Against the Grain (*A Matter of Honor*, Part 2)

by Bob Dushay

After the summer solstice, Jakallans hunker down for the annual food riots. But this year, the clan has a special reason to protect its warehouse. It could be a long and bumpy week…

An adventure set in the world of the Empire of the Petal Throne, using the Gardásiyal rules. Sequel to A Matter of Honor; it is recommended, but not required, to have played that adventure. All materials provided. Beginners welcome, but this game features adult themes. This is not a monster-bash: strong roleplaying required.

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Battering ram
Burning down the house
Breaking into the warehouse
Prince Rereshqála to the rescue

ZIPPED version ↘ of the adventure, the map, and supporting documents in MS-Word 97/98 format.

Author's Introduction

This adventure is designed as a follow-up to *A Matter of Honor* using the same characters. I don't think this scenario would work as well without the conflicting goals of the group. If other characters are to be used, this scenario may lose a lot of tension without some Sarku worshippers and Dlamelish worshippers. Notice that Adlar's promotion-hungry attitude is usually a better hook for Sidla's message than Shemek's fanaticism. The two mercenaries are helpful as mystery men, and if this scenario is being played with a group of players that is used to working together, it might be better to make the mercenaries NPCs. Good role-playing on the part of the referee is also demanded, because the succession of women looking for Visan are likely to be barred from the warehouse without a strong push on the part of the referee.

In play, this tends to be a wild and woolly game. Visan always wants to let the women in, and there's always at least one player who strongly opposes this disruption of military security. The Sarku types usually support the military, until Sidla shows up and forces them to change their minds. The mercenaries are driven to distraction by the rumors, and there is usually a tense, sweaty atmosphere long before the riot actually begins. This game works much better for those who like to get into their character.

Incidentally, in one version of this game, Visan was an Aridani, in which case the stream of women was modified as a string of 'boy-toys'. In this game, the referee used all ten of the mercenaries' rumors, driving everybody frantic.

Referee's Introduction

This adventure is set during the food riots and mob violence orchestrated by the Temple of Sárku in Jakálla in early Langála, 2366. [Notice that Langála 3 is the date of the summer solstice, which is celebrated by feasting all over Tsolyánu. Missing this feast is likely to make party members glum, so assume the adventure begins after this date.]

As in the last game, each character has individual, secret goals. This information should be passed on to the appropriate players, and not shared unless the player chooses to divulge it. Unlike the previous adventure, some players may have to choose their loyalties. Depending on their choices, it may not be possible for all players to accomplish their goals.

1. Nyélme ("Illusionist") Adlár hiKhursa, a 4th circle sorcerer-priest of Sárku Cousin to Shémek.

"You are an ambitious careerist, and want to advance your prospects as far as possible. With a strong representative of Sárku on the Petal Throne, people like you are being appointed to powerful positions throughout the Empire. If your superiors in the Temple feel they can trust you, you may go far indeed.

Prince Rereshqála, although powerful in this city, is no friend of his brother, the Emperor. If you can find a way to interfere with the Prince's plans (without bringing shame to your own clan), your superiors in the temple may reward you, and maybe reports will reach the Emperor! You could be appointed to a powerful position in less than a year!

However, Prince Rereshqala might retain his wealth and power. If you serve him well (almost certainly against your Temple's interests), you may also gain—and two of his agents are in this warehouse! Of course, the Temple of Sárku will not appreciate having a Rereshqála supporter in their midst, which means the end of your magical training and your temple career, so a switch to Rereshqála only makes sense if it is going to be very well rewarded.

You possess an *Amulet of Resolve Against The Powers*, a silvery half-moon the size of a dime you wear around your neck. Supposedly, this increases your ability to resist hostile magics. [Referee only: He is thus protected against spells as if he were a 10th level mage. If he fails to protect against a spell, it will burst in a puff of yellow smoke, doing the wearer damage on Table A.] You would love to collect other magical devices, if possible.

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve the honor of the clan.
- Preserve your own honor and advance your career.
- Be sure reports of your helpful activity reaches the right ears and not the wrong ones.
- Use this rare opportunity to practice sorcery against live, unsuspecting targets. Cast as many spells as possible.
- Inconvenience Stability worshippers as much as possible".

2. Nyélme ("Illusionist") Chúrisan hiMrelsa, a 4th circle sorcerer-priest of Belkhánu.

"Nobody knows this about you, but you have a phobia about being buried alive. You are ashamed of this unheroic trait, and you must not let others learn this. You must not allow yourself to be in a dark, enclosed space: if you end up in this situation, you must roll a d10 every 10 minutes. If you roll a 4 or less, you will panic, needing immediate light (either light a fire or cast a spell). Any version Control of Self spell will prevent this fear for as long as the spell lasts. You may add +2 to the die roll if you are clutching a friend. [Clutch another player's arm. TELLING OTHER PLAYERS ABOUT YOUR PHOBIA MEANS THEIR CHARACTERS KNOW IT.]

You genuinely love your city, and hate the annual riots. You don't want to see property damaged and people to die. As a sorcerer, you may be able to reduce bloodshed. Further, as the only resident priest of Belkhánu, you are responsible for making sure that any dead are treated with respect.

You are learning the spell *Alleviation*, which neutralizes poisons. Your studies must not be interrupted, so your teacher gave you a scroll with the spell on it, and you must study it for at least four hours daily to make progress. If you can study for three more weeks, you will know the spell.

Your personal goals for this adventure are:

- Preserve clan honor.
- Preserve your own honor.
- Do not let anybody else learn of your shameful phobia.
- Study your spell.
- Your lineage has a long-standing feud with the Marassu lineage. If there are any Marassu in the party, be sure everybody sees their faults.
- Inconvenience Change-worshippers as much as possible".

3. Gayán hiTessuken. Cousin to both Tsodlán and Zagár. Now a 4th circle bureaucrat in the Glorious Palace of War.

"You will miss your wife, Tálodel hiMarassu, while you are stuck out here. Perhaps you will find an opportunity to turn this guard duty into a story about your bravery. It might make a more interesting story if you embellish what really happened. What if one of the warehouse defenders were actually a member of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, the Tsolyani secret police, here to keep an eye on the grain? If everybody believes your embellishments before you go home, it will be easier to tell an exciting story.

While you are trapped in the warehouse anyway, you may be able to win some gold Káitars by gambling. It would probably be ignoble to take money from your Chaqotél clan-cousins (and they don't have much, anyway), but the mercenaries should have money to spare…

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve the honor of the clan at all costs.
- Preserve your own honor.
- Get home alive and unwounded.
- Win at least 10 Káitars at gambling.
- Try to inconvenience Change worshippers, and don't be caught by their tricks.
- Be able to tell a good story to tell about this mission when it's over".

4. Shémek hiKhursa, Kási of the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm, on leave. Cousin to Adlár.

"Ever since your capture by the Sa'á Allaqiyáni, you have had terrifying nightmares about being taken alive by the Hlüss—a horrifying prospect for anybody, but it would also mean no Unlife for you in service to Lord Sárku! Your nightmares have affected your ability to concentrate (like a Vietnam vet with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), and this is probably why you have been put on extended leave from your beloved legion, the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm.

This is not exactly a combat assignment, but it is a chance to command, and perhaps you can get reports of your performance here to reach the ears of powerful patrons who can compel the legion to bring you back to duty. The best patron, of course, would be somebody who reports to the Sárku-worshipping Emperor Dhich'uné, 'Eternal Splendour'.

You are a big supporter of the Emperor. His rivals should be sacrificed to the Gods, as honor and tradition demand.

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve clan honor, and your own honor.
- Prove to yourself you can still be a good officer, and be sure others know it—especially powerful potential patrons.
- As a fanatic of the Worm-Lord, you have little use for Stability worshippers. Due to atrocities you witnessed in the army, you don't like Flame worshippers (Vimúhla, Chiténg) either, even if they are on the side of Change. You want to inconvenience all of these misguided people as much as possible without jeopardizing your other goals".

5. Tsodlán hiTessuken. Cousin to Gayán, brother to Zagár. A former Kási in the First Legion of Ever-Present Glory, now a 5th circle bureaucrat in the Palace of the Realm, under clan-brother Dlamúz.

"Protecting grain for Prince Rereshqála…this might be an opportunity to obtain the thanks of a powerful prince and possible candidate for the Petal Throne, depending on how things work out. (An Emperor Rereshqála would be a thousand times better than the Sárku-worshipping Emperor Dhich'uné!) If the mission is successful, and the Prince's agents think you are responsible, you may gain one of the best possible patrons for your career! Of course, you must be certain that your clan brothers not screw things up with undisciplined behavior.

It would be good if you can get some good credit for your kid brother Zagár with the Prince, too. Zagár is unlucky, and needs your help.

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve the honor of the clan at all costs.
- Preserve your own honor.
- Be sure you have an important role in this assignment, and that you do a good job at it. See to it that good reports about you get to Prince Rereshqála.
- Keep an eye out for your kid brother Zagár, the "black Hmá of the family". He seems to have a lot of bad luck. Help him out however you can.
- Be sure Change worshippers don't get credit for this assignment, and be careful of their tricks".

6. Visán hiMarassu. A foppish dandy, worshipper of Dlamélish.

"You savor each experience for whatever pleasure it can offer. The less real work you have to do, the better. You would find it so much more pleasant to manipulate others into doing whatever is needed instead of dirtying your noble hands.

You care little for politics, but Prince Rereshqála is known for throwing the very best parties. Perhaps if you impress his rude mercenaries, they might carry word of you to the Prince, and you might get invited to his villa someday.

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order)

- You want to preserve your honor and reputation, and the clan's.
- You want to savor new experiences and enjoy yourself as much as possible.
- You want to avoid doing any real work, and you don't want to have to fight any peasants! Little pleasure in that, and you might get hurt or dirty!
- Be wary of tricks from the Stability worshippers.
- Your lineage is feuding with the Mrelsa lineage. If there are any Mrelsa present, be sure everybody sees their faults".

7. Zagár hiTessuken, cousin to Gayán, brother to Tsodlán.

Worships Vimuhla, just to irritate his Karakán worshipping family. Rejected from the legion of Ever Present Glory, he struggled to make Kási in the Legion of Mirkitani, Hero of Victories. Forced to resign because of politics, he is very bitter about his brother's easy successes. Now a 1st circle official in the Palace of the Realm, thanks to Tsodlán's intervention. How galling.

"You are sick to the teeth of being in your older brother Tsodlán's shadow. He always was the favored one in the family—they paid for his promotions, and you got nothing. He got into one of the most prestigious legions in the Empire, and you had to settle for second best. He retired with honor—you were kicked out of the army. He's a 5th circle official, and you're a lowly 1st circle…and he's the one who got you the job! This is an opportunity to prove you're as good as he is, or even better.

In fact, wouldn't it be sweet if "great noble hero" Tsodlán screwed up badly, and you got the credit for saving this grain? Serve the big dork right…

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve the honor of the clan at all costs.
- Preserve your own honor.
- Prove you're a better man than your brother Tsodlán. Make him look bad and yourself look good.
- Try to inconvenience Stability-worshippers, and don't be tricked by them".

8. Qumal hiArcharáya, mercenary warrior serving Prince Rereshqála.

"You are a retired operative of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, the Tsolyáni intelligence service. You didn't want to retire, but with the ascension of the new Sárku-worshipping Emperor, Eternal Splendour, the old Stability-worshipping agents were at risk for unpleasant "accidents". You sought refuge with the old Emperor's eldest son, Prince Rereshqála, in Jakálla.

Prince Rereshqála intends to distribute the grain in this warehouse to the poor to settle the riots (and take the credit). He believes elements within the temple of Sárku intend to provoke the riots to damage his reputation and to cause financial injury to his supporters. Thus, you have been assigned to assist the guards appointed by the Clan of the White Crystal in their defense of Prince Rereshqála's property.

You must NOT allow your identity as a former OAL operative to be exposed—your life would be in danger, as well as those of your friends. BE AS UNOBTRUSIVE AS POSSIBLE. You must be especially careful around Sárku worshippers, as some of them might carry tales to their superiors in the temple, and then to agents of the Emperor…

You also have 10 skill levels each in the unarmed martial arts Dedarátl (hands) and Hu'ón (feet). HBS 187, initiative +3/+3, damage table C. Using them will reveal you to be something more than a mercenary".

9. "Two Stones", mercenary warrior serving Prince Rereshqála.

"You are a retired operative of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, the Tsolyáni intelligence service. You got out fast when the new Sárku-worshipping Emperor took over, guessing that Stability supporters were going to find life difficult and short. Now you are working for Prince Rereshqála.

The Prince intends to distribute this grain to settle the riots (and take the credit) once things quiet down. He believes elements within the Temple of Sárku will provoke this year's riots, and cause injury to his financial supporters. Thus, you are assigned to assist the guards appointed by the owners of this warehouse. It is very important that the grain be protected.

You must NOT allow your identity as a former OAL operative to be exposed, as this may endanger your life. Unfortunately, you have a distinctive appearance, so you must play the dumb barbarian mercenary role and remain as unobtrusive as you can. Being too competent might start people asking uncomfortable questions.

You also have 10 skill levels each in the unarmed martial arts Dedarátl (hands) and Hu'ón (feet). HBS 160, initiative +1/+1, damage table C. Using these skills will reveal you to be more than a barbarian mercenary".

In addition to the various secrets held by the PCs, and the usual Stability-Change tension, the Mrelsa and Marassu lineages are feuding, and Chúrisan and Visán will cause trouble for each other. This is further complicated by Dlamúz being married to a Mrelsa, and his sister is married into the Marassu lineage, while Gayán is married to a Marassu.

If running with the pre-generated characters in a smallish group, I find it valuable to be sure Adlár and Visán are in the group. The mercenaries can be played as NPCs.

There is also one key NPC:

Sídla hiVraisúna. Dark Water Clan. 2nd circle sorcerer-priestess (3rd level), temple of Sárku.

Aged 18, 5'4", Slender

Intelligence: 95
Psychic Ability: 65
Strength: 30
Comeliness: 64
Psychic Reservoir: 87
Dexterity: 89
Charisma: 64
HBS: 66

Combat Skills: Dagger 1
Skills: Read/Write 3 / Priest: Dogma and Ritual 6 / Etiquette 2 / Special Ceremonies 6 / Calligraphy 3 / Scriptures 4 / Grammar 3 Theology 2 / Hymns 1
Hobbies: Geneology 4 / Mathematics 2 Own clan 2 / Medicine 1 Other clans 2 / Salarvyáni 1 / Mythology 2 / Swimming 3 / Undead 2 / Sailing 3 / Ecclesiastical History 2 / Cosmetics and adornment 2 / Collect animal figurines 4 / Shopping and bargaining 2 / Fashion and dress 1 / Sewing and tailoring 1 / Classical Tsolyáni 3
Spells: Ascertainment U1, U2 / Clairvoyance/Clairaudience U1, U2 / Control of Self U1, U2 / Domination U2 / Elicitation U1 / Terrorisation U2 / Translocation U1

Sídla was a fairly average girl. Schooled at the temple of Sárku in Jakalla, her talent for psychic sorcery was soon noted. Although insufficiently psychic to learn both branches of sorcery, she was brought into the sorcerer-priest branch of the temple fairly soon. At first, Sídla was disinterested in her religious studies, but after two failures to achieve 2nd circle status she applied herself to learning about religion, and began to study mythology and to learn about the undead in her spare time. She was accepted as 2nd circle acolyte one year ago. She has mastered nearly all of the elementary psychic spells (Only Elicitation 2 remains for her to learn), and looks forward to learning more.

Sídla is aware that advancement requires more than studies, and she has served her temple assignments with zeal. She strongly supports Emperor Dhich'une, and believes fervently that whatever actions taken by the temple or the Emperor are right! Sídla is bright and clever, and her superiors have taken a strong interest in providing her with opportunities to prove her loyalty and skill for the temple. She hopes she is being groomed for membership in the Copper Tomb Society, the secret society that favors violent political action in support of the Emperor's political goals.

Player's Introduction

As before, 'Speedy' hands you a plaque, summoning you to clan master Neqo hiArsanmra's apartment. 'Speedy' doesn't know anything about what this meeting is for, but he does know that your comrades from the tomb robber incident (see *A Matter of Honor*) have been included in this meeting once again. [NOTE: Neqo's speech below assumes the group succeeded in A Matter of Honor. If the group failed, then Neqo is not going to be polite, and this will be presented as an opportunity to redeem themselves. Refreshments will not be offered, and he will not be complementary to the group. Fix the speech accordingly.]

As before Neqo's méshqu is his typical 'Badge of Purposive Activity', and when you enter and take your position on the appropriate dais, he will chat with you regarding the health of your family until all the people he has summoned have appeared. The fruit and pastries he offers are of noticeably higher quality than before, and there is also Chumétl to sip.

"Clan cousins, summer is approaching, as inexorable as the Gods. Likewise as inexorable as the Gods, Jakalláni of lesser status will soon be engaged in their customary summertime evening activities. I need not remind you that last year, we incurred great expense in rebuilding the boathouse and the facade to the clan warehouse. This year, I fear, the situation may be more difficult. We are currently in possession of a large shipment of Dná-grain, which is being held in our warehouse until such time as the purchaser will make use of it. (He holds out his hand to forestall anticipated queries.) We will need to protect this shipment against the depredations of the disrespectful members of lower clans. I am thankfully reminded for your services in preserving clan honor in the unpleasant matter of our ancestral tombs, and I believe you are best suited of our clan to protect our honor once again.

"The purchaser of our grain is none other than the mighty prince Rereshqála himself, may all the Gods smile upon him. It is absolutely necessary that we do not disappoint the most noble Prince. I am asking that you join our less-fortunate clan brothers of the Chaqotél lineage in protecting the warehouse.

"As you undoubtedly remember, our present Emperor, "Eternal Splendour", arose to the throne on the death of our beloved, wise, all-merciful Emperor Hirkáne, "The Stone Upon Which the Universe Rests", may he rest in the bosom of the Gods, barely two and a half years ago. You doubtless also remember that Emperor Dhich'uné ascended to the Petal Throne after a highly…(ahem) irregular…Kolumejálim, the Rite of the Choosing of Emperors. As his siblings were unable to compete or "renounce the Gold" to surrender their claim to the Petal Throne, the question of who should rule is not yet a sealed book, despite the protestations of the temple of Sárku, gladdened to see one so strongly immersed in their faith on the Petal Throne.

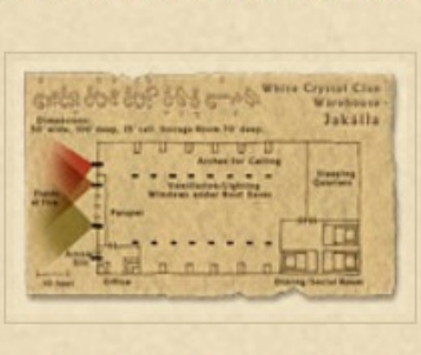
"I have taken great pains to ensure that our clan remains uninvolved in these discussions until such time as the political situation becomes clear. The clan does not make any claims regarding the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the various claimants of the throne: warlike Prince Eselné in the western half of the Empire, Flame-worshipping Prince Mirusíya in Fasiltúm, the Blue Princes Taksuru and Mridóbu in Béy Sü, or our own Prince Rereshqála here in Jakálla. Your personal opinions concerning who should occupy the Petal Throne should remain unvoiced in your heart.

"You will be accompanied in your duty by two mercenaries, hired by Prince Rereshqála. I remind you that they report back to the Prince. Show them every courtesy, and be watchful of your tongues in their presence.

"This is a clan responsibility that I place upon you. Your failure would dishonor us all. Do you understand? Good. You will be expected to make your quarters in the warehouse until the rioting has been brought under control. You will be permitted what slaves you need, supplies, and Masha will cook for you. You may take what armor and weapons you need from the clan armory. Remember that your duty is to protect the grain and our property. I do not wish to see excessive zeal such as that displayed by Lord Tékunu hiQolyélmu of the clan of the Golden Sunburst, who uses the riots as an opportunity to practice his archery while his wives applaud his skill. We cannot afford such bountiful Shámtla! Kill only when you must."

Masha is a crabby old slave-woman, but she is a good cook. At least you will eat well during this boring assignment! Supplies include three barrels of fresh water and one of decent Faóz (rice beer), and Masha has a clay oven, along with a small cabinet of spices, several bottles of cooking oil, and supplies of grain, vegetables, and some dried strips of meat. As Masha insists on privacy while cooking, there is also a set of three folding screens to isolate her "field kitchen." The warehouse has no provision to store food for long, so you'll be getting fresh supplements daily from the markets. If you are cut off for long, the diet will get bland. You will also have lanterns and oil to supply them. Keep in mind that the cooking and lanterns are to be used outside of the warehouse only, as grain dust tends to be explosive!

It is recommended that PCs bring bows or crossbows, and plenty of arrows and bolts for them. Armor may not be necessary, depending on the impression one wishes to convey. This is a mob of peasants, not an opposing army!


White Crystal Clan Warehouse
[click to enlarge]

The warehouse is ordinarily guarded by young men of the Chaqotél lineage of your clan, a poor branch that accepts some of the dirtier jobs of the clan, including warehouse guard duty, in exchange for housing and food. The guards normally serve eight hour shifts. Six guards are assigned to each shift. Sometimes extra guards sleep at the warehouse at night to be ready to relieve their fellows, and there is a small room in the back for such naps. Full stats on the guards are unnecessary: they have an HBS of 100. They have rudimentary skills on most things, but have a 30% chance of having 1-5 skill levels in any hobby skill required for the adventure. Their names are Nirún, Tlamosh, Tlikkan, Banar, Ulmo, Etqole, Mígor, and Fíru. They are morale class C (clan guards).

The warehouse is strong enough against rampaging mobs, and has wooden shutters for the windows that will permit them to be used as arrow slits while protecting a shooter from thrown rocks. It is by the river, with wide doors that permit a chlén-cart to enter. (Give players the map.) The office contains only the two daises, all business records having been removed back to the main clanhouse. The only lack is that there are no sanitary facilities—one either goes outside to the river, or uses a slopjar, and dumps it in the river when there is a chance.

The main door is a double door nine feet wide, of stout black Tíu-wood, nearly three inches thick. There are two stout bars, each a four inch thick beam that slots into bronze brackets on either side of the door. There is an arrow slit/window to the right of the main door, on the right. Above the door is a stone walkway, accessed by a ladder next to the office. The walkway has a pair of arrow-slit windows to obtain a field of fire over possible gate besiegers.

The office has an outer door, also of three-inch Tíu-wood, barred with a single, three-inch bar. There is one arrow slit window next to the two-step dais. The inner door is a typical door.

The main body of the warehouse has ventilation/lighting windows just under the eaves of the ventilating roof. These are about 1' x 2', and barred with bronze. There are arches holding the roof up, (15' ceiling) and there is no easy way to get up there from either the inside or outside. The high area where the windows are is set back ten feet from the outermost walls on each side.

Among your first order of business is to set up some slave quarters. It would be a breach of etiquette to let them sleep with you unless they are body-slaves, and Masha needs her privacy, too.

Day One: The mercenaries arrive

The first day is long and boring. There is little to do except for gamble on Kévuk-dice, play Dén-den, watch the cats chase the Ndeto lizards, and sleep. The two mercenaries will show that afternoon. They are hard-bitten men, who have served in the Yán Koryáni war.

Anybody watching the outside will see slaves carrying heavy sacks, prosperous clan members nervously scuttling about, and very occasionally a half-Semétl of police. If the party is looking (and there is no real reason to, unless the mercenaries are especially nervous), why yes, there are a few Sárku worshippers in that crowd. If anybody chooses to make a point of memorizing a face, have them specify who they are looking for. Sídla hiVraisúna (see below) is in the crowd, scouting buildings, but there is no reason to suspect her yet.

In the late afternoon, there is another knock at the door. Chashána hiZhotlu'e has arrived from the clanhouse, accompanied by four of her body-slaves. She is young (about 17), very pretty, and wishes to see Visán hiMarassu. If the door-guard tries to send her away, she will pout about the lengthy walk from the clanhouse into this disreputable neighborhood, and how uncouth it is to turn her away without asking her to refresh herself. If the guard is firm, she will beg to just see Visán's face for just "one Yóm" (90 seconds). If the guard is still firm, she will threaten to camp outside their door, causing shame to them and their lineages. In short, she will use teenage wiles to try to get into the warehouse and spend the night with Visán. She has brought a few comforts: four bottles of medium-quality Drónu, the sweet black wine of Salarvyá, a packet of Chúmaz, the bluish-white powder that enhances perception and is mildly aphrodisiacal, and a dozen sweet buns to munch upon.

Chashána is a bit spoiled, good at using her looks and youth to get what she wants, and the clanhouse thinks she may pretend to go Aridáni if they don't find a match that suits her: a man handsome and rich enough to keep her happy, and pliable enough to be manipulated. She is a worshipper of Dlamélish, but not especially religious. If she finds out Prince Rereshqála is involved in this venture in any way, she will get very excited. "Ohé, Prince Rereshqála! I do so adore him! Do you think I could get to meet him? Wouldn't it be exciting if he became Emperor and I was one of his wives?" If the mercenaries are introduced, she will have some interest in Qúmal, but will be somewhat less than civil to Two Stones, who is a mere barbarian, after all, and cannot be expected to have any status. Depending on circumstances, Chashána may end up spending the night with Qúmal rather than Visán, but Qúmal would have to work for it.
That evening, Masha directs the other slaves to set up her screens outside against the wall of the warehouse. They start a fire, and she cooks up supper. She is a crabby old woman, and will not tolerate watchers. After dinner is cooked, she will wash her utensils in the river, while the other slaves disassemble the kitchen, put out the fire, and bring things back indoors. This will be the standard evening routine unless otherwise interrupted.

Before dusk, the streets clear of respectable folk. About 4 Kirén after dark, small gangs of young men roam the area, obviously looking for trouble, rendered all the more strange by the mixed light of the two moons. The toughs rattle a few doors to see which are locked, and finding little to do, move along quickly, looking over their shoulders. This activity quiets down in another 4 Kirén or so.

Day Two: The Chancellor arrives

At 9:30 AM of the second day, there is a knock at the office door. "Open in the name of the Most Noble Prince Rereshqála Tlakotáni!" Lord Ssamíral hiTiréldu, of the Might of Gánga clan, Chancellor of local affairs for Prince Rereshqála, has arrived with a scribe and four guards to inspect the grain. Lord Ssamíral is a short, aging, fat little man, fussy, but polite, and will poke about the warehouse. He will gladly accept a cup of Chumétl if offered. His scribe will count sacks of grain. Lord Ssamíral claims to be inspecting the grain for spoilage, but he is actually sizing up the defensive arrangements. He will try to speak to a mercenary in private to see if any further assistance is needed. If this can't be done, he will bleat pleasantly that "all seems to be in order" and take his leave. Unless he is forced to it, Lord Ssamíral is much too busy to stay here and socialize.

If Chashána has attached herself to Qúmal, she will make it difficult for the Chancellor to speak with the mercenary privately, either forcing him to speak with Two Stones, or forcing the mercenary to figure out how to order her away. Otherwise, Chashána may try to chat with Lord Ssamíral. "Lord Ssamíral, will the Prince be coming here himself? Is he not the most wonderful man in the world?" The Chancellor will be barely polite and very distant. She is only a silly clangirl, after all, and below his status. Chashána will gather her slaves and leave after this rebuff.

Outdoors, activity is much the same as yesterday, but people seem a little more edgy.

At noon, there is another visitor. Mrivalash, one of the clan's slaves, has a message for Gayán. "Your wife, Tálodel hiMarassu, wishes you to return to the clanhouse. She is engaged in a dispute with Ssorudu hiZhotlu'e, and wishes you to take her side." Mrivalash does not know what the dispute is about, but remembers "there was a loud clatter, and broken pottery when I was summoned. Tálodel was most upset. If you do not come today, you may wish to sleep with the unmarried men for a time after your return." If Gayán goes home, he will not be back before the next morning. NOTE: If Gayán is not playing, this can be converted to Tsodlán or Zagár, in which case, it is their mother Dzái. Tsodlán and Zagár can have an illuminating little dispute over their family responsibilities. If Zagár is not playing, Tsodlán's wife Atín sends the message.

At about 3 in the afternoon, there is yet another visitor. Osuré hiTlangtal has arrived from the clanhouse with three slaves, one of whom carries a small, elaborately carved wooden chest, to see Visán hiMarassu. (Visán, if he asks, is sure to recognize her "chest of sweet pleasures".) Osuré is a 2nd circle Aridáni priestess of Dlamélish, about 20 years old, and rather sure of herself. Osuré will set up in the corner with Visán and any others who care to join them, or she will simply prepare herself if Visán is otherwise on duty. Her chest contains Dátsu (heavy purple brandy) fine porcelain cups, a small vial of Tsuhóridu, Chúmaz and Drársha (a packet of clear crystals from Salarvyá that distorts one's sense of time and creates pleasant hallucinations), body lotions, and some very skimpy outfits and bells from the temple. One slave will minister to her needs, but the other two will join the rest of the party's slaves. Osuré will keep Visán busy for a good part of the night, and those bells may interfere with others trying to sleep nearby. She may be willing to dally with other party members if they are good-looking and impress her. Osuré may also join the gambling if invited, and she's not bad: 4 skill levels in indoor gaming.

At about 3:30, a young man knocks, looking for Qúmal. His name is Pí'ur hiCháishe, of the Emerald Girdle clan (high status, although his lineage and loincloth show he is of a low status lineage), and he will only say that he must speak with Qúmal. Qúmal and Two Stones will recognize the boy as a hanger-on often used to run messages in the Prince's compound. If Qúmal is not available, he will reluctantly speak to Two Stones. He will give the prince's agents, and only the prince's agents, one of the following messages (choose at random):

1. Lord Morollan hiTsugash of the Golden Sunburst Clan, of Prince Rereshqála's house guards, has been given command of the relieving force for this district. You are commanded to keep this location secure until Lord Morollan arrives. (Lord Morollan is a good commander.)
2. Sources have heard that the clanmaster of the White Crystal Clan has made rather more grain sales to the Emperor than previously thought. Beware of treachery, for the White Crystal clan may decide to throw their support to the Emperor at any time.
3. One of the people guarding the warehouse may be an agent of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in good standing—that is, loyal to Emperor Dhich'uné.
4. The prince's commanders believe there is an excellent possibility that the riots will begin tonight.
5. The prince's commanders believe the riots may occur during daylight hours in order to gain surprise.
6. Sources now say that the Emperor's agents intend to poison or destroy the grain. Their likeliest attack would be to infest it with Banyékh, a squelchy little beast common in the western part of the Empire. Banyékh rot grain, turning it into a foul black mush. This may have already occurred!
7. Rumors say that activists within the Temple of Ksárul have thrown their support behind the Emperor. Worshippers of the Doomed Prince of the Blue Room may be dangerous. Adjust your plans accordingly.
8. There are rumors of an assassination attempt on Prince Rereshqála. Be prepared to be urgently recalled at a moment's notice.
9. The temple of Sárku may add Undead creatures to the rioting mobs. Be prepared!
10. The temple of Karakán may use the riots as a cover to steal the grain in the name of Prince Eselné. You may have to deal with foes from two fronts.

Day Three

A delegation from the temple of Dlamélish and another Osuré will sleep until nearly noon, grumbling if any awaken her. She will languorously pack up her belongings, kiss her fingertips for Visán (and any others who please her), and saunter home with her slaves.

At 2 in the afternoon, Pí'ur will again come running. He is clearly out of breath, and he has another message for the mercenaries. If this one contradicts yesterday's, he'll say yesterday's message was probably wrong, and the commanders feel this information is correct. Pick another rumor from yesterday's list.

If the party has been keeping watch, they'll see the same parade as yesterday and the day before. By now they'll be expecting it: a knock at the door at about 5 in the afternoon. Kalusü hiSsáivra, of the Standing Stone clan, and her younger sister Nélel have arrived. Kalusü is a 4th circle ritual priestess of Dlamélish, and she has brought her sister to introduce her to Visán. They are escorted by a party of eight slaves of both sexes, most of them good looking and well-endowed. They have a chest of costumes, silver bells, body paints and cosmetics, Chúmaz and Osí (a gray ointment that increases libido for 1-2 hours), fragrances, a Sra'úr for music, and fine Másh brandy. Kalusü is setting up for a little ritual for her sister, and Visán is her choice for the other participant. Preparations are made for a fine little orgy in the back of the warehouse. There are enough supplies for nearly everybody to have a fine evening.

In the evening, before dinner, at a time when the streets are normally deserted, there is another knock at the office door. It is a rather attractive young woman. Her name is Sídla hiVraisúna, of the Dark Water clan. Her clothes and manner indicate that she is a Sárku worshipper. What is not apparent is that she is a sorcerer-priestess of the Temple of Sárku, and her task is to ensure that the grain in this warehouse is either captured by the mob in the forthcoming riot, or that it is destroyed.

Her actions will depend on who is present for the adventure. (And the note should be modified accordingly).

1. If Adlár hiKhursa is present, she announces she has a private message for him. The message is "Shárto [Priest] Mísha hiNidoktó, Opener of the First Sepulcher, sends you these words: 'The Emperor claims this grain, as is his right, and he will collect it in whatever fashion he chooses to. You are commanded to aid and assist this messenger in this, her legal duty, in every way possible.'" She will show Adlár one of Priest Míshan's rings as proof that she has his confidence.

Notes to Adlár's player:
Shárto Mísha hiNidoktó is an administrative priest of the 6th circle. He outranks you, and has the authority to give you orders. He is rumored to be a member of the Copper Tomb Society, the secret society within the temple of Sárku that advocates political action.

In case you are wondering, legally the Emperor owns everything and everybody within the Empire. Law and precedent permits him to take your clan's grain, even without paying for it. In practice, however, clans can use delaying tactics and political influence to attempt to countermand such orders. It should also be mentioned that it is somewhat high-handed and rude to simply barge in and confiscate the goods of a high clan without compensation, as if you were common criminals!

Adlár knows Sídla, and knows that she is a sorcerer priestess of Sárku. She is smart, reverent, and talented, but does not seem to be as ambitious as him. She is very supportive of Emperor Dhich'uné. They are colleagues in the temple, of course, and may be competitors someday. It is up to Adlár's player as to his feelings about her.

2. If Adlár is not there, but Shémek hiKhursa is, the message is for him. He's seen this woman before at the temple of Sárku, but knows very little about her. They move in different circles.
3. If using non-pregenerated characters, she will have a message for any Sárku or Durritlámish worshipper, preferably a sorcerer.
4. If there are no Sárku worshippers in the party (and she will know this, having cast a Clairvoyance/Clairaudience spell into the warehouse when the party arrived two days ago), she will have been hanging around at one of the warehouses nearby, looking increasingly distraught. By dusk, she will knock at the door of the White Crystal warehouse, asking if she could come in. She was supposed to make an assignation with a lover here, but he didn't show up, and now she is afraid to go home without an escort.

Sídla will do her best to be invited to spend the night in any case. She will ask for refreshment (and her clan is equivalent in status to the White Crystal, so it would be shameful not to offer), and try to get involved in the conversation, the gambling, or whatever. She may even offer to bed one of the others in order to stay. [Note to the referee: Watch the situation. She may wish to cement alliances with the Sárku worshippers, or she may wish to make new friends.] The mercenaries shouldn't be happy about her presence, but if she's too "frightened" to leave after dark, then there would seem to be little they can do while acting nobly.

Sídla knows that the rioting will start later that night. She wishes to cause the party to become incapacitated, and has a vial of Chr-melon juice (sweetened, to avoid the bitter taste) that she hopes to slip into the stewpot. Humans who are unused to Chr-melon, a Shén staple, will suffer from horrendous diarrhea. All she needs is a distraction for a few minutes.

Fortuitously, this distraction is provided. Kalusü will be costuming and painting Nélel, and another woman's aid would be much appreciated. Sídla looks good and clearly knows how to apply cosmetics, so she is invited. Sídla will refuse at first, but after Nélel's begging, she reluctantly assents. The women retreat to Masha's room or corner for privacy. Kalusü, with some mischievousness, takes the opportunity to slip most of her Osí supply into the dinner supplies. "This will stiffen the boys for later," she giggles. "No sense wasting so many good-looking men." Sídla frowns a bit, but shows no other response. When the priestesses are distracted, she will likewise dump her Chr juice into the supplies. The emptied vial will be carefully hidden with the Kalusü's drugs.

When Nélel is made up, Sídla will excuse herself and return to the PC she gave her message to. She will whisper to him to avoid the stew because Kalusü put something in it, but not to tell the others, as it may be amusing to see what happens.

Sídla's hope is that most of the defenders will be unable to fight due to intestinal distress, allowing her to unlock the office door or unbar the front gate shortly before the rioters arrive so that they may easily enter. Failing this (and she has no clock and no way to see the sky), she will try to take advantage of whatever confusion she can to unbar the main door or otherwise let rioters in. With her spells, this shouldn't be much of a problem unless she is carefully watched. She will interfere with the warehouse's defense as much as possible without getting herself hurt.

Kalusü and Nélel and Visán's ritual is a great success, and everybody who participated or watched is satisfied with the performance. Afterwards, dinner is served. All who eat the stew (and assume everybody does, unless somebody specifically says they do not) will be very happy after dinner. The women will start to look darned attractive. Kalusü and Nélel will stretch and act most seductive. It's clear they wouldn't mind a little more entertainment, and they will be very pleased by anybody who chooses to oblige. PCs should be informed that they are very relaxed and would very much like to oblige, but they don't have to. If nobody does, the women will pout and make comments like "what use is such uprightness if you can't take advantage of it?" Visán, at the least, will be unlikely to want to refuse. If there are still no takers, they will play music and drink and gamble. If anybody wants to figure if there's something funny about the way they feel, success on "difficult" test would tell them they have ingested Osí, and it will wear off in 1-2 hours. You might as well enjoy it.

Unfortunately, 3 hours after dinner, people begin to experience fierce dysentery from the Chr juice. (Succeed on a "Very Difficult" test; roll 01-25 on d100 to avoid the flux.) The degree of failure tells how bad the symptoms are; 80-100 is total incapacitation from digestive distress.

The Third Night: The riot begins

A while after the middle of the night (about 2 A.M.; the party is unlikely to have some means to measure time at night), there is noise outside. A torch-carrying mob is advancing on the warehouse district. They will rush the doors of the warehouse, which are locked, of course, unless Sídla was successful in either unlocking the office door or unbarring the front door. The shouldering and banging on the door will essentially make a loud noise, but should not succeed in breaking down the door, but the players don't know that.

"There is a muted roar of a hundred throats outside. The constant pounding on the doors has started to have a coherent rhythm. With each THUD! on the door, the door shivers a little on its hinges, and puffs of dust float around it. The crowd roars and cheers as the pounding grows more insistent. The THUD!s are turning into louder BANG!s as the crowd begins using their clubs against the doors. Many are kicking the doors as well, and the air in the warehouse throbs like an enormous heart. The wood shivers under the strains."

If most of the defenders are ill, the guards and slaves may panic. (Consider every two incapacitated defenders as one dead for calculating losses for morale.) Sick, panicked guards will cower and refuse to help without strong "inducements". Active panicked guards may become passive, or attempt to flee if they really blow the morale check. Slaves may cower or flee, too. Check guard morale first: if they panic, the slaves will check on the next worse casualty line on the morale table.

The mob looks to be between one and two hundred. There are at least a score of torches providing light. Most people carry makeshift cudgels, clubs, and daggers. A few have better weapons. Dark, shadowy figures appear to slip in and around the crowd.

If the party within begins dropping rioters, the crowd will fall back within 2-3 minutes (depending on the level of carnage). If the party does nothing that affects the crowd, they will give up on pounding the doors after about ten minutes of banging and shouting. Now they are shouting and chanting "Food! Food! Food!" and banging on the door for emphasis.

Typical peasants: HBS 50, Damage Table C (clubs), Speed Average, 1 critical to kill, no armor.

If more detail is needed, they have 37 body damage points, and will be armed with a variety of short, one-handed weapons (short swords, clubs, axes, etc.) They have morale B.

Battering ram

The crowd splits to allow a group of about twenty burly men carrying a timber. It is not known where they found it, but it is well suited to being a battering ram. The ram is brought close to the warehouse, and two of the men slip into the shadows where somebody is waiting for them. After a discussion, they return to the ram, and they begin to swing it against the warehouse main doors. At first, the blows are irregular and relatively weak, but the crowd learns how to use the ram in 3-4 minutes, and the warehouse doors begin shiver under the strain. The bar is beginning to crack, and the bolts holding it to the wall are beginning to work loose. Unless the defenders manage to convince the mob to cease their attack, the ram will bring down the main doors after about seven minutes of pounding.

If they haven't panicked yet, the ramming will definitely entail a morale check for the guards and slaves. Drop morale to the next worse casualty level while the ramming is going on. Remember, two disabled defenders count as one dead for morale purposes. If Sídla is making mischief, this may also demoralize the guards.

The crowd can be convinced to stop ramming if they are demoralized. This can be accomplished by a flashy display of magic, or by killing enough of the ram-wielders, possibly by shooting them from the arrow slits above the door. At first, the crowd will replace the fallen rammers (and the ram will lose strength for a stroke or two), but if enough are felled, they will lose morale. Depending on the morale loss, the crowd will either retreat with the ram, or they will drop it and flee.

If the crowd has retreated with the ram, they are likely to try it on the office door, which has only one arrow slit with a line of fire. The office door will be shattered in about seven minutes of ramming.

Burning down the house

If the mob fails to break into the warehouse, or if they do break in and the defenders subsequently hold them off, they will try to burn the whole thing down out of pique. (The Temple of Sárku would rather deny Rereshqála the propaganda victory of distributing the grain after the riots.) Mob members may confer with shadowy figures in dark corners. Fires have been started at other locations in the city.

The mob quiets a bit. There is shouting by one voice, with the crowd roaring along. If anybody can see, it is a priest of Sárku that is addressing the mob: "Do you not starve already? They are saving grain for their own bellies! Burn it down! Burn it!" The crowd picks up the chant: "Burn! Burn!". Barrels of oil are produced. (Note for observant players: Where did the ram come from? The oil? This is no simple riot, but a prepared action!) The oil will be splashed over the doors if they are intact, into the warehouse if not. There are footsteps on the roof above, as rioters climb to the vents and drop oil skins within, followed by burning torches. There will be 2-8 fires started in the back of the warehouse that will need attention. 1d4-1 fires will be started on the grain, which will set the whole warehouse ablaze if they aren't stopped immediately. [Since an explosion could end the game thoroughly and fatally, let us assume there isn't one.] Slaves can be delegated to fire-fighting duties; it's their hide, too. Water, Chumétl, clothes, sleeping mats: all can be used to put out the fires. The doors will need about a half hour to burn through.

If the fires are going well, the guards and slaves will need (separate) morale checks. Consider the percentage of the warehouse that is aflame as a casualty level, and add defender casualties to the total. As before, check the guards first; if they panic, the slaves drop another casualty level.

Unless the party is especially adept at driving the rioters away while they try to burn down the warehouse, the crowd will continue to try to burn it out until Prince Rereshqála's rescue force arrives. If they succeed in keeping the crowd out, Rereshqála's force will arrive about 10-30 minutes after the fires have been attempted.

Breaking into the warehouse

If the mob breaks into the warehouse, the party can try to hold them back. The office door will be an easier place to do it, because only one or two peasants can enter the door at a time, easy victims for a swordsman. If the main gate goes, it will require four or five warriors to even try to hold the mob back, and if they rush the opening (which they will do, if their morale has not already been shattered), they will probably break the line and enter the warehouse.

Once the mob has made it into the warehouse, it will be utter chaos. Since the sacks are too large to comfortably carry, many of them will be ripped open, and peasants will grab whatever they can to carry it off in. Some will try to cooperatively carry off sacks, others will strip and turn their clothes into bags, while a few will grab handfuls and run. Others will simply smash and burn whatever they can. The defenders may be beaten or murdered. Flight would be the safest (if least noble) recourse. The crowd is unlikely to pursue for more than a block or two, double that if a priest of Sárku has been captured and is being carried off. If party members are wearing armor that slows their movement, they will be caught and beaten or killed. Guards or slaves losing the morale check will flee into the crowd, and probably trampled.

If party members keep their wits, they may be able to grab an unwary Sárku priest supervising the mayhem on their way out, but they have to be explicit about what they're doing and move quickly to get away with it.

If party members flee towards the main avenue, or head for Prince Rereshqála's palace, they will encounter the relief force. This force will arrive too late to save much of the warehouse. The party has failed. They can recover their honor by presenting some proof of the "worm-boys" involvement in the rioting, preferably with a prisoner, or Adlár or Shémek might volunteer information. (The note is too ambiguous to serve as much proof.) Neqo is unlikely to be pleased with their performance.

Prince Rereshqála to the rescue

If the party keeps the mob out of the warehouse, use the following:

At the far end of the mob, where the street connects with a larger avenue, there is a disturbance. Soldiers led by members of Rereshqála's house guards and marines from the legion of Tlanéno the Steersman are clearing the streets. They are headed toward your warehouse! The commander, Lord Morollan hiTsugash of the Golden Sunburst Clan, of Prince Rereshqála's house guards, enters the warehouse to inspect the party's handiwork.

If the party was successful, Lord Morollan will be courteous. "You have acquitted yourselves well. The Prince will be gratified to learn of your service in protecting his grain. Here is a token of the Prince's thanks," and he hands a party member a ring from his own hand. "Have you noticed anything about the mob that might be of assistance to us?" If they give him any information about Sárku priests, he will nod. "We suspected they might organize this year's riots to obtain an advantage. They will pay for their temerity."

If the party can give him a captive, he will be very excited. "Ohé, one of the worms has been hooked! Hlokku, take you this captive to the Prince, and have a care he/she doesn't cause injury or escape!" An officer carries the captive away. Lord Morollan has a scribe take names. "There will be a reward for this, once affairs have been settled! Ohé, a fine catch indeed!"

If the party was unsuccessful, Lord Morollan will be solicitous of injured party members, and cluck his tongue at the damage. "A pity, indeed. The Prince had intended to give this grain to the less fortunate once the riots had ended. It is sad that more must starve and die for the plottings of the worm-priests. Well, there is little more for you to do, then. Return home, if you can, and stay out of trouble." The mercenaries will join his forces, and the party will be left to try to figure out how to return to their clanhouse successfully. If they tried hard, but were outmatched, the mercenaries may put in a good word with Lord Morollan, which will allow them to participate in the attack on the Temple of Sárku, which will occur off-stage…I don't imagine there would be enough time after this adventure. Maybe in another sequel?

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