]; Yat Ayun-Native [6]; Shandassa-Native [6].

**Weapon:** Large Knife: 1 die cutting, 1d-1 impaling

1 –Cloaked riders are seen in the distance. They shadow the group for two hours, and are not seen again.

2 –The mingled bones of a man and a camel are found.

3 –Several little desert wolves circle the camp one night. They come within 30 yards, but will flee if pursued. Because of their size and the faint moonlight, they will be at -3 to hit with a missile weapon. All will flee the turn after any wolf is hit. These wolves' stats are: ST 10; DX 12; IQ 4; HT 12. Will 11; Per 14; Speed 6; Dodge 9; Move 9. They have DR 1. They are no danger to the caravan, and there is no real reason to attack them, but the PCs may want target practice.

4 –A family of skunks, scurrying across the trail, spooks the lead camels. Each PC must make a Camel Riding roll. Failure indicates the character was thrown off into prickly cactus, taking 1 die of damage (armor protects). A critical failure indicates the PC was sprayed – nobody will want to get near him for days, and strangers will react at -4.

5 –All PCs must make Desert Survival rolls. The one who makes the roll by the most (if anyone does) spots a patch of greenery along the wadi. Investigating, he finds a spring. This is valuable information – that spring was not on the maps – and will be worth a \$50 award from the Merchants' Guild, or double that if he is a member.

6 –Farvaro insists on *his* reading of the map. The party is delayed by a day as a result. Make a note of the delay; it may be important later.

On the fifth day, a brownish haze will appear on the horizon. Have each PC make a skill roll, on either Desert Survival (default IQ-5, Naturalist-3, or any other Survival-3) or Weather Sense (default IQ-5). If anyone has Danger Sense, they may make a roll against IQ to sense the danger. Any PC who makes their roll will be able to tell that a sandstorm is blowing in from the west and will be on them in about an hour. If no one makes a roll to notice the approaching storm, one of the herdsmen will point it out about 15 minutes before it hits. It will be too late to set up camp properly.

Once the sandstorm is sighted, the group will whirl into activity, trying to get the camels tethered and the tents pitched before the storm strikes. Farvaro will be no help at all; he will whine, dither, and get in the way. Each player must make another Animal Handling (Camel) roll (at -4, again!). This time a failure means a bite (1 die damage) and a critical failure means the camel runs away and is lost – see #5 on the table below.

Then the storm strikes. Each PC must roll against Desert Survival skill or default – at -2 if the storm was pointed out by a herdsman. For each PC who fails his skill roll, roll one die on the table below. For anyone who had a critical failure, roll twice! Note that if by chance someone is already lost in the desert when the storm strikes, their roll to survive is at -2 automatically, because they have no tent.

1 –PC takes 1 die of damage from the blasting sand.

2 –In the hurry, the PC dropped something or left a saddlebag open at the wrong time. An item of personal gear was lost – possibly a weapon, a piece of armor, etc. The GM looks at the character sheet and makes a random determination about what was lost.



## Lost in the Desert

PCs may become separated from the group, and lost in the desert, in several ways. If the cause was not a sandstorm, they can find their way back by a Tracking roll (+3 because they're tracking a human being – themselves! See p. B226). Or someone else from the party could track the lost person.

If the sandstorm was involved, there will be no tracks. At this point, a roll against Navigation is required to find the caravan by the stars. One roll per day is allowed. Keep trying until you die, find the caravan, or are rescued.

If the other PCs insist, Farvaro will delay the party to search for the lost person. For each day of delay, give any PC with Tracking skill (no default rolls) a single roll, without modifier, to find the lost person.

Anyone with Absolute Direction may try to find the caravan as above, at a +3 bonus, or just take two days and walk to a little village he saw on the map. From there he can get to Tatsori in time to join the caravan as it leaves. (In that case, the other players have no idea of the lost one's fate until he shows up in Tatsori; send the "lost" player out for pizza.)

A PC alone in the desert must make a Desert Survival roll each day. A failed roll costs 3 FP and 3 HP (no water!). If he survives, each day counts as 12 hours' study of Desert Survival.

If someone remains lost for more than four days but survives, let him be picked up by a small group of riders and delivered to Tatsori just before the caravan leaves.

3 –The PC didn't set the stake on his tent properly. His tent falls in, causing him 1d-3 damage.

4 –PC gets sand in his eyes and is blinded for 2 days.

5 –PC forgot to tether his camel. He will lose his camel and five days' worth of water the camel was carrying (but no personal gear). He will have to ride with someone else for the rest of

the trip to Tatsori, and the party will be on short water rations (and they'll blame him for it).

The PC's pay will also be docked \$200; the obnoxious Farvaro will take pains to point out that this is only a fraction of the creature's worth.

6 – PC gets lost in the sandstorm! He will wander lost in the sand until he finds the party or is found. See the

*Lost in the Desert* box (above).

The sandstorm will die down around sunset. The characters will find sand in their shoes. And their tunics. And their saddlebags. And the insides of their eyelids. And everything else . . . If you want to be a thoroughly irritating GM – and who doesn't? – you could have them finding sand in various places all the way to Tatsori.

# 5. TATSORI

The wadi eventually meets the river. The characters will follow the river south for about a day, until they reach Tatsori. If four or more days were lost during the trip, read the box. Otherwise, things are under control. Farvaro will snap to attention, put away his bottle, and go off to negotiate the supplies for the caravan; the players will have some leisure time, except for when they're guarding the animals and equipment in shifts (one at a time).

Farvaro tells the PCs to lose themselves and not bother him while he takes care of business. They have four days to kill, unless time was lost on the trip. They can go shopping (they can buy anything on the equipment list), carousing (there are two inns in town), or whatever they wish. There are also healers here who can take care of any injuries from the sandstorm.

Each day, one member of the party has a small adventure. The GM may choose the lucky PC any way he likes, as long as he doesn't repeat – either roll randomly, or pick an appropriate PC for each one.

**Day 1.** The character is approached on the way to the bazaar by a young boy carrying a begging bowl, who asks for alms and then says “Noble sir want good deal, fine sword from Bonoro?” This is a trap. A successful Streetwise or Danger Sense roll will reveal it right away. At the shop the boy leads him to, a Merchant, Armoury/TL3, or IQ-5 roll will reveal the swords being shown are cheap junk, not fine weapons at all. While the garrulous old “shopkeeper” is making conversation, a Taste (-2) or Poisons roll will warn that the tea is drugged. (Fake a reaction roll for the shopkeeper, if the PC tries to haggle. Then have him smile and pour more tea.) If the PC drinks the tea without suspecting, he will wake up in an alley, stripped and with an aching head. At no point will he have a chance to grab the boy if he tries – the kid is too fast – but the old man is slow, and could be easily captured at any time *before* the poison takes effect. Unfortunately, there's no reward, and the watch would confiscate the fake swords.

**Day 2.** Farvaro needs some help with negotiations and takes the character along. The precise type of help he needs depends on what skills that character has – it might be intimidation, good looks, or even a bit of thievery. The GM may either require a couple of skill rolls and tell the player what happened, or improvise and play out a whole encounter!

**Day 3.** A thief (use one of the fighters from the pregenerated characters) tries to steal from the camp during the character's guard shift. Roll a Contest of Skills – the thief's Stealth vs. the guard's Hearing. If the guard wins, he can confront the thief (who will probably try to flee). Otherwise, the thief sneaks up on the guard and gets a free attempt to bash him on the head with a club. The guard will not be able to get help in time to deal with the thief; he must do it himself. There is a price of \$20 on this thief's head; if the guard loses or is knocked out by surprise, the thief will take his weapons and valuables.

**Day 4.** One of the locals challenges the character to a camel race. The race itself is a Contest of Skills, Camel Riding vs. Camel Riding – assume the speed of the camels is the same, so it's the riders' skills that count. If you want to draw out the race, make a series of contest rolls, with the winner being the one who wins the most out of nine. There are possibilities for intrigue here if the players think of it; gamblers could make some money, a Vet could drug the opposing animal, pickpockets could be working the crowd . . .

Also in Tatsori, the players will be approached at their evening meal by a middle-aged woman who wants to make conversation about her flower garden. If none of the PCs are working for Katsaya, they will not recognize the signal. If one is, he will have to make an excuse to talk to the woman privately. She will give him a sealed parchment to be delivered to Katsaya.

The message will be meaningless if read. If it is opened before delivery to Katsaya, the deliverer has earned a knife in the back unless he made a successful Forgery roll to repair the seal. But if it's simply never delivered, Katsaya will not react – she wasn't expecting it.

On the fifth day, the caravan will come into town. This is one of the most exciting things to happen in Tatsori in years, and everyone will be there to see it. The town will be in a festive mood, and rural folk are always interested in news from the big city. Make a reaction roll for each PC. On an especially good reaction roll or Bard skill roll, the locals will be so impressed with the character's stories that they will provide him with free drinks and meals as long as he's in town. They will follow him everywhere, begging him for more stories. Members of the opposite sex will find him very attractive. A neutral reaction or Bard roll will mean the character is ignored in favor of more “interesting” members of the party.

A very poor roll will be an opportunity for a fight (maybe fists, but possibly weapons) with a drunk. If this happens, successful Stealth or Streetwise rolls will be needed to avoid pursuit by the Watch. If anyone is caught, make a reaction roll. A bad reaction indicates that the watch beats the character into insensibility (no time for jails here) and delivers him to the caravan with a warning. A good reaction indicates a slap on the wrist, or even a thanks for chastising the nuisance.

The main caravan will stay in Tatsori for two days. When it leaves, the PCs' group will travel with it. They are again under Tsvorvno's command.

## Late to Tatsori

If the sandstorm or Farvaro's jokes made the party more than four days late into Tatsori, they will arrive to find the main caravan already there. Tsvorvno is furious. Halmaro is seen having a quiet talk with Tsvorvno, after which Tsvorvno is even more furious.

Tsvorvno collars the PCs and Farvaro for an explanation. Farvaro will immediately blame everything on the PCs, or on some PC who has incurred his wrath. He will lie freely.

The PCs may now tell their side of the story. At this point, the GM says, “Now we'll see how Tsvorvno reacts.” Roll the dice twice. If either roll is very high or low, let the players see – but then, regardless of the roll, he grabs Farvaro by the scruff of the neck, rips the Guild stripe off his tunic, and throws him out the door.

Then he glowers at the PCs. “Haven't you got anything to do?” And he leaves.

Farvaro is not seen again. The caravan manages to reprovision itself, and leaves almost on schedule



## 6. A WEDDING

After leaving Tatsori, the caravan will follow the east bank of the river for about three days. Halmaro will send for the PCs and tell them there is to be a wedding at Aghnara in two days. Halmaro can't be there – the caravan is much too big to leave the main route – so he will send them as his representatives. He is sending a camel with two saddlebags full of gifts. The camel is of a prize breeding stock, worth \$3,000; the bride's father raises camels and trades with Halmaro often.

As the characters approach Aghnara they will hear drums and pipes over a hill. The music is cheerful and the people are well-dressed and enjoying themselves; this is obviously the wedding festival. The bride is the daughter of a nomad chief and the groom is the son of a prosperous farmer. The land on which the festival is being held will be his share of the farm. The bride's family speaks Nomic; the groom's family speaks a thickly accented version of Lantrai. The characters will have a chance to drink, eat, and enjoy themselves well into the night – especially those who speak both languages. Each character who participates must make a Carousing roll. A failure means loss of 1 HP to the effects of strange brew – First Aid won't help.

The festivities will continue another day; the ceremony is at sunset of the second day. Of course, the end of the ceremony is

everybody's cue for the revelry to escalate. Make another Carousing roll, as above.

That night, the wedding guests will present the nomad chief with various gifts. (See box for an explanation of the wedding customs.) One well-dressed man offers a camel harness with silver inlays. The chief gets into a shouting match with the man; translated loosely from Nomic, the chief is railing at the man, asking if that was all he could afford. The man calls the chief a rude name and leaves with a huge smile on his face. An elderly woman comes up next with a basket of eggs. The chief accepts with pleasure, kisses her on the forehead and gives her a beautiful woolen shawl. At this point, the characters may be somewhat confused!

When the characters show up with Halmaro's camel the chief will tell them (through an interpreter if necessary) something like, "Old Red has been out in the sun too long! I raise camels for a living. If he thinks I'll let this knock-kneed flea bag near my prize mares, he's a turtle." The saddlebags contain gifts for the couple: a plowshare, a bolt of rich fabric and a Commerce coin (a gold \$20 coin depicting the god of commerce) for their firstborn child.

The chief will look at the gifts, allow as how they are all right if Halmaro couldn't do any better, and ask what the PCs brought.

Let the characters stew over this for a while; then each may give whatever they wish. The chief reacts at +3 (he's in a good mood), or +6 for anyone who speaks his Nomic tongue. If the reaction roll is low, the gift will be accepted with empty smiles and set to the side. If it's high, the PC will be treated just like the locals, and the return gifts will be generous.

It is possible that some of the wedding guests won't think the gifts are good enough and will want to challenge the PCs, to uphold the newlyweds' honor.

These guests are drunk and ready to fight. This is traditional. This will be a fist fight (no weapons allowed), no worse than an average bar fight. There will be a lot of bruises and a couple of broken teeth the next morning, but no one should be hurt seriously. If the characters break anything they will be expected to pay for it.

The trip back to the main caravan takes one day and is uneventful. Halmaro and Tsorvano will ask for a report. If all went as described above, they will both be pleased. If by chance the PCs stole the wedding gifts rather than delivering them, see the *Stealing the Gifts* box.

### Wedding Customs

In Khedris, couples are usually married by magistrates. Rural customs are somewhat different. "Patriarchs" (heads of families) are empowered to perform marriages. (The information below is not known to the PCs unless they defined themselves as having a farm background, or unless they made an IQ roll at -6. Members of either the Merchants' Guild or White Sword get a +2 on this roll; so would anyone else the GM deems well traveled. Knowing these customs could save some embarrassment . . .)

Wedding guests will arrive two or three days before the wedding. There is dancing, eating, drinking, and general partying until the ceremony begins, traditionally at sunset. After the ceremony, everyone congratulates the couple. The guests bring gifts for both the couple and the bride's father (to compensate him for the loss of his daughter and to thank him for putting on such a lavish party). A lavish gift from someone wealthy will be belittled ("This is the best you can do?"); this means the recipient liked the gift. A gift from someone poor, if it represents a substantial portion of their assets, will be greatly appreciated. Often the giver receives a gift of greater value in return. Someone pretending to be poor and giving a small gift, when he could have given something better, will be extravagantly praised and given a worthless gift in return – a cooking pot with a hole in it, for instance.

### Stealing the Gifts

If the PCs stole the wedding gifts, their description of the wedding is unlikely to ring true. Roll a Contest of Skills: the liar's IQ or Fast-Talk vs. Halmaro's Detect Lies skill of 14. This is at -3 if the camel was stolen as well as the gifts, or a -6 if for any reason they never went to the wedding at all! If the PCs are caught in their thievery, they will be returned in chains to the nomad chief – slavery is illegal, so they're "permanently indentured servants." This adventure is over; their next problem is to escape.

## 7. SECRET MISSION

Late at night, Tsorvano summons the PCs for a briefing. He has a mission for them, and if necessary can pay a bonus for successful completion. He will not offer a bonus unless asked, but might go as high as \$500 apiece – none in advance – if pressed. This mission is only for the PCs.

Halmaro's daughter Kira, the bride-to-be, is supposedly with the caravan (Tsorvano tells the characters) but in reality her carriage is empty. The characters will be sent out to find her.

Kira was a student at an abbey school at Urlo, studying courtly arts, etiquette, and the Mashandi language and culture. Kira wanted to go out and do things, and staying cooped up in school, even if it meant she got to marry a rich prince, was torture.

One day she disappeared. The brothers and sisters of the abbey searched for her fruitlessly. Her bed hadn't been slept in and there were no signs of a struggle, so they had no idea what had happened – until a ransom note appeared on the abbey's front door one morning. HELP, the note read. I HAVE BEEN CAPTURED BY BANDITS. THEY WANT \$50,000 TO RELEASE ME. LIGHT TWO FIRES ON THE HILL NEAR THE RING OF OAK TREES JUST NORTH OF THE BANDOOTHU RIVER. HURRY. The note was signed by Kira, and so far as anyone can tell was in Kira's script.

Halmaro is suspicious; the note looks genuine but he has learned to be cautious of anything having to do with both Kira and money. When the caravan gets near the Bandothru (which is between Narhanha and Marshanda), he wants the PCs to investigate and see if they can find the bandits. Has Kira been kidnapped or did she just run away? If she has been kidnapped and they can rescue her without paying the ransom, so much the better; otherwise they will be deputized to pay the ransom and retrieve Kira.

The characters are to travel through Sathran Pass, and from there follow the road down to the Bandothru and the rendezvous point. They will be given \$500 for expenses, but will be expected to use it wisely and account for it upon returning. Their mission is to find out if the bandits really have Kira, if she's all right, and to rescue her if they can. If necessary, they are to make arrangements for the ransom.

For this trip, the PCs will be using horses provided by Halmaro. Anyone absolutely unable or unwilling to ride a

### Kira

83 points

Kira, daughter of Halmaro and Katsaya, was a cute, freckled tomboy when she was younger, and learned to ride and fight. As she grew older, she became beautiful – the very picture of the devastating female fighter. That's how she thinks of herself – and she will fight bravely if need arises. Unfortunately, she is also spoiled, arrogant, and a bit dumb.

18 years old; Red hair, brown eyes; 5'6", 125 lbs.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 13 [60], IQ 9 [-20], HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2 / 1d, BL 20, HP 10, Will 9, Per 9, FP 12, Basic Speed 6.25, Basic Move 6, Dodge 9, Parry 10, Block 10.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Advantages:** [36] Beautiful [16] (+2 on reaction roll by same sex, +4 by opposite); Charisma [5] (+1 on reaction); Status [15] (+3 on reaction by members of own culture).

**Disadvantages:** Bad temper (9) [-15]; Impulsiveness (9) [-15]; Jealousy [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].

**Quirks:** Arrogant; Conceited; "Female fighter" self image; Likes jewelry; Selfish. [-5]

**Skills:** Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Horse Riding (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Shield (A) DX+2 [8]-15; Dancing (A) DX [2]-13; Sex Appeal (A) HT+2 [8]-14; Savoir Faire (Lantara) (E) IQ+2 [4]-11; Singing (A) HT [1]-12.

**Languages:** Lantrai-Native [0]; Shandassa-Accented [4].

**Weapons:** Broadsword: 1d+1 cutting, 1d crushing; Small Knife: 1d-3 cutting, 1d-3 impaling.

horse may walk instead; horses are convenient but don't add anything to your daily march distance.

## 8. THE TAX COLLECTORS

The party proceeds along the shore of Lake Athrana into the mountains until they reach Sathran Pass. The weather is merely warm here, instead of hot. A mile into the pass, they will be stopped by a group of men wearing heavy clothing (counts as armor with DR 1).

They say they are tax collectors for the kingdom of Narhanha. They will ask for a tax of \$2 per person, and \$5 a head for each horse and mule, from anyone going through the pass.

Anyone making a Streetwise or Detect Lies roll (one roll per PC) will know that these are merely clever thieves. Setting up a barricade and charging toll is a common scam; most traveler's will pay rather than argue or fight.

The characters may want to fight. If any of them has Common Sense, roll against their IQ; on a successful roll, remind them that it isn't their money, and they might as well pay. If they decide to fight anyway, set the situation up on the map with the "tollbooth" to the GM's right, the thieves near the GM and the characters on the other side of the barricade.

Sathran Pass is represented by the "outdoor" game map (p. 15). The floor of the canyon is represented by the unshaded hexes; this is "normal" terrain. The lightly shaded hexes are at a higher elevation; the ground there is more rocky and hard to walk on. In this area all Moves and weapon skills are reduced by 1. The gray hexes are higher yet and very difficult to stand or walk on. All Moves here are reduced by 3 and all weapon

## Fighter I

**64 points**

**Attributes:** ST 13 [30], DX 12 [40], IQ 9 [-20], HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d / 2d-1, BL 34, HP 13, Will 9, Per 9, FP 10, Basic Speed 5.50, Basic Move 5, Dodge 8, Parry 11.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Skills:** Broadsword (A) DX+4 [16]-16; Knife (E) DX [1]-12.

**Weapons:** Broadsword: 2 dice cutting, 1d+1 crushing; Large Knife: 2d-3 cutting, 1 die impaling.

## Fighter II

**76 points**

**Attributes:** ST 13 [30], DX 12 [40], IQ 9 [-20], HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d / 2d-1, BL 34, HP 13, Will 9, Per 9, FP 11, Basic Speed 5.75, Basic Move 5, Dodge 8, Parry 10.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Skills:** Broadsword (A) DX+3 [12]-15; Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-14.

**Weapons:** Broadsword: 2 dice cutting, 1d+1 crushing; Large Knife: 2d-3 cutting, 1 die impaling.

## Fighter III

**78 points**

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20], DX 12 [40], IQ 10 [0], HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-1 / 1d+2, BL 29, HP 12, Will 10, Per 10, FP 10, Basic Speed 5.50, Basic Move 5, Dodge 8, Parry 9.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Skills:** Bow (A) DX+3 [12]-15; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-13.

**Weapons:** Broadsword: 1d+3 cutting, 1d crushing; Large Knife: 1d cutting, 1d-1 impaling; Regular bow: 1d impaling. Acc 2, 1/2 damage at 180 yds., Max 240 yds.

skills are reduced by 2. The dark hexes are atop a sheer cliff and impossible to reach without climbing equipment, Climbing rolls, and at least an hour of time.

The barrier is a gate with a DR of 2 and 15 HP. Its closed location is shown by the dotted line on the map; a counter can be made to show its position when opened. If the characters break through the gate, or pay and attack after it's opened, they will be able to fight the thieves.

The thieves will fight, but not to the death. (Use two each of the Fighters I and II (see box) for this group, with Horse Riding-18 added to their skills.) Any thief whose HP is reduced to half its original value will run; after two flee or are killed, the rest will retreat. Those who flee will retreat off the map, jump on horses and ride into the mountains.

The PCs may follow on horseback; otherwise the thieves will lose them completely. Roll a series of Contests of Skills, using the thieves' Horse Riding skill of 18 (they will stay together) and the *lowest* of the PCs' riding skills. Any PC with a low skill may choose to stay out of the chase rather than slow the others down.

# The Ayun Stockade

The stockade is a squalid brick building with iron-barred doors. Anyone imprisoned is first stripped of all possessions but clothing. Most likely the guards divide them up and they are never seen again.

If a character *specifies* that he is doing so, he may try to hide things on his person before the guard searches him. Have the player say what he is trying to hide and where. Then have a Contest of Skills: the PC's Holdout skill vs. the guard's IQ at 10. Modify the PC's Holdout skill for what he tried to hide, and how cleverly. If the guard loses the contest, the character gets to keep the item he hid.

Each prisoner is then thrown into a cube-shaped cell, six feet on a side. The sanitary facilities consist of a hole in the floor. He will be the only person in the room. There is a gridded window through which sun shines, and the guards bring food and water (both drinking and wash) twice a day, so it's not as bad as it could be (unless the character is over six feet tall).

If anyone wants to escape, let him try. The grates covering the sewer-hole and window have 30 HP. By constant effort (and what else do they have to do?) with something to wear down the grates (like a file, for instance) he can get through 1 hit point of grate each day. When the grate has taken 30 hits the character will be able to get through it. The window opens onto a parade ground, so someone escaping this way must do so at night to avoid being seen. The hole in the floor opens into a sewer leading to the river.

Jumping the guard at mealtime is probably not a good idea, since there are always two guards. If the character wants to try to take on both guards, use one Fighter I and one Fighter II. The character has to make it through two more Fighter II guards, at the outer door, to get the key and leave.

Other ideas might include chipping through the wall (90 HP) or making a knife and taking a guard hostage. A Fast Talk roll at -4 could bribe a guard with an offer of later payment. Players will no doubt have other ideas.

After the characters have been incarcerated for about a week, Tsorvano shows up to bail them out. This will cost \$200 for each character, taken out of their salaries. Tsorvano will *not* be happy, but he will send them on to finish the job . . . or else.



Keep track of how many contests each side wins. If the thieves win three more contests than the characters, they have outdistanced them and are home free. If the PCs win three more contests than the thieves, they have caught up and may fight.

Anyone rolling a critical failure during the chase is thrown. If a PC, he takes 1d-2 damage and is out of the chase. If a thief, he's caught, and any or all of the party may stop to fight him – but anyone who stops can't catch the other thieves.

If the PCs catch up with the thieves, they must fight from horseback, which will reduce their effective weapon skills; see the rules on *Mounted Combat* in the **GURPS Basic Set**, pp. 396-398.

## Loot

Each thief has personal weapons and 3d × 10 silver pieces.

If the characters kill or drive off the thieves and search the area, they find some horses (four, less the number of thieves that escaped) just off the map. These are good saddle horses, worth \$1,200 each. If they search the shack they find nothing in plain sight; however, a successful Vision (Perception plus Acute Vision) or Architecture (default IQ-5) roll finds a hidden tunnel behind the fireplace. This leads to a cave the thieves used as a headquarters. Inside they will find enough food for the party for ten days, \$1,136 in cash, and a good broadsword.

# 9. MORE TAX COLLECTORS

The characters continue through the pass; the other end is some three hours' travel away. At the other end, the pass is blocked by an official-looking barricade. (Use the same map but turn it so the characters are entering from the opposite side.) It is manned by four uniformed men who also claim to be tax collectors for the Kingdom of Narhanha. Anyone making a successful Streetwise or Detect Lies roll perceives they're telling the truth.

They will remove the barricade when they collect their toll (again, \$2 for each person, \$5 for each horse or mule). If the characters pay they will be allowed to pass unharmed. If the players want to fight, a Common Sense roll will let you caution them against it; if they persist, let them fight, but they will have to get through the barricade first. The barricade has a DR of 2 and 25 HP.

## Ayuni Trade Pidgin

For many years traders have passed through Ayun, going to and from Ein Arris and Khedris. This constant contact has spawned a pidgin used all along the trade route by traders of different linguistic backgrounds. Ayuni Trade Pidgin has the sentence structure of Yat Ayun, the vocabulary of Lantrai, and the numbers, curses, and insults of both.

Anyone knowing either Lantrai or Yat Ayun at Native level knows Ayuni Trade Pidgin at a Broken level of comprehension. It is impossible to gain a comprehension of greater than Broken in Trade Pidgin.

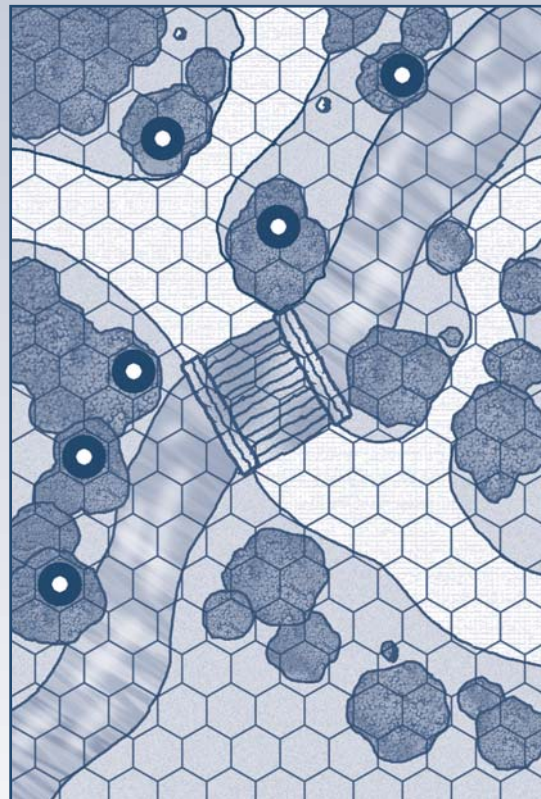
The tax collectors will flee if attacked by arrow fire, or if it looks as though the attackers have a chance of getting through. They're civil servants, not mercenaries. They will run to a garrison two miles away and report that Narhanha is being invaded. This brings two dozen men to see what the problem is. (Even if the PCs butcher the four tax collectors, someone will see what happens and report to the garrison.)

When the soldiers catch up with the PCs, make a Potential Combat reaction roll at -2 (see p. B561). Several of the troops have White Sword connections; if any of the PCs are White Sword members and mention it, this roll is at +2 instead.

The best thing that can happen is that the PCs surrender and are politely escorted to jail. The worst that can happen is a fight that ends with the unconscious or dead PCs being dragged back to town. If the PCs insist on fighting, use 12 each of the Fighters I and II. The players *will* lose this fight and will be taken straight to the city of Ayun and thrown into the stockade. If this happens, see the box on p. 14.

## The Bridge

If you're using the Advanced Combat System, you'll need this map. The location of hiding places is marked on the map.



# 10. THE BRIGANDS

The characters travel several days until they get to the scene described in the ransom note: a ring of oak trees at the base of a hill. Before they light the signal fires, they may try a Tracking roll (default Per-5 or Naturalist-5) at +3 (tracking a man). A successful roll reveals a trail leading north down the hill. It looks like someone has come to this area several times. The trail leads to a footpath, with a bridge spanning a creek. There are four pathways here, two on each side, meeting at the bridge.

A Strategy or Tactics roll (default IQ-6) reveals several hiding places that permit observation of the bridge. Anyone who notices these will be at a +2 to spot anyone hidden there later (since he knows where to look).

There is also a small ruin just west of the bridge. There are three steps leading up to a largely intact front wall with no door. There is no roof. Only small portions of the connecting side walls remain.

Remind the characters that the ransom note told them to light two signal fires on the top of the hill. All of this reconnaissance brings them to nightfall; they must decide whether to light the fires tonight or investigate further tonight and perhaps light the fires tomorrow.

## *Meeting the Brigands*

If they light the fires, they soon hear a horn blowing off to the north. Within 15 minutes, a brigand appears with a flag. He offers to make the exchange at sunrise the next morning at the bridge at the foot of the hill. Then he slips away. Since the brigands know they have company, there will be a -3 penalty on all Stealth rolls if the PCs try to spy on the brigand camp!

## *Spying on the Brigand Camp*

The brigand camp (see box) is 3/4 of a mile northeast of the bridge. If the characters want to look for it on their own, have them specify where they are searching. A successful Tracking roll at -7 (hunting men, but at night) will reveal a man-made trail leading northeast from the stream. If the character specifies that he is using his Stealth skill to avoid being seen, and is successful, he will be able approach the brigand camp. Otherwise, he is seen by a sentry. If he can defeat the sentry (Fighter I) within 30 seconds, and make a successful Stealth roll to flee, he can get away. Otherwise he is caught, his valuables are taken, and he is held until after the exchange is made.

Once the brigand camp is located, the PCs will not have to keep to the trail their scout found. They may try to sneak around where the pickets and sentries won't see them. Stealth rolls, at +3, will be required to do this without being spotted and captured.

If they have a good plan, let them try to carry it out; if not, have them make a Strategy or Tactics roll, and give them a plan if they are successful. A possible plan: Build two brush piles on the hill; leave lit candles in the middle of each to serve as fuses; go to the other side of the brigand camp, ready to move in when the fires blaze up and draw the brigands' attention. This would draw at least five brigands, including the leader, out of camp. For more about the brigand camp, see the box.

## The Brigand Camp

Use this information if the PCs want to reconnoiter the camp. They may even attack, if they are foolhardy. If they come up with some clever tactic to improve their odds, let them try it, requiring whatever skill rolls seem appropriate.

There are 42 brigands in the band, but when the PCs arrive, 10 of them are out on picket duty and 13 are asleep. This leaves Karhan (the leader) and 18 other brigands in the camp. Of these, six are Fighter I, six are Fighter II, and the rest are Fighter III. All have the appropriate weapons for their skills. Choose them randomly unless otherwise specified.

Kira's tent is in the center of camp, facing the campfire. Two brigands (one each I and III) are guarding Kira's tent, one in front and one behind. Two others are walking around the perimeter.

The other 15 brigands will be gathered around the campfire, cooking a meal and singing. Karhan, the chief, will be among them. There are eight tents in a ring surrounding the campfire and Kira's tent. The PCs will hear snoring in one tent just behind Kira's; there are two men inside. (If the PCs check or stumble into a tent, or the guards are alerted, there are two men in each of the tents near Kira's.)

All the brigands are light sleepers. If anything happens to awaken them, wait 10 seconds and then start rolling against IQ for each brigand. A successful roll means that, four seconds later, that brigand will come out of the tent, weapon in hand, looking for trouble.

The brigand's horses are tethered north of the camp; two men are on guard there, near a small campfire. Both are Fighter III, armed with swords and bows; they are there mostly to defend against wolves. If they shout for help, they will be heard at the main camp, but it's 200 yards away.

There are about 50 horses here; they are fast, sure-footed mountain ponies worth \$1,500 each.

## *The Exchange*

If the characters meet the brigands on the bridge at dawn, the brigand chief will have Kira with him. She is all right, but bruised and furious. A Vision or Danger Sense roll will reveal several brigands (eight, actually) hiding nearby. At this point the characters have three options:

- They can attack the brigands. Anyone with Common Sense, Strategy, or Tactics should make a roll; if successful, hint to them that they are in enemy territory and are probably outnumbered. If they fight anyway, play it out. There will be



one Fighter I with a sword in each hiding place, and two Fighter IIIs with bow and arrow ready in the ruin. If the characters win they get Kira and anything the brigands have on them; if they lose they will die.

If the PCs flee, the brigands pursue; handle this chase as for the phony tax collectors (above). The brigands all have Horse Riding skills of 16 to 21 (1d+15) and will fight to the death if they catch the PCs.

- They can try to fool the brigands with a fake ransom payment. If they do this they had better have good counterfeit, because the brigand chief will count the money to make sure there's \$50,000 there. The GM rolls for this; the exact roll depends on what the characters tried and how clever it was. If they detect fraud, they will attack; see above. If the brigands take the fake money, they release Kira.

- They can agree to deliver the ransom. The chief tells them to meet him at the bridge in one week. When they return to Halmaro, he sends Tsorvano and a dozen assorted guards with them; Tsorvano will have the \$50,000 in a locked chest in his saddlebag. The PCs should not even think of trying to steal the ransom money – Tsorvano is much too careful. On the return trip, they meet the real tax collectors (going both ways) but not the fakes; the trips will be otherwise uneventful.

### *Karhan, the Brigand Chief*

**160 points**

Karhan and Kira met at a festival a year ago, and were smitten with each other for all the wrong reasons. Kira ran away to join Karhan of her own free will. Together, they cooked up the plan to extort \$50,000 from her father. But after a couple of weeks with Kira, the brigand decided he'd rather have \$50,000 than \$50,000 and Kira. She tried to scratch his eyes out; he had her imprisoned for real. He will now happily exchange her for the ransom, if given the chance.

Late 20s; Golden skin, black hair in ponytail, black eyes; 5'11", 160 lbs.

**Attributes:** ST 13 [30], DX 13 [60], IQ 12 [40], HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d / 2d-1, BL 34, HP 13, Will 12, Per 12, FP 11, Basic Speed 6, Basic Move 6, Dodge 9, Parry 11.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Handsome (+2 reaction for same sex, +4 for opposite sex) [16]; Voice (+2 to all reactions) [10].

**Disadvantages:** Laziness [-10]; Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Overconfidence (12) [-5].

**Quirks:** Conceited and susceptible to flattery; Loves music; Arrogant; Likes to gamble; Easily bored. [-5]

**Skills:** Broadsword (A) DX+3 [12]-16; Fast-Talk (A) IQ -1 [1]-13\*; Gambling (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Horse Riding (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Leadership (A) IQ [2]-14 \*.

\* Includes +2 from Voice

**Weapons:** Broadsword: 2d cutting, 1d+1 crushing; Large Knife: 2d-3 cutting, 1d impaling.

## Prisoners of the Brigands

If one or more PCs are imprisoned by the brigands, they will be tied up, together, in one of the eight tents circling the fire. A single guard is posted in front of the tent. Their weapons will be taken (and will not be found unless the camp is totally sacked) but they will be left with any armor less valuable than chainmail. Other personal belongings are tossed in the tent with them.

If they wait for rescue, it will be weeks coming; Halmaro will eventually send a large force for a ransom, but it will be awhile! So they'd better try to free themselves. Possibilities include:

A successful Escape roll (one attempt per character per day) to wriggle out of bonds. If someone succeeds and frees the others, all must make Stealth rolls to creep away. These rolls are at +3 if the guard in front of the tent is eliminated. A failure means discovery and a fight.

A successful Fast-Talk roll on the guard, and another one on Karhan, to get them released. "Somebody's got to bring you the ransom!"

Gambling with Karhan, for their liberty, property, etc. Of course, if they lose they are in worse trouble than they were before. His Gambling skill is 14. He doesn't cheat.

The brigand leader will meet them at the bridge, as promised. Once he is satisfied the payment is correct he will cut the bands around Kira's wrists, toss her sword and knife down beside her, and leave. Neither Karhan nor Tsorvano will start a fight; the sides are too evenly matched. If one of the PCs does something to alarm Karhan,

he will duck below the railing of the bridge. This is a signal to the brigands to attack – see #1, above. (GMs: If you don't want to set up a mass battle, let Karhan laugh off the threat. If you do want a big fight, you should probably use the Basic Combat System to make it go quickly.)

If Tsorvano's force wins, they ride back with Kira; they won't be pursued. If they lose, the brigands are likely to slaughter them and vanish with the money, effectively ending the adventure!





# 11. DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL

If the party hasn't totally botched the mission, they will be riding back with Kira. During the trip, Kira exhibits all of her character flaws. She is glad to be out of the brigand's camp, but the word "grateful" does not describe her attitude. Her saddle is uncomfortable, she hates the weather, she's glad to get away from Karhan because he turned out to be so boring, she's been wearing this same dress "forever," she needs a maid to do her hair, and on and on.

Once Kira gets back to the caravan there will be a big, happy family reunion. If Kira was rescued, rather than ransomed, Halmaro splits \$5,000 among the PCs! Kira herself will be very happy for a day or two and then get bored with the whole routine.

The fourth day after her rescue, she approaches the male PC with the highest reaction bonus, and entreats him to run away with her. If he refuses, she tries to convince him. Roll a Contest of Skills: her Sex Appeal of 14 vs. his IQ.

At this point, the possibilities are:

- The PC runs away with her – either because he wanted to or because her Sex Appeal overmatched his IQ. Give the PC

a chance to reconsider the next day (no IQ roll required – let the player choose freely). If he really wants to run away with Kira, they are both out of the adventure unless you, the GM, want to write them back in. If he brings her back by force, he takes 1 die of damage in the process. Proceed as in the third option below, except that Halmaro offers no reward.

- The PC will refuse Kira, but keep quiet about it. She will be in a truly terrible mood the next day. The day after that, she runs off with one of the animal handlers; all attempts to find her will be fruitless.

- The PC refuses Kira (or lies to her) and immediately reports the whole affair to Halmaro. This is loyal, prudent behavior, and should be worth a character point unless the PC is supposed to be foolish. Halmaro thanks the PC and presents him with a jeweled dagger of fine quality, worth \$900. The next morning Kira is nowhere to be seen; Halmaro has bundled her back to school in the company of six tough female camel-jockeys. Katsaya doesn't know . . .

# 12. HAGGLING IN AYUN

Before long the caravan reaches Ayun. Here the players get the second quarter of their promised pay.

If the PCs acquitted themselves well in rescuing or ransoming Kira, Tsorvano congratulates them grudgingly, pays the promised bonus, and sends them into Ayun on the following errand. If they did *not* do well with Kira, Tsorvano harangues them thoroughly, pays little or no bonus, and gives them this job anyway . . . "And don't make fools of yourself this time – it makes *me* look bad." If asked why they are picking up jewels when the bride is gone, Tsorvano will explain, "Shut up and follow orders."

Yoka, a jeweler in Ayun, was commissioned to make a tiara and some other jewelry for the wedding. Tsorvano gives the characters \$8,000, the agreed-upon price. The PCs are to pick up the jewelry and return to the caravan by sunset.

Tsorvano emphasizes the urgency and importance of the errand.

As the PCs enter Ayun, they are readily recognized as visitors (their clothes are so dull). A half-dozen street vendors rush up to them, trying to sell them anything from hot squab on a stick (very tasty, actually) to street maps to lucky charms. These people are not in the habit of giving out free information – they react at -3 to any request for information, and are confusing and unintelligible on bad reactions.

But if a PC buys something first, they do their best to help (except the map seller, of course). "Yoka? Oh yeah Yoka, he-fella talk all time, not say nothing. You-fella go down this street maybe by me four, maybe five street, see sweet shop, turn left. Look big green jewel sign, you find Yoka."

After running around for a while (and getting lost or misdirected several times) they finally find Yoka; he is short, bald, fat and wears loud, bloused clothes (like Arab robes made in Hawaii). His shop displays dozens of trinkets, which even the most ignorant PC can tell are mere gaudy glass.

Yoka will be all smiles but very unhelpful until the PCs mention Tsorvano. "So-vann-no send you? Why you-fella not say so? Why you leave ugly camel-driver behind?"

Yoka talks a mile a minute – "You-fella guy very lucky, have Ugly for friend, you know? Ugly good with sword. Chop-chop! One day by me six, maybe seven trip to Ayun, Ugly come in with six-fella head from bandit. Ugly say bandit try to take him away the money from boss-fella Bigred. Ha! Yoka know better. Yoka know bandit want take him booze! Ugly only got one big problem, you know. Big saying in Ayun: 'Good with sword, bad with girls.' Is big-fella problem for Ugly, you know? He-fella guy go to find girl, look at girl, sing to girl, scare girl away! Hey, you-fella want to see Yoka make like Ugly? Yoka grab cat and pull him tail, sound like Ugly play kalba same-same!" And so forth, with Yoka railing on in a semi-intelligible pidgin, laughing at his own humor, telling contradictory stories about his past with Tsorvano, and regaling the party.

Eventually the characters will get a word in edgewise and ask about the jewelry. Yoka unlocks a door, scuttles into the back of his shop, and returns with a tiara, a necklace, a pair of earrings, and two bracelets. He will allow the characters to look over the merchandise (anyone making a Jeweler or Merchant roll will know this is *good* jewelry).

Yoka will say, "Have extra expense! Price rubies go up, silver go up. Must have \$9,000 all same." He will say that he absolutely cannot let it go for less! This may present a problem if the PCs aren't carrying enough extra cash! Yoka will helpfully suggest a shop a couple of streets away where they can sell weapons, armor, etc. If the PCs go along with this outrageous suggestion, let them go visit Tekoff (p. 19).

If a character thinks to ask the GM, and a Detect Lies roll succeeds, he will know Yoka is lying. But just knowing this isn't good enough.

To haggle Yoka back down, the PCs must pick a negotiator. The negotiator must roll a quick Contest of Skills (Merchant) with Yoka. Yoka's skill is 18. The PC's negotiator is at a +1 because Yoka feels a bit guilty about cheating Tsorvano, and another +1 if someone detected Yoka's lie.

If the PC wins, Yoka concedes that Tsorvano is a friend of his and for his friend he will lose money, not to worry about his six starving children. If the PC loses, Yoka's final demand is \$8,000 plus \$100 for every point by which the PC lost the haggling contest. The players will just have to find the cash!

The PCs may threaten Yoka. If so, he will be abusive and ask what kind of friends Tsorvano is choosing these days; if he feels really threatened he will call for the watch. He will eventually give them the jewelry for \$8,000, but he will never speak to them again if he can avoid it. This probably won't concern the PCs too much. If the PCs actually attack Yoka, they're in serious trouble. At the very least, they will wind up in jail (see sidebar, p. 14). Tsorvano will *not* bail them out. The GM should prevent the PCs from harming Yoka (let him flee very nimbly) unless he is willing to dispense with the rest of the adventure and let the PCs become hunted outlaws.

The characters may shop in Ayun; it is a large city and has just about anything they would need. If they plan to stay any length of time, one of the first things they should buy is one of the local costumes. Anyone wearing solid or subdued colors is immediately branded a tourist.

When the PCs return to Tsorvano, there are three possibilities:

- They paid \$8,000 for the jewelry. Tsorvano acknowledges that they performed this simple task without botching it, and dismisses them.
- They paid more than \$8,000. Tsorvano laughs and calls them fools. Make a reaction roll. On a "very good" or better

## Tekoff the Pawnbroker

Tekoff is a tall, skinny old man in a screaming red-and-purple robe, set off by a wide green hat which he wears indoors. He speaks good Lantrai, but talks . . . very . . . slowly. This is the man that Yoka suggests if the players decide to sell equipment to pay his extra charges.

Tekoff has ST 9, DX 10, IQ 11, HT 9. He has a merchant skill of 15. He is prone to make snap decisions about people. When each person first talks to him, make Tekoff's reaction roll. That will rule his offer – except that his best offer will never be better than 90% market value for weapons, or 2/3 market value for armor and other goods. Tekoff will "haggle" interminably, in his slow voice – but he will never offer a substantially better deal than his first price.

Should someone want to buy weapons or armor, Tekoff will sell at the prices suggested by his first reaction roll. His selection is limited to "ordinary" items, though the GM may throw in a couple of oddball things if he wishes.

roll, he reimburses them. On a good reaction he reimburses them for half the difference. On a neutral or worse reaction he reimburses nothing.

- They failed to get the jewelry. Tsorvano gives them a tongue-lashing; the next day, he rides back and picks it up himself.

## 13. THE ABBEY

Three days later the caravan is about a day's journey south of the town of Desh Ava. Tsorvano calls for a stop at Desh Ava; he has an errand to perform at the abbey, and he wants the characters to come along. The caravan will go on to Desh Ava and spend two days there, lodging their camels and transferring their goods to horses and mules.

The abbey is a cluster of gleaming white buildings on a hillside to the west of Desh Ava. It is a shrine to the goddess of the homeless and orphaned. Anyone who has nowhere else to go is brought here; this is where mothers who can't care for their children bring them, for instance. *Everyone* there is expected to work to earn their keep, including visitors. The sisters don't ask Tsorvano to do any physical work; he is just asked to play his kalba (a musical instrument resembling a seven-stringed balalaika) in the evenings.

The characters can use any talents they have to entertain. For instance, one character might use his Acrobatic skill to tumble for some orphans. A Literate character who has Calligraphy might be asked to help write some prayer scrolls or to help teach children to write.

Those who can't entertain will have to work. Applicable skills might be Animal Handling (any specialty) (helping in the stables), Herb Lore or Healing (helping to prepare herbs for

healers), or Sewing (to help mend and make clothes). Anyone using these skills should roll against their skill level. If they fail, they botched the job; they will be thanked for helping and asked to do something different, like wash dishes or sweep stables. A successful roll means the character did a good job and is asked to continue for a little while.

In terms of the overall adventure, it makes no difference what any of the characters do here. But they can have fun trying to avoid the stables. The GM can roleplay other abbey visitors, who tease those who have to do menial labor.

As the characters are showing off their skills, one of the sisters makes the rounds, asking for volunteers for the dinner dishes. The characters should have a chance to get out of this by contests of their Fast-Talk vs. the sister's IQ of 10. (If anyone wants to volunteer to do the dishes, the sister is grateful.) One of the PCs *will* end up doing the dishes. There he meets a girl with green eyes, red hair, and an engaging personality.

Her name is Riana. She is about 19 years old. She has lived in the abbey all her life. She has no idea who her parents were; all she knows about the outside world is what the sisters tell her. Of course these sisters describe the world outside as riddled with sin, with wicked men who will do their best to

# Improvised Adventures

During the time that the PCs are with the main caravan, the GM may improvise almost any sort of encounter he wishes. The caravan was huge when it left Khedris, and it's grown along the way. Wellwishers, hangers-on, camp followers, and smaller caravans glad to "convoy" with Hatmaro – all have joined.

Each day the caravan heaves itself up and travels north and west, stringing out over miles of road. Horses, mules, oxen, and even stranger beasts pull carts, wagons, and sledges – neighing, mooing, braying, and honking, one following another.

Each night when the caravan makes camp, 20 acres of wilderness turn into a carnival. Cooks, bards, dancers, pickpockets, jugglers, peddlers of all kinds of merchandise, singers, and gamblers all ply their trades. If the PCs want to borrow, buy, steal, or look at something, it's offered in camp at night. Of course, the GM should *never* simply tell the characters, "Sure, by an amazing coincidence there's a tavern tent right in front of you." Lead them past the minstrel (whose assistant will be aggressively passing the hat), the snake-oil salesman who won't take no for an answer, and the man offering them a view of the eighth wonder of the world, newly arrived from mysterious Darabi, for one thin silver penny if they step right this way.

The GM should remember that if the PCs create disorder, he can't just say "look out for the guards." The PCs are the guards – that's why most or all of them were hired by Hatmaro. Of course, there are other guards . . . but the PCs are more likely to be called to break up a brawl than they are to start one. If they forget this, they'll earn a stiff reprimand from Tsorvano.

Below are two encounters that the GM can use any time the action gets a bit slow . . . or whenever a play session threatens to end a bit early and he needs something to keep the players busy for another hour.

**Lion Loose!** One of the caravan hangers-on is a showman with a small menagerie. One bright morning, for no reason anybody can tell, his lion knocks him down and bolts out the open cage door. The showman is unconscious; the PCs are called to deal with the matter. They follow the sounds of screams to find the lion holed up in a ring of suddenly deserted wagons.

Anyone with Animal Handling can try to calm the creature. The roll will be at -5 (creature is unfamiliar with handler), as well as at least -4 for not specializing in Big Cats (unless your character *does*, in which case good for you!). The lion bolted at feeding time; approaching the beast with fresh meat would be worth a +2 to the roll. A failed

roll means the lion attacks the PC. A successful roll gets the lion safely back to its cage; the showman will be very grateful (\$100 cash reward and friendship). Good role-playing here would be worth a character point, too.

But in all probability the lion will have to be killed. It has ST 16, DX 13, IQ 4, HT 11, Will 11, Per 12, Speed 6, Dodge 9, Move 10. Its hide has DR 1; it attacks with Brawling-15, and uses its Sharp Claws and Sharp Teeth to do 1d+1 cutting damage with its bite and 2d+2 cutting damage with its claws.

However the PCs deal with the Terrible Lion Menace, they will be the evening's heroes.

**Missing Jewels.** A clever thief breaks into Katsaya's wagon and steals a necklace. She is furious. If a PC is Katsaya's agent, he will receive instructions to listen for rumors about it; Tsorvano will give all the PCs similar instructions. A \$500 reward is offered (Katsaya is feeling stingy).

If the PCs don't actively pursue this, nothing will happen. Any PC who investigates will get a roll (Streetwise or Criminology) to pick up a useful rumor. Allow one roll per day for three days; three failures mean permanent failure.

However, a successful roll will turn up an interesting name – a member of the caravan's "instant underworld." A successful Streetwise roll (by any PC, not necessarily the one who got the name) will set up a meeting. (The PCs may try for three days, once per day. If all rolls fail, the man has grown frightened and left.)

If the meeting takes place, it will be between a single PC and the thief Peccissimavo. Make the thief's reaction roll. Peccissimavo will react at +2 if the whole \$500 reward is offered up front, but at -1 if the PC holds back even a farthing of it. The necklace is easily worth \$5,000 even to a fence. The only reason the thief will even consider giving it back is to avoid the unexpected level of heat!

Details are up to the GM – but essentially a good reaction roll means the thief turns over the jewels with no trouble, while a neutral reaction means "no deal" and a bad reaction means an attack (use one of the NPC Fighters on p. 14 for the thief). If the PC initiates an attack and wins, he can get the jewels, but will be jumped by three of the thief's friends, two nights later (use one of each Fighter NPC).

Return of the necklace will earn the petty reward, and a +1 on any reaction from Hatmaro, Tsorvano, or Katsaya for the rest of the adventure. If the return was peaceful, the PC(s) involved in the deal will have made some good contacts, giving them a +2 on Streetwise rolls while with the caravan.

corrupt her, evil pleasures and material goods abounding. And of course all these lurid descriptions simply make the outside world more alluring to Riana. She has romantic dreams of travel and adventure, and even, perhaps, owning more than a few simple dresses. She wants to get out of the abbey. In fact, she pleads with the PC to take her away.

Before long Tsorvano enters the kitchen, and she will run to him, calling, "Uncle Tsorvy!" Tsorvano has been here many times with the caravans and knows many of the children. He brings them presents and plays the kalba for them. A successful Empathy roll would allow someone to notice that, though Tsorvano likes all the children, Riana is clearly his favorite.





## Riana

**175 points**

19 years old; Red hair, green eyes; 5'6", 120 lbs.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 13 [60], IQ 13 [60], HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2 / 1d, BL 20, HP 10, Will 13, Per 13, FP 12, Basic Speed 6.25, Basic Move 6, Dodge 9, Parry 0.

No armor, no encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Appearance (Beautiful) [12]; Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** Sense of Duty (to Tsorvano)[-2].

**Quirks:** Gregarious; Inquisitive; Likes small animals; Naive; Romantic dreamer. [-5]

**Skills:** Fast-Talk (A) IQ-1 [1]-14 \*; First Aid/TL3 (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Musical Instrument (Flute) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Poetry (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Public Speaking (A) IQ-1 [1]-14 \*; Savoir-Faire (Lantara) (E) IQ+2 [4]-15; Singing (E) HT+2 [4]-16 \*.

\* Includes +2 from Voice.

**Languages:** Lantrai-Native [0]; Shandassa-Native [6].

Total reactions vary (see Advantages).

No weapons.

## Riana's Story

Riana is Halmaro's daughter. She is also Tsorvano's niece. Tsorvano's sister Lura was Halmaro's third wife. His first wife, Katsaya, couldn't stand her because Lura was prettier. When Lura became pregnant, Katsaya's jealousy grew to hatred; Katsaya had not yet had any children. (A year later she would bear Kira.) She ordered Lura out of the household. Halmaro and Tsorvano took Lura to the abbey, but it was the dead of winter and the trip was too strenuous. Riana was a strong, healthy girl, but her mother died just moments after Riana was born.

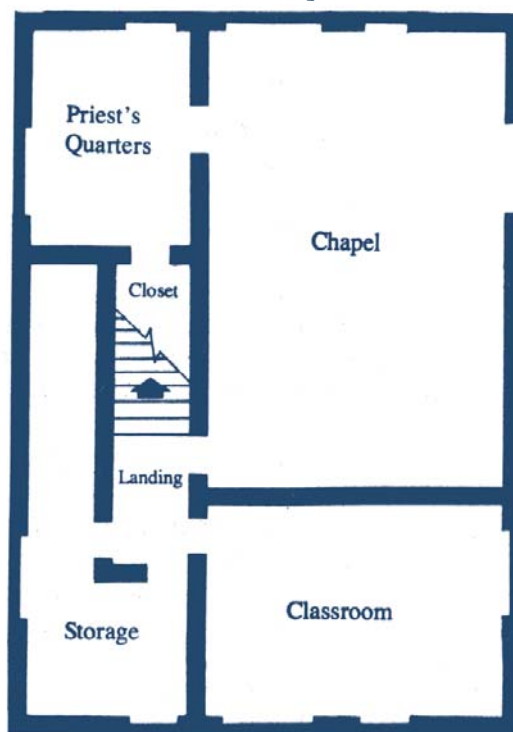
Halmaro appears at the abbey infrequently; when he goes through Desh Ava on business he generally manages to stop in. Tsorvano visits the abbey at every opportunity, bringing gifts and checking up on his niece. He also brings money from Halmaro, who pays for Riana's upkeep (he does this clandestinely, so Katsaya won't find out).

Riana loves Tsorvano; she knows she's special to him, and accepts him as "Uncle Tsorvy," without the slightest idea he really is her uncle. She knows Halmaro by sight, and realizes he is a powerful man, but has no special feeling toward him.

Riana looks a *lot* like Kira. Give each PC an IQ roll to notice this. Anyone who succeeds should get an IQ-2 roll to realize there is a marked family resemblance between Riana and Halmaro. Anyone who succeeds in this should get an IQ-4 roll to notice that there is also a faint, but distinct, resemblance between Riana and Tsorvano – she has his eyes.

The next morning, as they are getting ready to leave, they notice that Tsorvano is saddling up an extra horse. Riana

## The Chapel



emerges from the abbey, dressed for travel and carrying a bundle (this contains everything she owns). As they ride, Tsorvano tells the characters everything in the "Riana's Story" box, plus the following information:

Halmaro made a contract with the Mashandi Royal Family to supply a bride. Katsaya took this to mean her daughter Kira; she doesn't know about Riana, and Halmaro's other wives bore only sons. While Halmaro can honor the contract with either of his daughters, he would prefer that the prince marry Riana. This will provide a good marriage for the daughter he cherishes the most, as well as a more valuable link with Mashanda; he fears Katsaya's interference and her diplomatic abilities. And he'd rather not make a permanent enemy of the Prince of Mashanda . . .

When Katsaya finds out about Riana she will be livid, and will do everything she can do to stop her from marrying the prince. Tsorvano warns that Katsaya has planted spies in the caravan; he wants the characters to be on the lookout for such spies. The characters are to guard Riana with their lives – which will be forfeit anyway if they should fail. If they are successful, however, a substantial bonus will be paid.

The GM can have some fun playing Riana at this point. She has suddenly fallen into a fairy tale! Her Uncle Tsorvy is *really* her uncle; her father is wealthy and powerful; and she's going to marry a prince – if the evil stepmother doesn't get her first! She is alternately ecstatic and terrified – but she remains pleasant, in sharp contrast to her spoiled half-sister.

A PC in Katsaya's pay can earn a quick \$500 in gold by reporting this whole episode to Katsaya. If he does so, he must make an IQ roll to avoid being noticed **by the other PCs** as he visits her part of the encampment. Whether the other PCs suspect the truth, or report him to Tsorvano, is up to them.

A spy who does **not** report to Katsaya will earn her wrath – because she will find out anyway, within a day.



# 14. THE VIGIL

The caravan stops in a small valley two days' journey from Ein Arris. Tsorvano meets with the PCs and about 30 other guards to explain the situation. Katsaya found out about Riana – one way or another – and exploded in anger. Taking her personal retinue of some 40 guards and servants, she left the caravan, saying she was going back home. Halmaro didn't believe her.

As part of the wedding ritual, Riana is to spend a night in vigil. Tsorvano has made arrangements to have Riana perform her vigil at a small church on the hill above the valley. He is almost certain that Katsaya will try something before the wedding, and he wants plenty of able-bodied guards around Riana. Tsorvano, Riana, the PCs, and the guards will go up to the church.

Tsorvano divides the guards into shifts; he assigns the PCs to the third shift (roughly three hours, starting at midnight). They will be able to sleep or relax for a few hours so long as they are at their posts at midnight.

Any PC in Katsaya's pay received instructions that morning: "The church will be attacked at about 1 a.m. The attackers will wear black armbands; here's one you can wear when the time comes. Riana's death will mean a \$1,000 bonus; Tsorvano is worth an extra \$1,000. If Riana lives, you won't."

Have the characters take their posts at midnight. Use the interior map; the rooms are labeled as shown in the box. The PCs are stationed inside the church. Tsorvano is in the priest's quarters talking with the priest. Riana is in a small room at the head of the stairs. The other guards are ranged around the building.

After the PCs have been on guard for an hour, have each of them make a Hearing roll: IQ, with Alertness and Acute Hearing bonuses added in. Anyone making this roll will hear the guards outside challenging someone. A successful Danger Sense roll will warn that something is wrong. There is a knock at the door. "Hey, open up in there!" someone shouts. "We need to talk to Tsorvano!"

If the characters open the door, three attackers (one of each Fighter NPC) will rush in. They wear dark clothing with black armbands. More are visible outside – then someone outside kicks the door shut. The PCs will have to deal with the three that got in.

If the PCs don't open the door, they hear a curse – then the sounds of battle. The guards outside are being attacked by a superior force.

Either way, the battle outside will eventually die down (after the battle inside is over, if foes got in). The door begins to vibrate to heavy blows. Clearly, the attackers have killed or driven off the guard force outside.

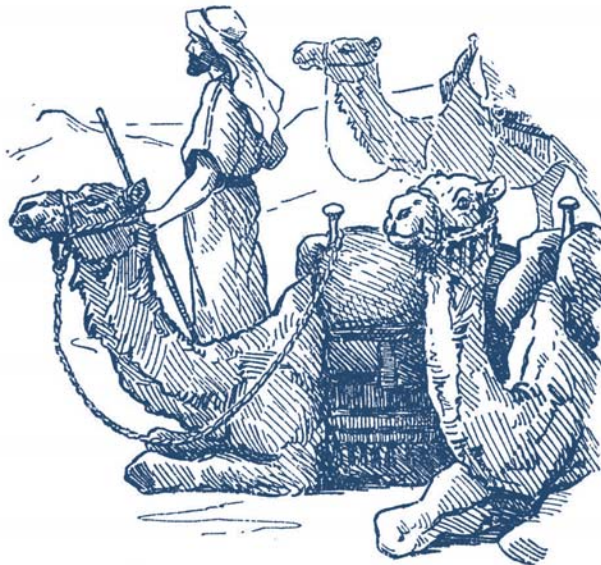
It takes several axe-strokes to smash the door. Each attack is at -2 to hit, but the attacker outside, still swinging the woodsman's axe, does not expect the attack and gets no active defense! If he is hit, he falls back, and others finish destroying the door with swords; their defenses are normal.

Then the door falls, and the attackers swarm in. There are more than the surviving defenders – if four PCs plus Tsorvano are left standing, then six attackers appear. Select randomly from the NPC fighters, or make up equivalent 80- to 100-point fighters. The last one through is the

door-chopper (if he lives), who has abandoned his axe for a broadsword.

The attackers' mission is to kill Riana. They will fight to the death; if they kill Riana, they try to escape. There is only one open door: the front door. (There is another door leading from the priest's cloister. It is barred from the inside; an attacker outside is guarding it to make sure that Riana doesn't get out the back way.) The other windows are solidly closed and barred – ignore them.

If the attackers make it up the stairs, there is one more surprise waiting for them. The first attacker through the door will stop and look around, only to be knifed in the back by Riana, who is hiding behind the door with a dagger. She hits automatically; the foe gets no defense roll. Her damage is 1d-2 impaling. If the attacker survives, he will fight Riana; her default Knife skill is 9.



If one of the PCs is in Katsaya's pay, he must make a decision now: try to kill Riana, and hope to survive the consequences – or try to find an excuse to spare her? Either course is very dangerous. A good solution should be worth one or even two character points, if the character survives.

When the fight is over, if Riana is still alive, the survivors are praised for their dedication; each gets the medical treatment TL3 offers. There will be no more attacks, and the caravan reaches Ein Arris; Tsorvano is in a good mood, and Halmaro is very thoughtful. His domestic problems are getting out of hand, and are beginning to affect national politics. Fortunately, Katsaya overstepped herself when she ordered the attack on the church; that's far worse than simple assassination. By using that against her, he can keep her in line. For a while.

If Riana is dead, the characters had better flee. Anyone in Katsaya's pay will at least have somewhere to go. Anyone else had better vanish before Halmaro or Tsorvano catches him – they would be powerful enemies. Riana's death ends the adventure, unless the GM wants to write some new episodes.



# 15. A WEDDING IN EIN ARRIS

If Riana is still alive, Halmaro pays the PCs their salary plus \$1,000 bonus each. He thanks them for a job well done, takes Riana, Tsorvano, and a dozen of the other guards with him, and leaves.

The adventure is over, but if the PCs stay in town for two days, they may attend the wedding – it's a public spectacle.

Halmaro is on the dais with Riana and her bridegroom, and the king and queen of Mashanda. Katsaya is conspicuous by her absence, and is represented by an empty chair.

And after the wedding, there will be celebrations for *days*. The PCs will have a chance to spend all the money they've made, if not more.

# 16. CHARACTER POINTS

Each PC gets one character point for completing the adventure and one point for delivering Riana to Ein Arris. Anyone who did a good job of roleplaying and staying in character earns one further point.

Any booty or trade goods they've collected are theirs to keep as well.

The loyal characters have acquired a powerful enemy (Katsaya) who appears very seldom. She does not give any

character points – enemies acquired during the course of an adventure don't count for points.

Loyal characters do, however, have the opportunity to buy a powerful patron (Halmaro). He also appears very seldom, and costs 5 points.

Note that these two possibilities are reversed if a PC was an agent for Katsaya and survived – but only for that PC.

# 17. FURTHER ADVENTURES

Now the characters are in Ein Arris with a completed mission behind them. Where can they go from here? Almost anywhere! They could return to Khedris, of course. But someone could offer them a chance to guard a caravan to Assa on a route where six caravans have disappeared in the last two years. Or one of Katsaya's hirelings might try to

poison one of them. Or Riana's new husband might want to send them on a diplomatic mission to Azatl, one of the Sea States on the eastern coast. Or a shifty-eyed man might offer them a large sum of money to hold some documents safe for him. Or perhaps all of the above. Or . . . ?



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