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HIGH AND DRY

An Introductory Adventure For

Béthorm
The Plane of Tékumel®

The heroes journey to the small town of Mishábar, east of Katalál near an ancient ruined stone castle, where a recent series of disappearances have brought the local clan's farming business to a halt. Who – or what – has taken three of the clan's women? The players must identify the cause, and find a solution so that the grain may flow again. Find out how in this introductory adventure for 4 to 6 beginning player characters!

Written by Jeff Dee

Illustrations by Jeff Dee & Talzhemir

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HIGH & DRY

By Jeff Dee

1.0 GM's Introduction

High & Dry is an Introductory Adventure for Béthorm: the Plane of Tékmel for 4-6 beginning player characters. Pre-generated characters are not provided: there is much for new players to learn about the Tékmel setting, and the character creation process in Béthorm is designed to acquaint new players with fundamental concepts they'll need to understand. Players equipped with pre-made characters would miss out on that crucial introduction to the culture of Tsolyánu.

In order to ensure a worthy challenge for the players, increase the total danger rating of all encounters by approximately 20% for each additional PC. Increase it further (by approximately 5% per experience point which has been earned by the average party member) to reflect the group's experience if they are not raw beginners. These are only suggested guidelines; GMs are free to fine-tune the encounters in this adventure more precisely based on their familiarity with the actual capabilities of their group's PCs.

1.1 Background

Peasants began disappearing from the town of Mishábar one month ago. Three have disappeared so far. First were Jalúda and Chángil, two unmarried clanswomen of the Flat Rock clan. Their Chief Elder (and Imperially-appointed town Headman) Shrakán hiTekkú'une simply wrote them off – assuming they'd been taken by beasts, or slavers, or bandits (such things have not happened in recent years, but wild animals were commoner in Chief Elder Shrakán's youth).

But then Chief Elder Shrakán's new young and beautiful third wife Dijáya was taken. Shrakán reacted violently, laying blame seemingly at random and causing much strife within his own clan-house.

No competent search or rescue efforts have been organized, because nobody wants to be the next one to disappear and they're trying to avoid being blamed by Chief Elder Shrakán, who is sending out his 'deputies' to 'investigate' everyone else in the clan. The last grain shipment from the Flat Rock clan has been held up for two weeks.

The ruined castle upon the hill was the citadel of petty warlord Kajján Mssá about 3000 years ago, during the Time of No Kings. There are centuries-old legends about townsfolk disappearing at night near these ruins. No one alive today knows of the old prison cells in its basement, or the small troop of Shédra guards, servitors of the Warlord, trapped within it when the ruin collapsed.

Just over one month ago, a minor tremor caused a portion of the hillside to fall away – giving the Shédra access to the surface world for the first time in centuries. Following their ancient orders, the Shédra have begun taking and infecting local villagers, in order to replenish their own numbers.

2.0 Players' Introduction

The way this adventure begins depends on the type of campaign being played. The following entries offer some typical examples. The GM may choose the one that fits best, or tailor a different introduction if needed.

2.1 Clan Business

Use this introduction if the PCs are primarily bound together by their shared loyalty to a particular clan. Which clan the PCs serve, and the identity of their patron within that clan, is left open-ended so the GM can more easily adapt this adventure to their campaign.

Read to the PCs:

The fief of land on which the town of Mishábar stands is managed by your patron, an elder of the clan which you serve. The last grain shipment from the Flat Rock clan of Mishábar to your patron is 2 weeks late. You are being sent to find out what is wrong, and correct it. You are also instructed to demand 2000 Káitars in Shámtla (see Appendix 2) from Flat Rock's chief elder Shrakán, to make up for your patron's financial losses from the late shipment. You are authorized to accept a counter-offer as low as 1000 Káitars in order to avoid further unpleasantness.

2.2 Temple Business

Use this introduction if the PCs are primarily united by their shared loyalty to a particular god. Which temple the PCs serve is unspecified, for ease of adapting this adventure to the campaign.

Read to the PCs:

The fief of land on which the town of Mishábar stands is managed by the temple which you serve. The last grain shipment from the Flat Rock clan of Mishábar to the temple is 2 weeks late. You are being sent to find out what is wrong, and correct it. You are also instructed to demand 2000 Káitars in Shámtla (see Appendix 2) from Flat Rock's chief elder Shrakán, to make up for your temple's financial losses from the late shipment. You are authorized to accept a counter-offer as low as 1000 Káitars in order to avoid further unpleasantness.

2.3 Legion Business

Use this introduction if the PCs are all (or mostly) members of a particular imperial Legion. Which legion the PCs serve is unstated, to make it easy for the GM to fit the adventure to the campaign.

Read to the PCs:

Your commander has assigned your unit to assess the condition of a ruined fort near Mishábar, for possible future strategic use. You have been given a letter commanding that the Flat Rock clan in the nearby town of Mishábar provide your unit with fitting accommodations.

As Imperial soldiers on an official assignment, your unit's leader is authorized to use force if necessary to compel compliance from citizens of the Empire, up to and including impaling individuals who obstruct your mission.

2.4 Typical Adventurers

Use this introduction if the PCs are a mixed group of characters with no particular social, religious, or professional ties to one another.

Read to the PCs:

Several of you have heard childhood tales about the ruins of an accursed castle east of Katalál. Recently, rumors have begun to circulate that people have been disappearing from the town of Mishábar – east of Katalál, near the site of an old ruin. Could the old stories have been about that place? Have whatever dark forces once haunted the site been re-awakened? And what treasures and secrets of the past might they be guarding?

2.5 Heroes of the Age

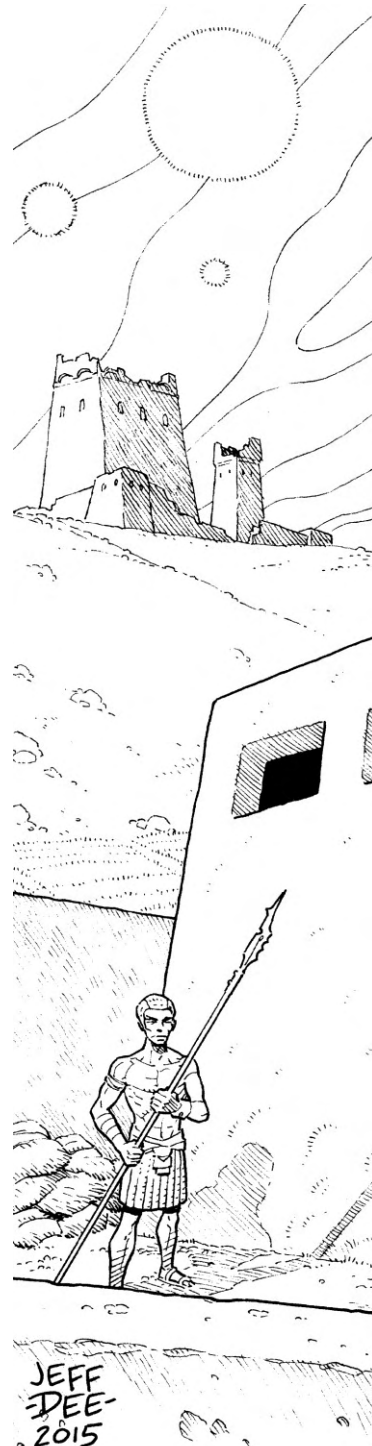
Use this introduction if the GM is running a Heroes of the Age campaign (whether the PCs yet realize they've been chosen by the gods, or not). The GM should choose which PC has the vision, and use their name in the intro text.

Read to the PCs:

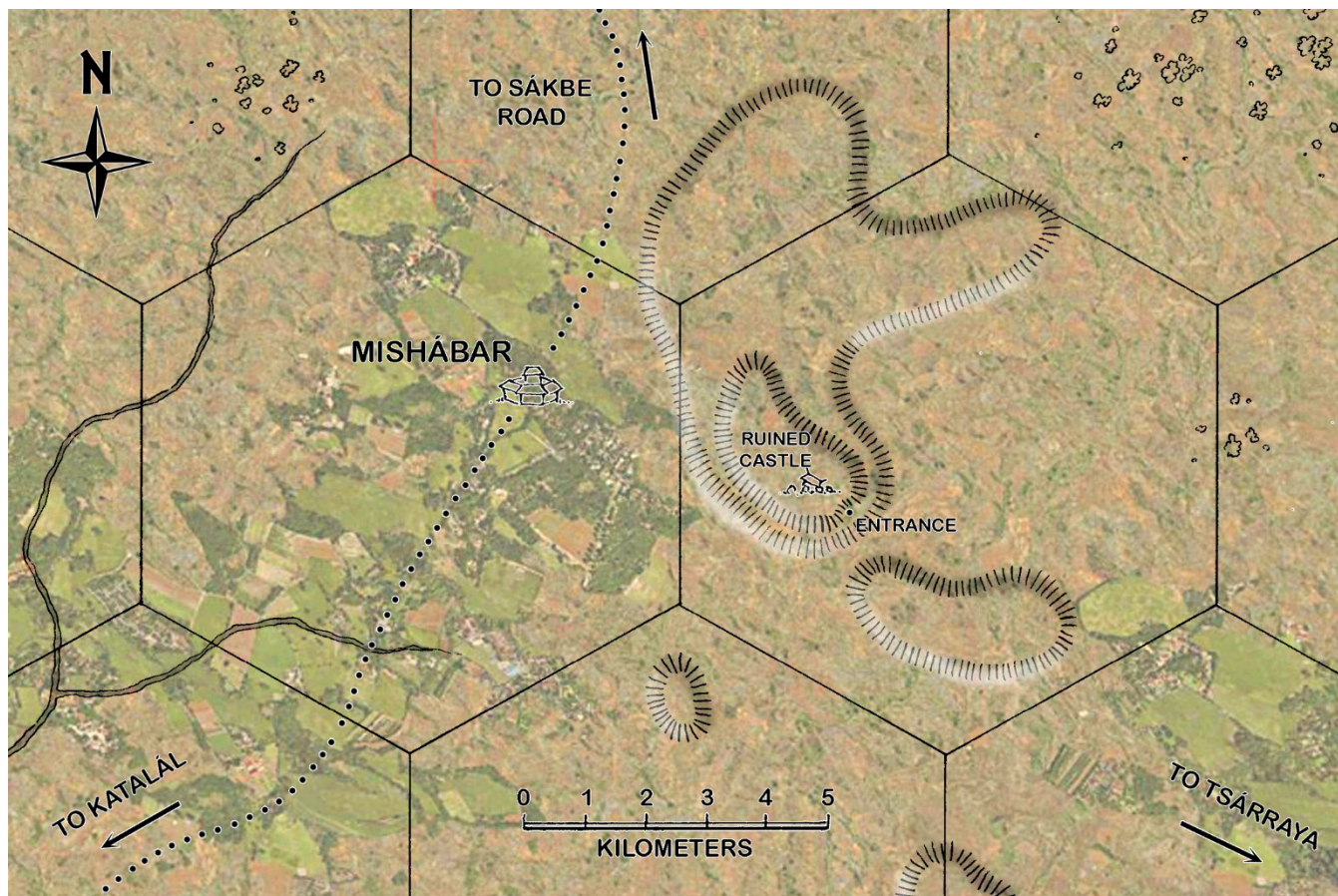
[PC's name] has had a vision. In it, an archaically garbed warrior was captured and severely beaten by a band of archaically garbed thugs. The warrior was taken to a tower on a hill by a small town. [PC's name] saw the warrior imprisoned in the dungeon beneath that tower. In his cell, the dying warrior hid a small piece of parchment behind a loose stone.

When the vision faded, the name 'Mishábar' was left ringing in [PC's name]'s ears. It took little investigation to discover that there is a town named Mishábar not far to the east of Katalál. Your group has decided to investigate.

This vision refers to the treasure map hidden in cell #4. The Gods wish for the heroes to find one of the items that the map leads to, for it will be crucial in one of their later adventures.



3.0 The Adventure



3.1 Encounters on the Road

The GM should check for random encounters during the PCs' journey to Mishábar, whether they're travelling from the nearby city of Katalál or from elsewhere. Here is a pre-prepared clear terrain / minor road encounter which the GM may use for that purpose:

3.1.1 Spiders in the Fields

The PCs are waylaid on their way to Mishábar by several small non-poisonous Atlún. There are three Atlún for every 2 PCs in the group (rounded up). They come out of the grasslands around the players' path in broad daylight, at a range of 64". The Atlún have good stealth skill, but it's harvest season so they have nowhere to hide, and so neither side surprises the other. But the PCs are surrounded.

A tactics skill check will suggest it might be best to carry the attack the Atlún; defeat a few of them at one point in their line before they can all converge. Sorcerers may prefer to wait; it'll take the Atlún 1 minute to converge on the center, allowing that much time to prep spells.

If the PCs choose to flee, the Atlún closest to their path of escape will try to block them. If the PCs break free, the Atlún only pursue them for a couple of minutes.

The Atlún nest can easily be found a short distance away, if the PCs defeat them, but it contains no treasure.

3.1.2 Approaching the Town

When the PCs come within a few miles of Mishábar, five of Shrakán's deputies show up and politely invite them to come to the Flat Rock clan house and meet with their chief elder, Shrakán. See 3.3, below. The PCs don't see anyone working in the fields around Mishábar, which is a bit odd.

If the PCs try to ask the deputies questions, they'll be told to wait for their audience with Mayor Shrakán.

If the PCs refuse to accompany the guards, the men withdraw – and then ten of them show up an hour later, still polite but threatening force if the PCs don't comply.

The game stats for the Mayor's men are found in Appendix 1.



3.2 Mishábar

Read to the PCs

The town of Mishábar consists of a single large clan house, bearing the glyph of the Flat Rock clan. Single-clan towns are very uncommon, but not unknown. The population is about 700.

The clan compound has its own wall, and there is also an outer town wall. A little livestock can be seen, but no Chlén beasts. The clan's main business is the farming of Dná rain, but they also produce woven mats and baskets.

A small two-room building (with separate entrances to each room) outside the clan compound houses shrines to Karakán and Sárku.

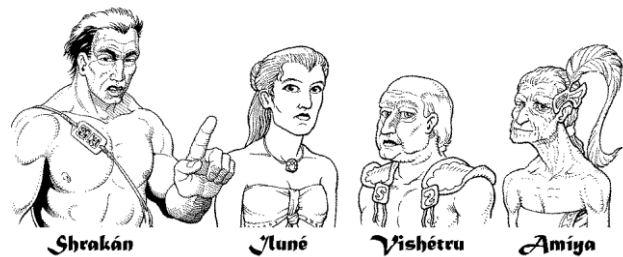
600 large sacks of grain sit out in the sun within the Flat Peak clan compound walls.

A steep hill looms to the east of the town. Ruins are visible atop this hill.

If the players approach any of the townsfolk, they're told (either by that person, or by a watching deputy) that their clan's Chief Elder, Shrakán, has forbidden everyone from talking to strangers. The PCs must go to the main clanhouse, and speak with Shrakán himself.

The Council of Flat Rock Clan Elders

Name	Details
Shrakán hiTekkú'une Clan Influence 2 Prof. Influence 13 Prestige 8	Chief Elder. Paranoid, delusional. He is the Headman of the town. His lineage within the clan manages the Dná-grain farming. He worships Sárku.
Iluné hiAyánmu Clan Influence 2 Prof. Influence 11 Prestige 7	She worships Ksárul. Ascetic. She is a 4 th circle Imperial administrator, and Shrakán's subordinate in the town's government.
Vishétu hiMriyatlaku Clan Influence 3 Prof. Influence 11 Prestige 7	He worships Sárku. Intuitive. His lineage within the clan manages the clan's basket and mat weaving business.
Amiya hiNemanádu Clan Influence 2 Prof. Influence 11 Prestige 7	She worships Karakán. Generous. She's favored to replace Shrakán as Chief Elder if anything were to happen to him.



3.3 The Mad Mayor of Mishábar

The PCs' first visit to Mishábar begins with an audience with Shrakán, the Chief Elder of the Flat Rock clan and Mayor of the town.

Shrakán's game statistics are found in Appendix 1: NPC Stats.



Shrakán controls 12 human 'deputies' in his capacity as Mayor of Mishábar (see Appendix 1: NPC Stats). Two deputies accompany Shrakán at all times, acting as his bodyguards. If the PCs' spokesperson's Prestige is 4 or less, Shrakán will use the Lieutenant of his deputies (whose Prestige is 5) as an intermediary to interact with them.

Strangely, fighting Shrakán's deputies has no effect on his treatment of the PCs. He simultaneously distrusts them, and desperately hopes they can help him, no matter what they do.

Read to the PCs

Clan Chief Shrakán is a handsome but unkempt older man. He wears the insignia of an Imperial mayor, and a pendant signifying his worship of Sárku. Shrakán sits on a stack of woven mats, carefully piled up to give



him the correct elevation in accordance with his status relative to you – represented by the mats which have been placed for you to sit upon.

Three other Clan Elders, two women and a man, are seated behind Shrakán on mats piled just slightly lower than his. They exchange worried looks, which seem to be about their Chief Elder and not about you.

Once you are seated, and Chumétl has been served, Shrakán begins to speak:

"So! Have you come to confess? Do not give me that look! My darling third wife Dijáya disappeared 28 days ago, just three days after we were married. Do you say you did not know this? I have spent every hour since then, questioning every member of my clan, seeking the culprits. Now that you are here, you will assist me. My people say they know nothing, just like you. Some imply she took the unlucky path to the village of Tsárraya. Cha! Unlucky? What foolishness. I sent an inquiry to Tsárraya, and she is not there... if am I to trust my own messenger."

One of the other Elders, a pleasant-looking older woman bearing the emblem of a worshipper of Karakán, introduced as Amíya hiNemanándu, quietly interjects. "Let us not forget the two other clan women who disappeared, Chief Elder. Jalúda and Chángil, in the 2 days before Dijáya."

Shrakán irritably waves for her to be silent. "Yes, yes. Old spinsters, already bound for the grave. But yes. Them as well. All three went out with dinner for the field workers, and never returned. There, you see? I've remembered. You'll not be using that against me, or indeed the disappearances themselves, no matter how conveniently timed, to undermine me and claim my place at the head of this clan!"

"Where was I? Yes. Now that you are here, I must insist that you aid in my investigations. You are mighty, you are new in town, and you probably did it, so who better to tell me what has become of my beloved Dijáya?

If the PCs ask Shrakán which way the victims were going when they disappeared, says he doesn't know. In fact he reacts as if it is an odd and irrelevant question. The other elders don't know either, but they understand why the PCs are asking and suggest that they ask the local villagers.

When or if the PCs agree to help Shrakán, he immediately offers them lodgings. See also section 3.4.5.

If the PCs do not offer to help him, Shrakán will allow them to camp within the town walls (but outside of the clan compound), under constant guard by 5 of his

deputies. He will not allow them to leave until they agree to help him.

During the audience (and in further audiences during the visit, which the PCs may request as needed) the PCs may attempt any of the options in section 3.4 which involve interactions with Shrakán. Each audience takes about 5 hours.

3.3.1 Secret Invitation from the Elders

On the PCs' first night in town (after their meeting with Shrakán), the other clan elders secretly send young clan-cousin Thék (see "Help Shrakán", below) to request a private meeting. Whether the PCs choose to accept this invitation is up to them. If and when they do, consult the 'Negotiate with the Elders' option (see 3.4.7).



3.4 Things to Do in Mishábar

This section describes the consequences of the most likely actions that the PCs may attempt while in town. Anything not covered here is probably not important. For example, the PCs may ask to speak with Shrakán's first two wives. The GM may allow this, or come up with a reason for Shrakán to refuse them; the important thing is that lines of investigation not specifically covered in this section probably won't go anywhere.

Each activity listed here that doesn't occur as part of an audience with Shrakán takes up about 5 hours (or, about 1/3 of the players' waking hours).

3.4.1 Bribe Shrakán

Shrakán will not release the grain shipment, or do anything else the PCs request which does not fit into his plans, no matter how much they offer him. He is only interested in getting the PCs to help him with his 'investigation'.

3.4.2 Command Shrakán

Shockingly, Shrakán rejects any authority which stands between himself and his 'investigation'. If the PCs demand anything from him forcefully, with or without the legitimate authority to do so, Shrakán will summon his deputies (see "Threaten or Attack Shrakán", below).

3.4.3 Demand Shámtla

PCs who have been sent to Mishábar specifically to deal with the interruption of the grain shipments have been instructed to demand Shámtla ('blood money') from Shrakán. PCs who are in Mishábar for other reasons may also demand Shámtla if Shrakán offends them in some way (GM's option; see Appendix 2). When he hears this demand, Shrakán replies:

"Our small clanhouse cannot spare that amount while in the midst of the current crisis, since our investigations may incur unforeseeable expenses. If you honored visitors would care to wait until the crisis is resolved, or indeed assist me in resolving it, I assure you that every effort will be made to fulfill our debts at that time".

Once the cause of the disappearances has been found and eliminated, Shrakán will sullenly offer to pay ½ of the demanded amount (saying that is all his clan can afford) - if he is still in power. If he has been removed from power, the Flat Rock clan elders will dutifully pay the full amount.

3.4.4 Frame Someone

The PCs may try to satisfy Shrakán's obsession by declaring someone guilty and handing them over. If this fake guilty person is dead (or if they have fled), Shrakán immediately sends the PCs back out to find "the other conspirators". If the fake guilty person still lives, Shrakán hands them over to three of his deputies with orders to torture them until they reveal Dijáya's location. When this doesn't produce results within 1/2/3 days, the victim dies and Shrakán sends the PCs out again.

3.4.5 Help Shrakán

If the PCs offer to question the townsfolk or the town's priests, Shrakán allows it. See 'Question the Townsfolk' or 'Question the Priests', below.

If the PCs offer to search the clan house, or the countryside, or the ruins, Shrakán allows that as well. Shrakán asks elder Vishétru to provide the PCs with an assistant and guide, and Vishétru assigns them a young weaver named Thék (see Appendix 1: NPC Stats).

A search of the clan house uncovers nothing. Nothing is found in the countryside either. If the PCs decide to search the ruins, go to 3.5.

3.4.6 Leave Mishábar

If the PCs attempt to leave the town without having agreed to help investigate the disappearances, Shrakán sends all of his deputies out to apprehend

them. First, they demand that the PCs accompany them back to Mishábar. If the PCs refuse, the deputies attack.

After they've agreed to help Shrakán, the PCs are free to go – provided that they travel toward an agreed-upon destination (as part of the investigation). Ten of Shrakán's deputies will follow them, at a discreet distance, to ensure this. If the PCs try to travel elsewhere, the deputies will intercept them, demanding that they return, and attack if they refuse.

3.4.7 Negotiate with the Elders

If the PCs go over Shrakán's head, and approach the other clan elders directly (or accept their invitation to a secret meeting), they will cautiously encourage the PCs to do something – almost anything – to end Shrakán's nonsense for the good of the clan, the fief, and the Empire. The GM should play out this negotiation, assuming the roles of the three other Elders (see 3.2).

Iluné can keep Shrakán's goons busy for an hour or so, if the PCs can move about freely – but Shrakán will certainly find out about it once the hour is up, and send all of his available deputies after the PCs (except for his two bodyguards) to stop whatever they're doing and bring them back.

If asked for clues to the disappearances, the elders complain that for all of Shrakán's bluster and belligerence, he hasn't turned up a single clue that they know of. They say that the townsfolk or the local priests might know more.

The elders of the Flat Rock clan would very much like to see Shrakán removed from power, both as Headman of Mishábar and as Chief Elder of the clan. Unfortunately, they have grown too fearful of him and his posse of thugs to act on their own.

Vishétru proposes that the PCs kill Shrakán (and as many of his deputies as necessary), and Iluné agrees. Amíya cautions against this, citing Shrakán's Imperial post, but Iluné points out that the Empire need know nothing of what happens here other than what she tells them. The others agree that this is so, and Iluné then promises to shield the PCs from any repercussions. Nevertheless, Amíya urges that the PCs solve the issue of the disappearances first, to restore Shrakán to his senses. If that doesn't work, then Shrakán should be taken alive and sent to the Ba'alán Shrine for treatment, instead of murdered. The other two elders echo Amíya's desire for the PCs to investigate the disappearances, they're just less patient about dealing with Shrakán. The PCs are left to choose their own course of action.

The elders promise that once Shrakán is dealt with, they will pay any outstanding Shámtla in full, and ship the grain to Katalál forthwith. They have no objection to the PCs speaking with the townsfolk.

Amiya



3.4.8 Question the Priests

Shrakán does not forbid the PCs from talking to the priests, and so his deputies will not interfere, but he personally favors Sárku and proclaims that proudly.

The shrine in Mishábar employs six priests; one Rank 6 / Prestige 5 priest and two Rank 0 / Prestige 2 acolytes each for Karakán and Sárku. One of the Karakán acolytes is a Universal-level sorcerer with the Dispel Universal spell (5A). He can cure Dijáya (see 3.5, Cell #5). Each of the shrine's two rooms also host small idols their allied gods and cohorts.

The priests tolerate each other but are not close associates. They each perform weekly rituals to Hriháyal and Avánthe to keep the unlucky forces to the southeast at bay, but these are merely ceremonial, to bolster the townsfolk's morale. The priests believe the 'unluckiness' is merely an old legend tied to the history of the ruined castle. They say it was occupied by Kajján Mssá, a warlord of fierce reputation devoted to Change, back in the Time of No Kings. He fought with raiders (the Karakán priest refers to them as 'heroes', while the Sárku priest calls them 'bandits') from the forest of the Kurt Hills. The priest of Karakán urges the PCs to bravely go there and investigate, while the priest of Sárku urges them to leave it – and its secrets – alone.

If asked about Shrakán, they both defer to his authority, though the priest of Karakán clearly disapproves of him. They remember the day of his wedding to Dijáya, though, because during the ceremony there was a subtle but perceptible tremor in the earth. The priest of Sárku says he took it as a propitious omen.

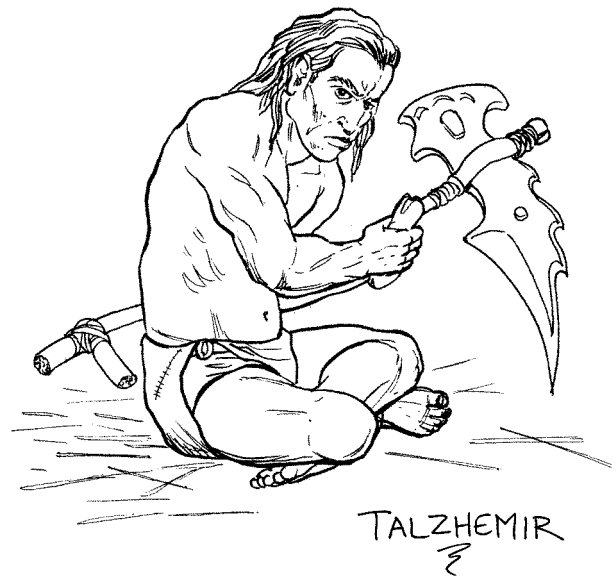
3.4.9 Question the Townsfolk

The PCs are told (either by the person they approached, or by one of Shrakán's watching deputies) that the Chief Elder has forbidden everyone in the clan from talking to strangers. If the PCs say that Shrakán has given them permission, they are allowed to proceed – but if the PCs lied, word gets back to Shrakán within an hour and he responds by sending all 10 of his deputies to capture or kill them.

If asked, the townsfolk say that the missing women had all gone out towards southeastern fields when they disappeared, carrying food to the field workers.

The townsfolk are terrified of Shrakán's men, and will be relieved to hear that the PCs are now investigating (unless the PCs mistreat them, of course). They also fear the ruins to the southeast toward Tsárraya, which legends say are unlucky. If asked for examples of this bad luck, they mention the unstable, crumbling hillside – where a hapless person might be caught in a landslide.

All agree that Dijáya was indeed young and beautiful, and that Jalúda and Chángil were old and unmarried, though well-liked and sorely missed.



3.4.10 Request Lodgings

If the PCs ask for accommodations without having agreed to help with Shrakán's investigations, he says he cannot risk harboring strangers during this crisis – strangers who might be part of the conspiracy! He demands that the PCs pledge to help with his investigation in exchange for lodgings. If the PCs are Imperial soldiers with a letter ordering him to house them, Shrakán's conditions are unlawful – giving the PCs the right to threaten him with any punishment from Shámtla to impalement, as they see fit (go to "Threaten or Attack Shrakán", below).

3.4.11 Demand or Seize the Grain

It would have taken 200 townsfolk (all of their able-bodied men) two weeks (three round trips) to carry all of the grain backlog to Katalál. Shrakán will not agree to release his people to deliver the grain until after his 'investigation' has concluded. Unless the PCs have 600 men at their disposal, they would have to commandeer practically the entire population of the town to carry it all to Katalál in one trip – and neither Shrakán nor the other elders will allow that, either.

3.4.12 Threaten or Attack Shrakán

Shrakán responds to any threat or violence by calling for his 'deputies'. Two of them accompany him at all times, and any others who haven't already been defeated (up to ten more) arrive to defend him at the start of the next turn. He will accept an apology from the PCs if they immediately retract their threat and swear to assist him with his 'investigations'. As Headman of Mishábar he is a petty Imperial official. So, unless the PCs also wield sufficient Imperial authority (for example, if they are a military unit and Shrakán is obstructing their orders, or one or more of them is an Imperial official of rank 6+ on official business), such threats are a crime against the Empire and he is well within his rights to react with force.

If Shrakán is ultimately removed from power, the thankful Flat Rock clan elders will shield the PCs from any legal consequences. However, the PCs won't know that unless they've already cut a deal with the elders.

3.5 Beneath the Ruins

This section begins when the PCs begin searching the ruins, the hill, or the crumbling hillside.

The dungeons beneath the ruined castle were once accessible only via a locked stairwell within an inner courtyard. The castle's collapse sealed that entrance permanently – but occasional tremors cause a portion of the steep hillside to fall away periodically, allowing access to the deepest chambers for a time, until another tremor closes it off again.

A search of the ruins takes five hours, and uncovers nothing but the impassable, caved-in stairwell – revealing that there are (or at least were) chambers underneath. Searching the entire hill takes a full day, but enables the PCs to locate the crumbling section of hillside and the underworld's exposed entrance. If the PCs were already informed of the crumbling section, and choose to go directly to it, then no extra searching time is necessary.

Torture Chamber

This room is exposed to the elements, halfway up the crumbled-away hillside. Its north and west walls remain intact, but the rest – including half of the floor and ceiling – have fallen away down the hill. The walls are speckled with pairs of small holes (where shackle chains were once attached). The holes are full of light green

fuzzy mineral deposits, left over from corroded bronze chain-rings. More corrosion stains on the floor attest to the past presence of bronze implements of torture there (an iron maiden, rack, and so on).

1. Cell #1

This room is empty. Its door has long since rotted away, as have all the doors in the prison, and lies as a misshapen pile of mold across the doorway.

2. Cell #2

Two dead, desiccated female bodies (Jalúda and Chángil) lie here. They are dressed like Tsolyáni peasants, and (on any Search roll except a fumble) are seen to be wearing crude pendants identifying them as members of the Flat Rock clan. A critically successful Search roll is needed to realize (by seeing them move slightly) that they are (unarmed) Shédra! See Béthorm p. 206. If not detected, they bide their time in order to attack the party later, from behind, with surprise. If detected, they attack immediately. They emit dry screams when combat begins, alerting their companions in Cell #5.

3. Cell #3

This cell is empty. See the description of Cell #1.

4. Cell #4

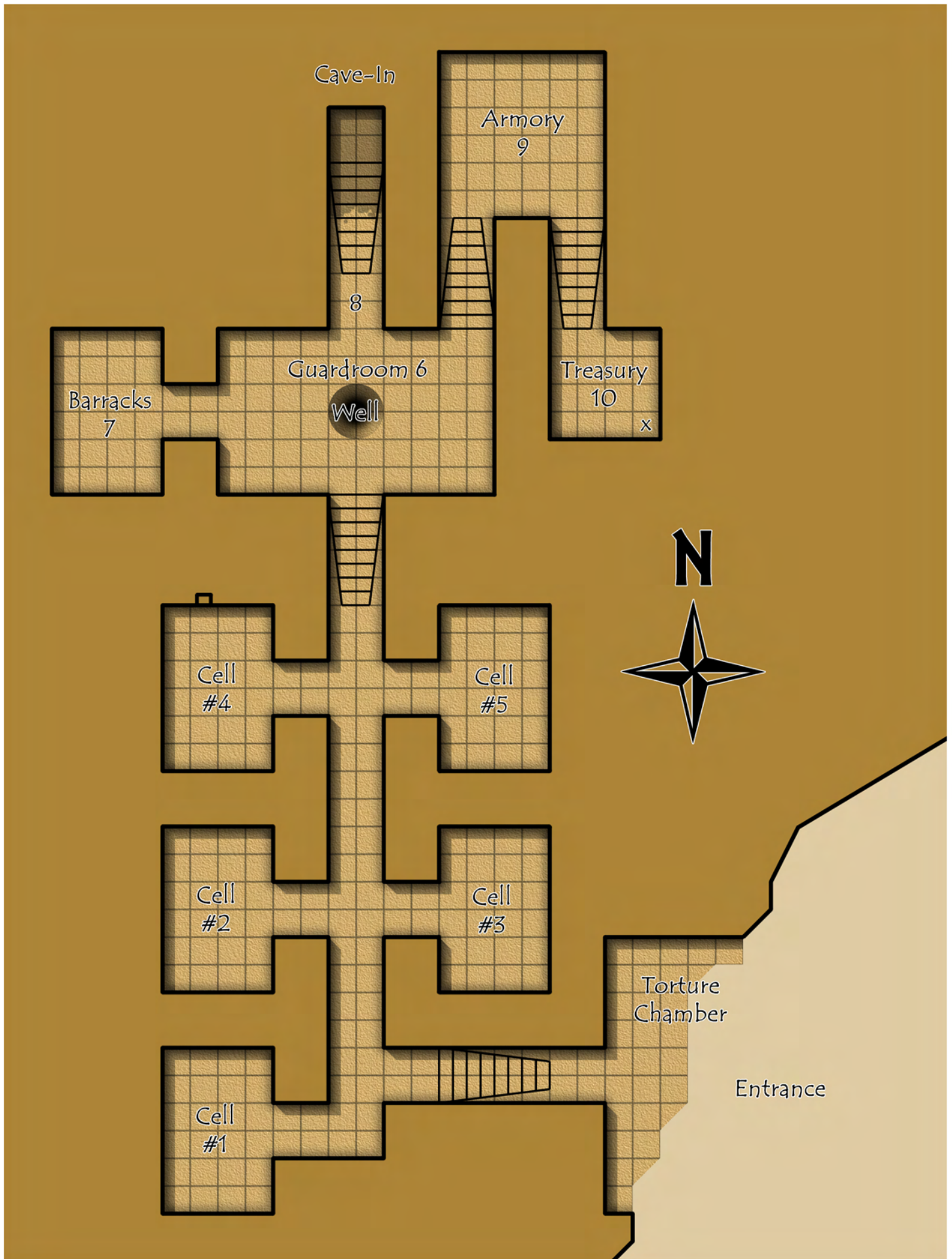
An ancient skeleton lies here, the remains of a prisoner dressed in scraps of Engsvanyáli armor. A skill checks on the relevant history skill is needed in order for players to identify this as evidence of the Time of No Kings. Players who search the remains may contract parasites (see Treasure Chart A, Béthorm p. 219).

The inmate created a map to a fabulous treasure – drawing it upon a scrap of fabric in his own blood – and hid it behind a stone in this cell. Players who glance casually into this cell notice the loose stone on a critical Search skill roll. Players who actually search find it on any successful Search roll.

The prisoner was a Kurtáni vigilante in the Time of No Kings, who intercepted and hid a treasure meant for the warlord Kajján Mssá. The map (in Thu'úsa) shows that the treasure was buried in a cave in a forest along the Chaigáva river. The forest in question is the Soru'á (just north of Katalál), but it is up to the GM to decide when (or if) the PCs figure that out.

5. Cell #5

This is the lair of two armed Shédra and three of their unarmed Shédra minions (see Béthorm p. 206). The unarmed Shédra were townsfolk from Mishábar, taken centuries ago when there was last access to the surface. The armed Shédra's equipment is non-magical copper, and extremely corroded (see below).



Also in the room is Dijáya – obviously ‘infected’ by the other-planar power which turns victims of the Shédra into Shédra themselves. Dijáya is unconscious, and slowly dying but not yet turned. In game terms, she has 6 hit points left and is bleeding at a rate of 1 per hour.

Copper Longsword: Blade skill, +1 to hit, 5/7/9 damage, requires PHYS 12. It breaks if it ever deals more than 9 damage.

These creatures attack immediately if players enter their cell, or respond to the call of their comrades in Cell #2.



6. Guardroom

This room is empty, with piles of moldy dust indicating what may have been furniture. The well in the center of the room is too deep to see the bottom by torchlight, but it is apparently dry.

7. Barracks

Empty. Again, dust & mold show where furniture might have stood.

8. Caved-In Stairway

A Biridlú, the guardian of the Treasury, lurks here. It (and its ancestors) have dwelt here, protecting the original owner's treasure, since the Time of No Kings. See Béthorm, p. 172. It will emerge and attack any party (from behind) that descends the stairs to the Armory. It attempts to remain hidden from players who poke around its hiding place, but it will attack if it is discovered.

9. Armory

This room contains a mass of old, rotted Chlén-hide arms and armor. None of it is in the least bit salvageable.

10. Treasury

A few scraps of treasure were left behind from the castle's treasure horde, in the rush to abandon this place when it was finally overrun by heroes from the Kurt Hills in the days near the dawn of the Tsolyáni Empire. The collapse of the stairwell, and the creatures left behind in this place, have preserved these few items from looters:

- An electrum necklace with gems, worth 840 Káitars
- A 14 carat opal, worth 189 Káitars
- A 7 carat opal, worth 32 Káitars
- An Eye of Non-Seeing (#24). There is no inscription, and the dial shows only 4 charges remain
- 350 Káitars worth of antique gold coins

4.0 Up from Above

What follows when the PCs return from investigating the underworld beneath the ruins on the hill depends on the situation back in Mishábar.

If Shrakán is still in power, he demands to know what the PCs discovered about Dijáya's fate.

If the PCs say they didn't find her, Shrakán demands that they continue with the investigation (and the adventure resumes at section 3.4).

If the PCs return Dijáya alive and cured, without speaking of the Shédra, Shrakán returns to his senses somewhat – fulfilling the PCs' demands for Shámtla and releasing the grain.

If the PCs return with Dijáya still infected and dying from the Shédra's bite, Shrakán immediately abdicates his authority and demands to be allowed to seal himself and his infected true love into the dungeons beneath the ruins, there to live forever together under the gaze of Sárku. Shrakán believes that the bite of a Shédra is a blessing. The other clan elders, supported by the local priest of Sárku, will allow this.

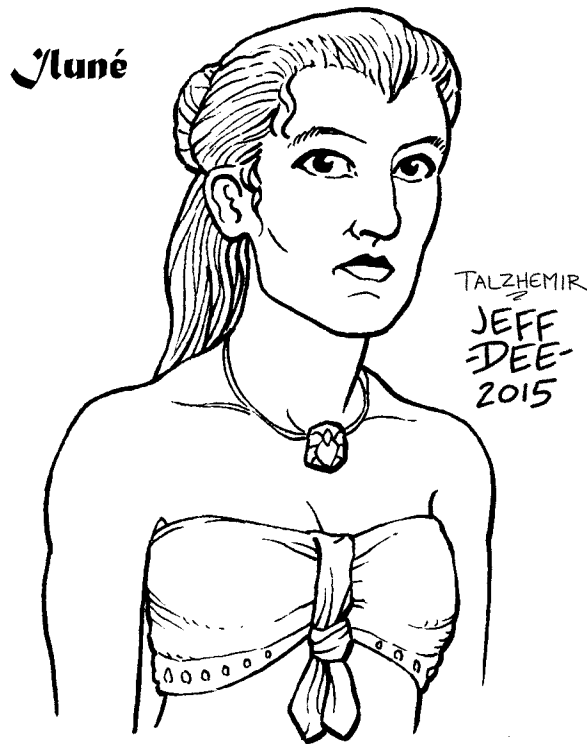
If the PCs say they have either destroyed Dijáya (to keep her from becoming a Shédra), or they return her alive but cured of the Shédra's bite, Shrakán snaps. He calls upon his remaining deputies to slay the PCs immediately. The PCs will then be forced to defeat Shrakán and his men in combat.

Once Shrakán is out of the picture, for whatever reason, the other elders take charge and make peace.

If Shrakán had already been deposed before the PCs set out to explore the underworld, then the new Chief Elder Amíya and acting mayor Iluné will ask for a report.

If the PCs say they haven't solved the mystery of the disappearances, then the NPC leaders ask them to please continue the investigation. Return to section 3.4.

Once the PCs report that they've solved the mystery (either the truth, which is that Shédra from beneath the ruined castle have been abducting people, or any other plausible-sounding answer that the PCs make up), the NPC elders thank them profusely, paying any demanded Shámmtla (and resuming the grain shipments, if they haven't already done so). The PCs are welcome to stay in Mishábar as long as they like, and to return to the underworld on the hill if they haven't finished exploring it. If the PCs rescued Dijáya, but she is still infected, an acolyte from the town's shrine of Karakán will cure her.



Appendix 1: NPC Stats

The Mayor's Men

Shrakán has 12 human 'deputies' in his capacity as Mayor of Mishábar. They are paid by the town's budget of Imperial funds, and not by the Flat Rock clan.

Shrakán's Deputies (.4)

Clan Influence 2, Prof. Influence 1, Prestige 2

PHYS: 10 DEFT: 10 INTL: 10
WILL: 10 PSYC: 2 Size Mod: 0
Initiative: 1/2/3 Movement: 6 ground

Defenses: Melee: 1 Missile: 1 Magic: -1
Armor: 1/0 Hits: 10 Energy: 10
(light leather body armor, leather cap)

Attacks Hit: Dmg: Other:
Spear 11- 4/6/8

These men surrender if Shrakán is killed, claiming they were 'just following orders'. Whether the PCs show

mercy is up to them, but the other elders of the Flat Rock clan will request mercy if they are consulted.

Shrakán, the Mad Mayor of Mishábar

Shrakán

(2)

Clan Influence 2, Prof. Influence 13, Prestige 8

PHYS: 10 DEFT: 10 INTL: 11
WILL: 12 PSYC: 2 Size Mod: 0
Initiative: 2/4/6 Movement: 6 ground

Defenses: Melee: 2 Missile: 2 Magic: 1
Armor: 2/1 Hits: 10 Energy: 10
(light Chlén body armor, no helmet)

Attacks Hit: Dmg: Other:
Staff 16- 1/2/3

Shrakán is also an Imperial administrator of the 12th circle.

Thék, the Young Weaver

Thék

(.4)

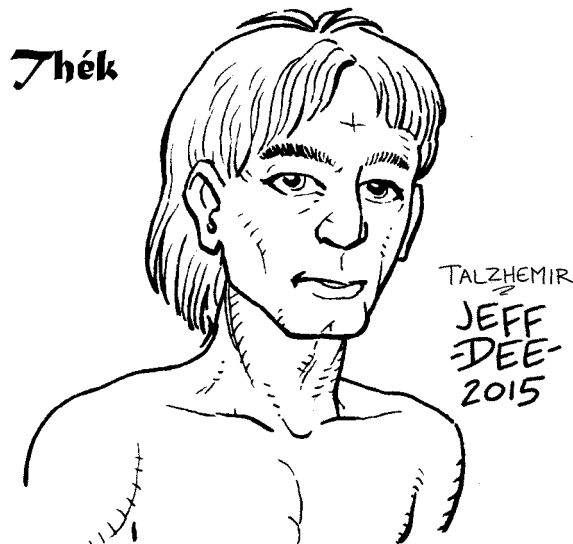
Clan Influence 3, Prof. Influence 2, Prestige 3

PHYS: 9 DEFT: 11 INTL: 10
WILL: 10 PSYC: 2 Size Mod: 0
Initiative: 1/2/3 Movement: 7 ground

Defenses: Melee: 2 Missile: 2 Magic: -1
Armor: 1/0 Hits: 7 Energy: 10
(light leather body armor and a leather cap)

Attacks Hit: Dmg: Other:
Light Axe 13- 2/4/6

Thék is cheerful, optimistic and talkative. He's not very creative, and not well educated, but he loves his clan and family. Thék is well aware of Elder Vishétru's concerns (see Negotiate with the Elders, below), and he eagerly assists the PCs in any plans they lay against Chief Elder Shrakán.



Appendix 2: Shámtla

The Tsolyáni custom of Shámtla "blood money" is a sort of "out-of-court settlement" to redress insult and injury. The plaintiff or his representative (usually a clan elder) approaches the accused party, states the case, and names an appropriate figure. The latter then states his side of the story, and the parties haggle until an agreement is reached. Even cases of extreme violence can be settled this way. The amount varies with the nature of the issue and the status of the persons involved: a very low clan might be happy to get 100 Káitars for a slain member, while a very high clan (or the Tlakotáni) might get 30,000 to 100,000. Multiply the victim's Prestige by itself 4 times, and then times 8 (so, $5 \times 5 \times 5 \times 5 \times 8$ for a character with 5 Prestige) to calculate an appropriate amount. Foreigners and clanless persons may also demand Shámtla, but they suffer a -1 penalty to their Prestige when making the aforesaid calculation.

In cases not involving injury or death, Shámtla may range from the value of damaged property to a sum 15 or 20 times its worth. If the issue concerns intangibles (infringements of clan prerogatives, breaches of contract, slander, etc.), the plaintiff demands whatever he thinks appropriate -- and likely. Again, status strongly affects the settlement: a foreigner, clanless person, or member of a lower clan who has been insulted by someone more prestigious will get nothing, while an aristocrat who slanders an equal publicly may pay from 1000 to 20,000 Káitars, depending upon the circumstances, whether the slander is true or not. One must thus be careful of one's speech and never attribute "ignobility" to another. For example, never imply that a merchant is dishonest while haggling over a price; to do so in the hearing of others is libel, resulting in a demand for Shámtla (often only a few Káitars, agreed to and paid on the spot) or a trip to a civil court, which can be much more expensive. This assumes the merchant and customer are of about equal status; a noble can insult a merchant with impunity. Even if the trader is proved fraudulent, the slander stands and must be compensated. The question of the merchant's dishonesty is a separate case, and the cheated customer may demand Shámtla in turn, or enter a countersuit in civil court.

Parties not directly involved may also ask for Shámtla if their interests are harmed. A widow whose husband was harmed through the negligence or deliberate action of an employer may turn up on his doorstep demanding compensation. If she has a clan and kinsmen to care for her, she may be awarded only a small amount, but if she has no resources a judge may order the employer to maintain her in her accustomed lifestyle until she remarries or finds other means of subsistence. One may cite the case of a ship captain who hired a crew without warning them he planned a dangerous raid on the island of the Hlüss. When he got back with all but five of his crew dead, the families of the slain all demanded Shámtla: 20 Káitars per month each to 42 plaintiffs for

life! The wretch was expelled from his clan for stupidity. Employers usually proclaim the perils of a job in advance, and some obtain a prior agreement from an employee's family and clan that no Shámtla will be asked. The courts do not always honor such contracts, however, because of the possibility of negligence or criminal action on the part of an employer.

True accidents -- even if they result from carelessness -- are not causes for Shámtla: the unfortunate who slips on a fruit peel in front of a grocer's stall has no claim, nor does the man whose foot was mashed by a carter's Chlén-beast, nor the merchant whose goods were broken during cargo handling. A judge would have to be certain that these acts were purposeful -- or the result of a deliberate failure to warn the victim -- in order to award Shámtla.

Slaves have no right to Shámtla, nor do free members of a slave's family if he is harmed. The state itself can never be held responsible -- after all, the residents of the Five Empires, their possessions and chattels, etc., are ultimately the property of the state and can be treated in any way the state wishes. It is therefore impossible for the family of a soldier or of a person injured by an Imperial official in the course of his duty to obtain Shámtla.